

**The influence of values on development practice:  
A study of Cambodian development practitioners in  
non-government organisations in Cambodia**

Submitted by  
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A thesis submitted in total fulfilment of the requirements  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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February 2006

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## **ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ACFID	Australian Council For International Development
CARERE	Cambodian Resettlement and Reintegration Programme
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CCC	Cooperation Committee for Cambodia
CD	Community Development
CDRA	Community Development Resource Association
CDRI	Cambodian Development Resource Institute
CNGO	Cambodian Non-Government Organisation
CPP	Cambodian People's Party
DK	Democratic Kampuchea
FUNCINPEC	National United Front for an Independent, Neutral, Peaceful and Cooperative Cambodia
GAD	Gender and Development
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNP	Gross National Product
GTZ	Gesellschaft fuer Technische Zusammenarbeit (German Technical Cooperation)
HDI	Human Development Index
HDR	Human Development Report (UNDP)
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INGO	International Non-Government Organisation
KAWP	Krom Akphiwat Phum
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
NGDO	Non-Government Development Organisation
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NNGO	Northern Non-Government Organisation
ODA	official development aid
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
PRK	People's Republic of Kampuchea
SEILA	Khmer for "Foundation Stone" (major decentralisation initiative)
SNGO	Southern Non-Government Organisation
SOC	State of Cambodia
TRA	Theory of Reasoned Action
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNTAC	United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia
VDC	Village Development Committee
WCCD	World Commission on Culture and Development
WCED	World Commission on Environment and Development
WID	Women in Development
WVS	World Values Survey

## SUMMARY

Evaluation reports, along with development studies literature suggest that development practice is often failing to enact espoused participatory, empowering and gender equitable approaches or to achieve these espoused goals. Mainstream development theories are underpinned by values and beliefs about what is good and what “ought to be”.

In this study I explore the influence of values on the development practice of Cambodian practitioners working in non-government organisations in rural Cambodia. Development practitioners are the major conduit of community based development assistance, but little is known about how their values impact their day-to-day practice, and influence their moral and political choices.

In the study I used ethnographic methodology, guided by feminist principles. The research was conducted with individuals and groups of experienced, mostly Cambodian development practitioners. Data were collected in four phases through in-depth and semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and observations of practice.

I examine the (in)congruity between practitioners’ espoused theories and values and those demonstrated by their practice. The findings reveal that the values are not essentially different but are prioritized differently. The espoused values are consistent with those of the international development discourse, all of which are premised on a belief in human equality. Theories and values inferred from actual practice reflect hierarchical underpinnings. In the Cambodian context this is consistent with socio-cultural values and the hierarchical order of society. However, as expatriate research participants and the literature attest, this incongruence is not particular to Cambodian practitioners.

The study reveals practitioners give higher priority to fulfilling the tasks necessary for the achievement of their NGOs’ planned outputs and organisational imperatives than to the facilitation of participatory and empowering processes. At the same time, the enactment of some development values is in tension with certain socio-cultural norms and practices. Practitioners are challenged to make desirable development values explicit and identify how to operationalise them in the lived social, cultural, political and economic context.



## STATEMENT OF AUTHORSHIP

Except where reference is made in the text of the thesis, this thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma.

No other person's work has been used without due acknowledgement in the main text of the thesis.

This thesis has not been submitted for the award of any degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution.

All research procedures reported in the thesis were approved by the La Trobe University Human Ethics Committee (Application No. 03-94).

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I sincerely thank the practitioners from the three Cambodian NGOs who participated in the research, and particularly the eight practitioners involved in the in-depth interviews. I am also grateful to the Cambodian and expatriate practitioners who took part in the focus groups and the semi-structured interviews. I am very appreciative of the time people gave willingly and their thoughtful engagement with the questions.

I feel very fortunate to have had the patient, wise and cheerful support and encouragement of my supervisors: Margarita Frederico and Cliff Picton. I was constantly appreciative that, despite busy schedules, they were invariably responsive and helpful and this in no small part helped to keep me on course and persevere.

Many people have talked with me about values and development practice over the last few years, all of whom contributed to the development of my thinking. I would particularly like to thank John McAndrew for his incisive reading of an early draft which helped to sharpen my ideas. I am grateful to David Ayres for his comments on several earlier chapters, and to Peter Annear, Emma Leslie and Lori Dostal for their comments on chapters 1 and 2. I appreciate Pratin Dhamarak's and Lindsay French's thought provoking reading of chapter 2. I thank Enda Moclair and Kate Radford for their ideas on chapter 3.2, and Lee FitzRoy for her thorough and thoughtful comments on later drafts of chapters 6 to 8. Mary-Jo O'Rourke edited and proof-read the final draft. I also thank Pan Putheavy, Chea Chanthong, Meas Nee and Pratin Dhamarak for their assistance with Khmer vocabulary. Val Forbes provided excellent support from the library, and I thank the administration staff from the School of Social Work and Social Policy for their help over the duration of my candidature.

For their support and hospitality in Cambodia I am very grateful to Lori Dostal, Nou Vary, Thoin Sean Lay, Julie Hoare and Bruce Powell. I would like to thank Krom Akphiwat Phum and Catholic Relief Services in Battambang for their logistical support, and VBNK in Phnom Penh. In Victoria, I am especially appreciative to Deb Stringer for her hospitality along with her friendship and support, and that of Helen Burt, Lee FitzRoy, Hilary Morgan and Sheila, Peter and Tom Houston. Finally I thank Mal Simmons, most importantly for his steadfast love and unshakeable belief in the usefulness of exploring values and development practice, but also for countless conversations and critiquing of numerous drafts. His unstinting support and encouragement enabled me to complete the thesis.

# CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 The research problem

The dream of a better life which development promises has not been realised for millions of people. For decades development assistance from developed, industrialised countries has aimed to improve the development prospects of poorer nations. However, the number of people living in poverty and the gap between developed and developing countries continue to grow. In many countries, human development indicators for education, maternal and child health and income show little sign of improvement, and are even deteriorating in some countries.

This underachievement of development goals is also true of the work of NGOs, which are small, but significant actors in the development sector. Typically, NGO development goals embrace development outcomes such as poverty alleviation, empowerment and just and equitable development. The development studies literature generally, and evaluations of both international and Cambodian NGOs in the late 1990s more specifically, indicate that development objectives are infrequently being achieved to the extent hoped or expected. Research findings often indicate that practice is neither participatory, empowering nor focused on the poor.

From February 1993 to October 2001 I worked as a development practitioner in Cambodia. In 2001 a Cambodian colleague and I undertook an eight-month action research project which aimed to understand why concerted training and capacity-building efforts with development practitioners had not been more effective in strengthening field practice (O'Leary & Meas 2001). The results described the typical approaches and underlying assumptions of field practice and training/capacity building, and demonstrated how development and development practice were conceptualised and influenced by aspects of Cambodian culture. The results left me thinking about questions of value and what influences practitioners' actions and decision-making in the field.

My starting point for this current thesis is that, if development is something which is desirable, it must involve values and moral choices. In the literature, values are regarded as important because they underpin the assumptions and beliefs that guide people's day-to-day behaviour and their moral and political choices. What a development practitioner believes is desirable, and how this can and should be achieved in Cambodian society, are inherently value judgments. If values influence what practitioners believe is good and right and what they ought to do, as well as influencing their behaviour, why is it that development practice often fails to deliver the just,

participatory, empowering and gender equitable processes and outcomes articulated in NGO vision and mission statements?

This thesis explores the nature of, and possible reasons for, this disparity between how development practitioners conceptualise development objectives, approaches and outcomes, and how they actually conduct their development interventions. The context and sample for my research is Cambodia and Cambodian development practitioners working with Cambodian NGOs in rural community based development work. I investigate the interaction between practitioners' personal values, their NGOs' values, those of the socio-cultural milieu in which they intervene, and the values inherent in the international discourse of development theories and approaches. The ultimate purpose of this inquiry is to gain insights into how development practice can be enhanced to more effectively facilitate empowerment and positive change at the village level.

## **1.2 The research question**

The principal question for the study is: How do values influence development practice? This is explored with specific reference to Cambodian development practitioners through the following research questions:

1. What are the values underpinning development goals and good practice as espoused by Cambodian development practitioners?
2. What are their guiding values as inferred from their actual practice?
3. How and why are the espoused values of Cambodian development practitioners (in)congruent with their values in-use?
4. Are Cambodian development practitioners' visions of "the good life" reflected in their espoused values regarding development, and congruent with the values underpinning their actual practice?
5. What are the implications of these findings for development practice in Cambodia?

## **1.3 Definition of concepts**

Values refer to a person's core beliefs about what is good and right. A commonly accepted definition of a value is: "an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally and socially preferable to alternative modes of conduct or end-states of existence" (Rokeach 1972:159-60).

Development, in the context of development practice, refers to outside intervention or “aided” development (Davies 1998). In this thesis I take the position that development is first and foremost about people and the expansion of human capabilities. In all community based development, the development relationship is central and should be primarily concerned with facilitating the liberation of people from poverty, oppression and dependency.

Development practice refers to the actions practitioners undertake to serve people in the pursuit of just and equitable development. Practice is the application of development knowledge, through the use of a range of skills, and is shaped by values regarding what ought to be, and in deciding what, when, why and how actions should be taken.

#### **1.4 Significance of the study**

This study is important for several reasons. Extensive searches of development studies literature reveal few studies that have examined the actual field-based practice of development practitioners and their perspectives and experiences, although there is considerable literature theorising about development concepts and approaches and the types of skills and attitudes needed. In community development the practitioner is the conduit of development assistance, but little is known about the impact of her or his values on practice and, by extension, on development outcomes. Despite a strong commitment to diversity and cultural values in the development discourse, and the well-established link between values and behaviour, I did not identify any studies that explore the connection between the values and beliefs of development practitioners and what actually happens in their interventions with communities, or the congruence between what is said and what is done. The findings from this study make a unique contribution to knowledge in this area.

To a large extent, work in the area of development ethics has been academic and has not penetrated the development practitioners’ sphere of activity. Values and ethics have not been made explicit in the conduct of development practice. This can be attributed partly to the fact that development studies are multidisciplinary in nature, lack a defined body of knowledge and are informed by a variety of professions from which development practitioners emerge. This study relates the values underpinning academic theories and concepts of development to empirical data on the beliefs and actual practice of Cambodian development practitioners.

Large amounts of aid are devoted to strengthening the capacity of practitioners. In general, capacity-building efforts have not incorporated values as a constitutive element alongside knowledge and skills. The exploration of practitioners’ perspectives on development, their

experience of practice, and the problems they encounter in mediating contradictory expectations provides a unique insight into the values questions confronting Cambodian practitioners and has implications for the training of development practitioners in Cambodia and elsewhere.

Through providing a detailed and rich description of the research context, the relevance of the findings for development practice in other countries, and in cross-cultural work such as with Aboriginal and migrant communities in Australia, can be assessed.

### **1.5 Limitations of the study**

My research is limited by the following factors. There are methodological problems associated with studying values. Interpretations of the term are diverse and studies indicate that most people have often not thought deeply about, and are unaccustomed to articulating, their values. The problem in asserting that values sometimes influence people's actions is that "the evidence for the existence of those values comes from having observed the actions" (Wilson 1993:xiv). Values are usually inferred from what people say and what people do. Many studies on values avoid these problems of interpretation by using ranking and scoring exercises for a list of values. This was not appropriate in the context of this study as pre-formulated lists of values would have precluded Cambodian practitioners' identification and expression of values important to them, as well as investigation of the meaning and significance of particular values. Language difficulties in expressing the concepts of values and achieving meaning equivalence across cultures are problematic, as are the interpretation and attribution of another's meaning. As the discussions took place in the practice context, it is also reasonable to assume that practitioners' responses may be influenced by what they consider to be the "right" values.

These limitations are somewhat mitigated by the triangulation of data collected by a variety of methods and from a number of sources, and by my experience with Cambodian development practitioners in the field over a nine-year period. The research design provided considerable scope for me to probe practitioners' perspectives through in-depth and semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions, rather than to assume particular interpretations. However, the time spent in the field and the number of interviews conducted were limited by resource constraints.

Another significant limitation to the study is that an individual's practice is influenced by a range of variables, not only their values and beliefs. While I investigate factors such as the practitioners' levels of knowledge, their skills in facilitating development processes and the influence of socio-cultural norms and expectations, I only briefly address the influence of economic and political

factors on practitioners' actions. The construction of the study, with its focus on only one variable, is justified by the exploratory nature of the research and the scarcity of empirical data in this area.

The absence of research into the values of other stakeholders in the development process with whom development practitioners interact, particularly those of the “beneficiaries” but also donors and government officials, is also a limitation. Development practitioners are generally educated, middle-class town dwellers (even if their roots had been in poverty and in the village) whose perspectives do not necessarily reflect those of the rural population they serve.

The study did not attempt to assess development outcomes. Practice can be said to be “good” only if it is achieving the outcomes that are being pursued and which are considered desirable by the practitioners and/or their agency, and by the participating villagers. Of even greater difficulty is the attempt to establish causality. For example, if one village undergoes greater change than another, it would be a study in itself to determine the contributing factors, only one of which might be the actions of the development practitioner. In a similar vein, a practitioner could behave consistently in two different villages and achieve very different outcomes. While these examples demonstrate another significant limitation, they do not negate the worth of this exploratory study.

My personal perspective on what constitutes developmental practice and desirable development outcomes, and the values I believe are important in promoting the holistic development of the human being and her or his community, are not necessarily those of the mainstream development establishment or those held by many Cambodian practitioners. The study is limited by the fact that Cambodian practitioners did not participate in the development of the research questions and the research design. The conceptualisation of the research problem and how it should/could be explored evolved from my worldview, influenced by my interests, interpretations and biases, although I try to be conscious of and document this.

## **1.6 Presentation of the study**

In this chapter I outline the genesis of the study, the research aims and its contribution to development knowledge and practice, as well as its limitations. Chapter 2 investigates the value system which underpins Cambodian socio-cultural, political and economic life, in order to better understand the practice context. Chapter 3, the literature review, provides the theoretical foundation of the research. The first section reviews the values construct and empirical research into the dimensions of values, particularly in the field of cross-cultural research, as well as the development literature concerned with ethical practice. The second section reviews the major

development theories and concepts and investigates the assumptions and values underpinning these and their implications for practice. The third section examines literature on NGOs as they constitute the organisational context for this investigation. In chapter 4 I describe the conceptual framework for the study, which is based on Argyris and Schön's theories of action (1974, 1978). Chapter 5 comprises the rationale for the use of a qualitative, ethnographic methodology guided by feminist principles, followed by a presentation of the multi-phase research design in which data were collected in four phases using a range of methods and data sources. In chapters 6 to 9 I present the findings, analysis and implications of the research. Chapter 6 presents the practitioners' espoused and in-use theories of practice and an analysis of the (in)congruence between them. In chapter 7 I explore practitioners' conceptions of the good life and examine the issues related to development and social change. Chapter 8 considers the applicability of development knowledge, skills and values to development practice in Cambodia. In chapter 9 I conclude with a discussion of the main findings and their implications for development practice.



## **CHAPTER 2 CAMBODIAN SOCIAL CONTEXT**

### **2.1 Introduction**

The importance of understanding indigenous values and their centrality in people's lives relates to the belief that the success or failure of development programs is connected to their congruence with people's value systems (Sinha & Kao 1988a). The central theme of my thesis is that what Cambodian development practitioners actually do in their practice is influenced by what they personally value to be good and right, and that this is enmeshed with the value system underpinning Cambodian socio-cultural, economic and political life.<sup>1</sup> Understanding Cambodia's (changing) cultural traditions is critical for the formulation and operationalisation of development policies and practices which aim to promote participatory, empowering, gender equitable change.

Values concerning status, authority and human relationships are “embodied in and expressed through religion, cultural practices, social organisation, political ideologies, psychological structures, conceptions of human needs, quality of life and human rights” (Clammer 1996:30). In this chapter I focus on aspects of Cambodian culture, social structures and belief systems which I consider have an important bearing on development processes in Cambodia. The influence of these aspects on development practice cannot, and should not, be separated from Cambodian history and the existing political and economic situation. I briefly describe some political and economic factors/events which have profoundly influenced the social context.

### **2.2 Social change**

Aided development is taking place in an evolving social situation in Cambodia which has undergone rapid change over the past three decades. Ledgerwood and Vijghen (2002:110) argue that although Khmer society is not fixed and is “being re-created, re-imagined, and negotiated through the everyday actions of people going about their lives” there are similarities with pre-war or pre-1970 patterns. From the literature, and my experience in Cambodia, it is difficult to assess the extent to which there is a break with past socio-cultural practices, where they have changed and/or are in the process of transformation in a changing environment. My intention here is not to resolve ambiguities but to present some of the complexities which are inherently a part of the situation in which practitioners intervene. Cambodians are not an homogenous group. To assume that there is any one way Cambodians view the world would be diametrically opposed to the purpose of this thesis. At the same time certain characteristic features do exist. Throughout this

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<sup>1</sup> Other values relevant to development practice are those underpinning the international development discourse and NGOs which I examine in the literature review (see chapter 3.2 and 3.3).

thesis “Cambodian” generally pertains to the majority Khmer ethnic group,<sup>2</sup> and I focus on the generation of Cambodians who lived through the Khmer Rouge period as children and young adults and who are now in middle age.<sup>3</sup>

There has been no comprehensive study of current Cambodian social life and there is relatively little literature on the lives of Cambodians since 1979 (Curtis 1998; Ledgerwood & Kheang 2002). The vast majority of literature about Cambodia has been written by foreigners although there is a small but growing body by Cambodian researchers and scholars. Numerous studies have been conducted in a range of fields such as: social capital (Krishnamurthy 1999); social organisation (Ovesen et al. 1996); culture and social reconstruction (Brown & Zasloff 1998; Ebihara et al. 1994; Kim 2001; Ledgerwood 2002; Marston 1997; Meas 1995, 2000; Vijghen & Ly 1996); development practice (Conway 1999; Meas & Healy 2002; O’Leary & Meas 2001; Soontornwong 1996); gender (Gorman 1999; Ledgerwood 1990, 1992; Santry 2005); violence against women (Giles 2004; Zimmerman 1994); conflict resolution (Luco 2002); organisational culture (Pearson 2004); trauma (Boyden & Gibbs 1996; Emerson 1996; Harmer 1995); religion (Harris 1999, 2005; Marston & Guthrie 2004; Morris 2000); education and development (Ayes 2000); and political transition (Curtis 1998; Downie & Kingsbury 2001; Heder & Ledgerwood 1996b; Roberts 2001; Shawcross 1994; Sorpong 2000; Vijghen 2002). These studies attempt to interpret or explain certain patterns or trends in current attitudes and behaviours. Academics have also identified historically recurrent patterns of attitudes and behaviours in the present day political elite (Ayes 2000; Chandler 1993, 1996; Ledgerwood & Vijghen 2002; Sorpong 2000). The very nature of development work, dominated as it is by an outputs oriented agenda, often compels practitioners more to action than to reflection and integrating what is already known.

## **2.3 Significant political and economic events/processes**

To understand the practice context it is crucial for practitioners to understand how past events in Cambodia’s history continue to impact on the current situation in terms of people’s perceptions and responses. Cambodia’s recent history has been well documented (Brown & Zasloff 1998; Chandler 1993, 1996, 1998; Curtis 1998; Etcheson 2005; Fawthrop & Jarvis 2005; Heder & Ledgerwood 1996b; Hinton 2005; Kiernan 1996; Martin 1994; Ponchaud 1977, 1989; Shawcross

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<sup>2</sup> Cambodian is a generic term referring to all persons who are nationals of Cambodia, regardless of their ethnicity. The majority ethnic group is the Khmer who comprise 85% of the population. Other ethnic groups are the Vietnamese, Chinese, Cham and Highland ethnic groups or “hill tribes” (Brown 2000).

<sup>3</sup> In my experience in Cambodia throughout the nineties, this group comprised most of the staff of Cambodian NGOs working in rural areas. There are now growing numbers of younger Cambodians with university education who are entering the NGO workforce and whose perspectives may be different to those described in this thesis.

1986; Slocumb 2003; Thion 1993; Vikery 1984, 1986). Here I highlight the Khmer Rouge regime, the ideology of political leadership and economic liberalisation as influences relevant to community development practice, as they have affected all aspects of social and cultural life in Cambodia.

### 2.3.1 Political processes

Cambodia has a proud past. From the ninth to the thirteenth centuries it was a mighty empire that encompassed parts of modern-day Thailand, Vietnam and Laos. The history of Cambodia is one of conflict, massive upheaval and disruption. At different times over the centuries Cambodia was dominated politically by both Vietnam and Thailand and this past continues to impact on Cambodia's relations with its neighbours and its national identity (Chandler 1993, 1996).

For both Cambodians and foreigners, the Khmer Rouge era was a defining period in the history of modern or post-colonial Cambodia. Following a five-year civil war the communist Khmer Rouge swept into power in 1975. They initiated a radical revolution which drove people out of the cities and towns, eliminated money and markets, education and health systems, and overturned the Khmer way of life, destroying the institutions of Buddhism and the family, outlawing people's fundamental customs and traditions, instilling terror and shattering people's trust in each other. Educated people were targeted for execution. Between 1975 and 1979 an estimated two million Cambodians, almost 25% of the population, died from starvation, disease, exhaustion and execution (Fawthrop & Jarvis 2005).

There is consensus in the literature that the Pol Pot regime had a profound impact on Cambodian society. Its efforts to dismantle the social structures and institutions of everyday life, and the genocide it perpetrated on the population, have had ramifications on Cambodians well beyond the period of its rule. The resilience of Cambodians in the face of so much suffering and change is evidenced by the ongoing reconstruction of their country and the fact that Cambodia has now achieved a relative peace. The tremendous pain and suffering endured during the Khmer Rouge period, when people lived on the brink of death, engendered a survival mentality. People's acquiescence to injustice in order to stay alive, passivity, lack of trust and an inward focus on one's family are regarded as consequences of this regime.<sup>4</sup> The depth of rupture and devastation wrought by the Khmer Rouge is incalculable. While not denying this, it would be wrong to attribute all features of present-day Cambodian society to legacies from that era. As this chapter

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<sup>4</sup> Despite this a number of people were, and are, willing to risk their lives and fight for what they believe is right through joining opposition parties, human rights organisations, trade unions and as journalists.

will show, a range of factors interact in their influence on everyday life. Passivity, for example, may be seen as the combined effect of poverty, trauma, understandings of karma and/or deference to those of higher status and authority.

Following the overthrow of the Khmer Rouge in 1979 a new Vietnamese supported communist government was installed in Phnom Penh. Due to cold-war politics Cambodia was isolated by a US-led political and economic international embargo throughout the 1980s. During this decade the government struggled, with limited help from the Soviet Union, other Eastern-bloc countries and a small number of international agencies, to rebuild the country devastated by the Khmer Rouge regime, while at the same time fighting an ongoing civil war against Cambodian resistance forces supported by China, the United States and other Western and ASEAN countries (Curtis 1998). In the late 1980s internationally sponsored peace talks began and a comprehensive peace agreement was reached in 1991. Under the Paris Peace Accords, a temporary governing body called the United Nations Transition Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) was created and given the mandate to implement the Agreements, restore peace in Cambodia, establish national reconciliation and organise national elections (Curtis 1998). During the UNTAC period, the goal was to create the political space to allow for multi-party democracy as well as the re-emergence of civil society, including the formation of the first Cambodian NGOs. UNTAC also oversaw the re-integration of Cambodia into the world community. Despite UNTAC's failure to disarm the political factions,<sup>5</sup> relatively free and fair elections were conducted in 1993.<sup>6</sup>

Although the 1993 constitution enshrined in law a democratic political system and respect for human rights and the rule of law, some commentators have noted, along with increased political stability, the increasing authoritarian nature of the government, the effective re-assertion of one-party political control following the July 1997 coup, lack of acceptance of a loyal opposition and endemic corruption (Brown & Timberman 1998; Brown & Zasloff 1998; Curtis 1998; Downie & Kingsbury 2001; Ledgerwood & Kheang 2002; Sorpong 2000). Progress in political development

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<sup>5</sup> The Khmer Rouge withdrew from the peace agreement and boycotted the election, continuing to fight against the government until the eventual defection of all its factions to the government in 1998.

<sup>6</sup> A two-thirds majority in parliament was needed to form government but no party won an absolute majority. Although winning the most seats the royalist party (FUNCINPEC) in effect became the less powerful party in the ensuing coalition government with the incumbent governing Cambodian People's Party (CPP) led by Hun Sen. As the administrative system installed in the 1980s at provincial, district and commune level by the CPP remained in place, the CPP effectively retained political control throughout the country (McGrew et al. 2004). In 1997 political tensions between the CPP and FUNCINPEC became violent and CPP took full control of the government by force (Ledgerwood & Kheang 2002). In 1998 and again in the 2003 national elections the CPP won the largest number of seats but not an outright majority and formed coalition governments with FUNCINPEC. In both governments the CPP has dominated the coalition.

— in terms of overcoming violence, impunity and corruption and establishing separation of powers, human rights, accountability and transparency — has been slow (Downie & Kingsbury 2001:56).

The persistence of anti-democratic behaviour and the failure to enact political reforms have been attributed to a long history of authoritarian rule (where the word “govern” was the same as “eat” (Chandler 1996:302)) underpinned by a hierarchical society where patronage and other cultural norms enable an elite to effectively rule with impunity (Chandler 1998; Curtis 1998; Downie & Kingsbury 2001; Lao 1998; Roberts 2001). Roberts (2001:35) asserts that “in elite Khmer political culture, a loyal opposition is a contradiction in terms”. Other compounding factors are: “pervasive poverty, the persistence of traditional approaches to education and the limited resources available for civic education [which] have made it difficult to educate the majority of Cambodians about their rights and responsibilities as citizens” (Lao 1998:174). The political culture is a pervasive influence on NGOs and development practitioners.

Curtis (1998:73) describes the foreign aid situation during and after UNTAC as “development anarchy” in that international donors and other non-government agencies tended to ignore or reject government bodies, the government had little control over the development process, and aid was very poorly coordinated. Mysliwiec (2003) states that Cambodians were treated as victims rather than participants and partners, and so lost confidence in their own capacity to manage the process of reconstruction. Their resourcefulness and the hard-won achievements in the 1980s were ignored and the government was not integrally involved in the planning and implementation of reconstruction and development activities initiated by international development agencies and NGOs. An example of this is the largely poor results of massive external technical assistance; the spending on 800 technical advisors to build institutional capacity in 2001 cost donors \$162 million which was more than the government’s wage bill (World Bank 2004). The donor driven identification, design and implementation of projects has reinforced rather than alleviated dependence on aid (Godfrey et al. 2000).

### 2.3.2 Economy

Along with political change in the late 1980s Cambodia began its transformation from a socialist, centrally planned economy to a free-market system under private ownership. Economic liberalisation brought rapid change in the economy and social relationships. Previously public resources were appropriated by private interests, by those with, or having access to, political and

official power. Research found that “the unleashing of a market economy in an immature political and legal environment without any safety nets to protect the interests of poor village communities” was proving to be even more detrimental to social capital than armed conflict had been (Krishnamurthy 1999). Since 1998 the national economy has grown and tourism has increased. Economic growth has been around 4% per annum in recent years (UNDP 2005). However, apart from the newly created garment industry (which faces an uncertain future due to increased trade liberalisation) there has been very limited foreign investment.

The UNTAC period marked the beginning of an over-dependency on foreign assistance, which represented two thirds of government expenditure at the time (Curtis 1998). Two important distortions have been identified as Cambodia’s economy continues to be aid dependent. One is the drain of the best-educated people from government service into donor agencies or international NGOs. Secondly, these agencies have largely displaced the government in funding health, education, social welfare and rural development (Godfrey et al. 2000; World Bank 2004).

According to the Human Development Report (UNDP 2005) Cambodia is one of the world’s poorer countries, ranking 130th out of 177 on the human development index. Millions of Cambodians live extremely vulnerable, difficult lives of poverty and hardship. With a GDP per capita of US\$315 in 2003, 34.1% of the population live on less than \$1 a day, with 77.7% surviving on less than \$2 a day. Thirty-six percent of the population live below the poverty line, and 90% of the poor live in rural areas (UNIFEM et al. 2004). Based on 2003 figures (UNDP 2005) 81% of Cambodia’s 13.5 million people live in rural areas and remain subsistence farmers in a country where the rural economy is stagnant and landlessness is increasing (Biddulph 2000; World Bank 2004).

The disparity in wealth between rich and poor, and between urban and rural populations, continues to grow in a largely unregulated economy. In 1997 the poorest 20%’s share of income or consumption was 6.9% of the total as compared to the richest 20% consuming almost half (47.6%) (UNDP 2005). Life expectancy at birth is 59.8 years for women and 52.4 years for men. Infant mortality is 97 per 1,000 births and under-five mortality is 140 per 1,000 births. Thirty-eight percent of the population are under the age of fifteen years. Sixty-six percent of the population do not have sustainable access to an improved water source (UNDP 2005). For there to be just and equitable development the challenges facing Cambodia, and development practitioners, are enormous.

## **2.4 Kinship and socialisation**

The individual's sense of self and his or her relationships within and beyond the family are significant for development processes concerned with strengthening community trust and cooperation and promoting social change. This subsection looks at the centrality of the family and the socialisation of children in Cambodian society, which encourage dependency and relationships of mutuality and obligation, but are also regarded as fostering individualistic behaviour.

The family is regarded as the model for all social organisation, and as a microcosm of the broader hierarchical order (Brown 1999; Giles 2004; Ovesen et al. 1996; Pearson 2004; Santry 2005).

Within the family, kinship terminology denotes the relative status of members firstly in terms of age and then sex, of the person who is speaking and being spoken to. Kinship terminology is extensively applied to broader society to situate oneself within the social order (Brown 1999; Ovesen et al. 1996).

As in the past the family is the focus of the individual's strongest emotional bonds, loyalties and obligations, and acts as a unit of economic production where resources and income are pooled and invested for the benefit of the group (Ebihara 1968; Ovesen et al. 1996). While there are no rigid norms or obligatory rules of behaviour between family members, the cultural norm, and moral obligation, is to provide support to siblings and relatives (Ebihara 1968). In the 1960s this support included affection and respect, assistance in times of need (labour, lending and borrowing, food and shelter in times of need) and participation in life-cycle and other ceremonies (Ebihara 1968). These have been documented in recent research (Kim 2001; Krishnamurthy 1999; McAndrew 1999). In her field work in 1959-60 Ebihara noted that a remarkable feature of Khmer village life was "the lack of indigenous, traditional, organized associations, clubs, factions, or other groups that are formed on non-kin principles" (Ebihara 1968:181) which I explore in the section on community.

Some authors (Santry 2005; UNIFEM et al. 2004) attribute family breakdown and violence to the Khmer Rouge regime and its attempt to destroy the family through the enforced separation of family members, removal of children into collective care and mobile work units and giving young people and children authority over older people. Children were encouraged to spy on their parents, destroying trust even at this level (Bit 1991; Ponchaud 1989).

Education, both within the family and in the education system, traditionally teaches a duty of respect towards one's parents, acceptance and obedience, and does not encourage curiosity or self-

reflection (Giles 2004; O’Leary & Meas 2001; Ponchaud 1989). As the recipients of protection, guidance and kindness, a debt of gratitude exists between children and their parents (as in other asymmetrical relationships) which obliges giving honour and obedience in return (Mulder 1996). Cambodians are obliged to pay back those who have helped them before. *Deung kun* means to “realise one’s favour” or to recognise one’s indebtedness to another for a past kindness or service, and is a fundamental concept in relationships (Kim 2001:95 see also Hinton, 2005).

“In Cambodia, importance is given to recitation rather than to reflection and to the diploma rather than to learning” (Tith Houn cited in Martin 1994). For a young Cambodian learning means memorisation, not development of a critical sense and this is still largely true of the present education system (O’Leary & Meas 2001). Ayres (2000) explores the dichotomy between change and changelessness within the framework of the education system, suggesting that, while on the one hand education is used to promote development, change and modernity, on the other it is used to sustain traditional hierarchical political values.

Some literature suggests that socialisation leads to low autonomy and militates against the development of an independent self (Bit 1991; Mulder 1996). Mulder argues that the individual is largely socially defined and that one’s acceptance by family and friends is crucial. People find their security in conformist behaviour and seek to avoid giving offence or creating conflict so that solidarity is promoted (1996). Somewhat in tension with this are anthropologists’ observations of individualistic behaviour in some Southeast Asian cultures including the Khmer (see Ebihara 1968). One aspect of this is the emphasis on the individual rather than the collective. This has been attributed to “the Buddhist doctrine that each person accumulates her or his own tally of meritorious and sinful deeds which determines her or his fate in successive incarnations; thus everyone is ultimately responsible to and for herself alone” (Ebihara 1968:204).

The second aspect is individualism “in the sense of social tolerance for individual variations in behaviour” (Ebihara 1968:203) despite the behavioural ideal described in the Cambodian legal code, Buddhist precepts and teachings, and norms of conduct. “A lack of perfect congruence between the real behaviour and the ideal norms is commonplace in all cultures.... But Khmer village society (like the Thai) does seem to have less rigid controls and more tolerance for variation than some groups” (p.205). Recent research indicated that, while non-conformity to the cultural ideal by men was generally regarded as normal and not condemned, there was much less tolerance for women who crossed cultural boundaries (Bit 1991; Conway 1999; Giles 2004).



## 2.5 Community

Whether community exists and what it means in Cambodia are contested. Understandings about this are relevant to the conceptualisation of “community” development processes. Central to this debate is whether a sense of solidarity exists between Cambodians beyond the family unit. In 1999 a conference in Phnom Penh discussed the meaning of community in Cambodia. A review of relevant Khmer literature implicitly suggests that the notion of community is synonymous with the village, and is characterised by traditional cooperative activities of mutual assistance (Prum 1999).<sup>7</sup> Review of the English literature revealed two positions: one, community does not exist outside the nuclear family; and two, community has always existed and is centred on the *wat* (Buddhist temple). The French literature (Brown 1999) concluded that solidarity between villagers does not exist, as mutual self-help is not perceived to constitute solidarity as conceived in western terms as it is regarded as “opportunistic”. Development practitioners presenting their views at the conference, both foreigners and Cambodians, equated community to the rural village on the basis that households within a defined geographical area shared common interests and demonstrated solidarity and mutual assistance (Working Group on Social Organisation in Cambodia 1999).

Based on her observations in 1959-1960 Ebihara questioned the existence of community cohesion and solidarity as there were very few activities that involved the cooperation of the community as a whole, the community was not strongly organised and no intermediary organisations were seen to exist (1968:211). This is contested by current researchers who argue that traditional civil society structures do exist, centred around the *wat* (Aschmoneit 1996; Collins 1998; Gyallay-Pap & Hean 1996; Pellini 2004). Research in Kompong Thom province identified at least 29 kinds of traditional self-help associations (Aschmoneit 1998). The *wat* is often regarded as the most important social institution in Cambodia which brings people together through shared values (Collins 1998) and has multiple roles including education, rural development, public charity and conflict resolution (Curtis 1998). Ebihara herself concluded that “villagers do have a sense of community, and they are bound together by diverse social, economic, political, and religious ties that form a loosely knit but nonetheless true community” (1968:215).

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<sup>7</sup> Cooperative activities included the following: “Exchange of hands” is helping each other with labour in planting, harvesting, threshing of rice, constructing roads and houses. *Provas dei* is where those who have labour cooperate with those who have rice fields and the outputs gained are divided. *Provas* is also used in raising animals where one person has animals and the other raises them, either for one of the offspring or part of the sale. There are various forms of cooperative credit, non-interest borrowing, rice from festival (where rice is given to the *wat* and loaned interest-free by the monks to those who lack food who will pay the rice back after harvest) and a money loan repaid in labour. There are social welfare activities such as a rice bank, a village rescue association for emergencies, a funeral association and a school-building association (Prum 1999).

Some contemporary researchers contend that the social fabric and bonds that connected people (if they ever existed) were destroyed by the Khmer Rouge (Frings 1994; Ovesen et al. 1996; Ponchaud 1989). Some authors assert the absence or weak sense of social responsibility in Cambodia (Bit 1991; Ponchaud 1989) and attribute this to the belief that an individual has to rely on one's self in that no one can add to the merit or demerit of another (Ponchaud 1989). On the other hand Harris (1999:61) describes how Sihanouk's "Buddhist socialism" in the late 1950s and early 1960s stressed the idea of mutual help and the promotion of the well-being of the poor. These were regarded as traditional Khmer values set within Buddhist principles.

Many other researchers reject the "image of atomization" and surmise that the existing links are invisible to outsiders (Ledgerwood & Vijghen 2002:143). Kim (2001) strongly refutes the view that reciprocity no longer exists in Cambodian villages. Based on his research he concludes that the forms of reciprocity described by Ebihara (1968) in pre-war years and in the nineties by Collins (1998), McAndrew (1998), Ledgerwood and Vijghen (2002) and Krishnamurthy (1999), still survive, along with a strong sense of villagehood. These researchers all describe mutual assistance relationships that extend beyond kinship groups, as well as an array of community events such as religious festivals and ceremonies. My experience working with vulnerable older people for several years in north-western Cambodia was that neighbours and other villagers did not abandon those without family support but provided food and assistance.

What is not disputed is that trust has been weakened as a result of the conflict and trauma people have experienced, and this has impacted on people's desire to work together (Curtis 1998; Harmer 1995; Meas 1995; O'Leary & Meas 2001). Mutual assistance or reciprocity has been and is being weakened due to the influence of the cash economy and monetised relations (wage labour) which has led to increased self-interested attitudes (Curtis 2004; Kim 2001; Krishnamurthy 1999; Ovesen et al. 1996). Also noted is that "relationships of reciprocity were circumscribed by a household's capacity to make exchanges, and poorer households with limited resources were decidedly disadvantaged". This important point underscores the vulnerability and exclusion of impoverished households (McAndrew 1999:101).

If the aim of aided development is to strengthen community trust and solidarity so members will work together for the common good, it is incumbent on practitioners to understand what encourages and what obstructs Cambodians doing so. Uphoff highlights the centrality of expectations on behaviour, arguing that the assumption of individuals' selfish motivations can create a self-fulfilling prophesy, "thereby reducing the influence of collective interests and social

ideals” (1996a:327). That is, expectations of selfishness and self-interest can lead to them. The following quote reflects one Cambodian practitioner’s belief and optimism in community:

The village is like a basket that has been broken and the pieces scattered. The pieces are still there but not everyone can see them. What has been broken can be rewoven slowly and gradually, but only by those who will take the time to stay close to the village people and build trust with them. I know for certain that this can be achieved, even though it must be done slowly and carefully. Eventually the village people are the weavers themselves and they carry the task forward further, further. The basket will be better than before, but first it must be something like the same.

You cannot easily change the damage caused by the war, or caused by the systematic breaking of relationships, or the loss of dignity. You cannot easily reverse the situation, ‘lack of food’. You cannot easily change the damage done by the meetings which were held in fear, or the meetings at which the people were harangued with propaganda. The mind is paralysed by such things so the way to go forward is slowly and carefully. (Meas 1995:54)

## 2.6 Religion

It is often asserted “to be Khmer is to be Buddhist” (Ledgerwood et al. 1994:23) as Buddhism is regarded to be deeply connected to Khmer identity. More than 90% of Cambodians are Buddhist (Morris 2000). If religion is central to how people make meaning of their situation in life and their perception of the natural order, then it is important to understand how it might relate to people’s beliefs about the social order and agency. The religious worldview of Cambodians contains elements of animism, Buddhism and Hinduism or Brahmanism (Mulder 1996) and is more appropriately referred to as ‘Khmer Buddhism’.

Ebihara’s classic anthropological study of a Cambodian village in 1959-1960 indicated that “for the ordinary Khmer, Buddha and ghosts, prayers at the temple and invocations to spirits, monks and mediums are all part of what is essentially a single religious system, different aspects of which are called into play at different appropriate times” (1968:364). Recent research (Chay 2002; Chin 2000; Kim 2001; Komai 1997) indicates that this remains essentially true today, particularly in rural areas. The importance of Buddhism and a spiritual dimension to the lives of rural villagers are evidenced by the reconstruction of Buddhist temples all over Cambodia following their destruction during the Khmer Rouge period, along with people’s participation in an array of annual religious ceremonies (Chay 2002; Keyes 1994).<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Festivals currently celebrated in Cambodia include: *Visak Boche*, the anniversary of the Birth, Enlightenment and Death of the Buddha; *Jol Vossa* which marks the entrance of the monks into the rainy season retreat in the *wat*; *Ceng Vossa* (when the monks

Despite this evident resurgence of Buddhism it is posited that Buddhism is now less important, particularly for young people and urban dwellers (Brown 1999; Chin 2000; Curtis 1998; Harmer 1995; Komai 1997). Kim suggests people are now more focused on making a living (2001). Moreover, the very existence of the Khmer Rouge and the suffering they inflicted resulted in people questioning the efficacy of Buddhism and the power of the spirits (Ponchaud 1989).

Ebihara (1968:383) concluded from her research in 1959-60 that villagers' understanding of Buddhist doctrine is limited, as people could relate little about the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path.<sup>9</sup> Knowledge and understanding of Buddhist theology by the clergy now is generally low and, although they are treated deferentially, they are not as influential as previously (Ledgerwood & Vijghen 2002). This can be at least partly attributed to the prohibition of Buddhist practices by the Khmer Rouge and its curtailment in the 1980s. Also "for most Cambodians Buddhism is shallow in terms of daily ethical practice or spiritual discipline" (Morris 2000:4; see also Harmer 1995; Watts 1999).

Mulder (1996) argues that two central concepts of Buddhist teachings have influenced the Thai conception of being human — reincarnation and karma — and I believe this is also true for Cambodians. Mulder tends to ignore the central Buddhist concept of nirvana, the pursuit of which guides behaviour towards detachment, selflessness and mindfulness (P. Dharmak, personal communication, August 20, 2005). The doctrine of karma refers to the moral consequences of human acts, where every action produces a good or bad effect, merits or demerits. The status at birth of all beings is regarded as reflecting the relative amounts of merit each has inherited from previous existences (Keyes 1994).

In the Theravada Buddhist universe there is a ranked continuum of sentient beings that stretches from the lowliest earthworm up through the animal kingdom to the kings and angels and bodhisattvas, and ultimately to the Buddha himself. Each

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leave the retreat); *Katun*, a festival to give gifts (e.g. new robes) to the monks who have come out of retreat (great merit is earned by an individual or group who organises a *Katun*); *Pchum Ben* (ancestors) festival when people leave offerings at the temples for their relatives whose souls are released from the land of the dead at that time; *Mieĕ Bocie* – anniversary of the last sermon of Buddha; the *Bon Pkaa* – ceremony of flowers – festival to raise money for the *vat* – may be held at any time. The full moon sacred candle dripping festival (celebrated after the rice harvest to foretell rain patterns for the coming year); *Chrot Preah Neang Kosal* (sacred furrow) ceremony held annually in May to predict the rainfall pattern; *Tver Bon Phnom Srow* – ceremony to make a mountain of rice (late January); *Joul Chnum Thmey* or Khmer New Year in April (Ebihara 1968; Chay 2002). These are as important as annual agricultural and life cycle events as they are religious rituals (L. French personal communication, March 22, 2005).

<sup>9</sup> Four Noble Truths: (1) existence is inevitably sorrowful because of the transience of all things; (2) unhappiness is caused by the desire for such things; (3) such sorrow can be avoided by the extinction of such desire; (4) desire can be stopped by following the Eightfold Path. The Eightfold Path: right understanding, right purpose, right speech, right conduct, right vocation, right effort, right alertness and right concentration. Lay people are to observe the five precepts that forbid killing, stealing, fornication, lying and the consumption of alcohol (Ebihara 1968).

being inhabits a different position in this hierarchy of virtue according to its karma, or destiny, which is the result of all its actions, good and bad, stretching back through the history of all its past lives. We accumulate merit through our moral actions, and suffer according to our karma. If our karma is good we will be born rich and powerful, but if it is bad we will be born poor or crippled or orphaned. These are both the signs and the manifestations of our karmic status. (French 1994b:81)

While in classic Buddhism karma means action, Cambodians in general perceive karma as the bad repercussion from a bad deed. For example, if they do something bad, they believe that they will receive its negative consequences in the future or the next life (Yang 1985).

Cambodians have a fundamentally pragmatic outlook, and have traditionally accepted as karma those difficult things in their lives which they could do little to change. What was taken to be outside one's ability to control depended on one's social position ... a well-educated and wealthy businessman in Phnom Penh had a much greater sense of personal efficacy than a poor rice farmer from the provinces. But this in itself was an example of karma: wealthy people had good karma and were powerful; poor people didn't and were not. For most people karma was a sufficient explanation for this. (French 1994a:82)

As discussed further in the leadership section there is a belief that people with power have good karma and thus are good people and, in the reverse, poor people are considered responsible for their current situation (Brown 1999).

While the Theravada Buddhist doctrine teaches that the future is not fixed because meritorious conduct in the present can influence one's current destiny (French 1994a; Ratanakul 1994) some interpretations of karma suggest that a person does not have agency and cannot change their fate and so become resigned and accept their lot. Ovesen et al (1996), Bit (1991), Curtis (1998), Harmer (1995), Morris (2000), Ponchaud (1989) all attribute what they regard as Cambodians' acceptance of injustices, inequality and apathy to Buddhist doctrines such as beliefs about karma which "favour a fatalistic mentality that reinforces social injustices and the social structure itself" (Brown 1999:8).

For many ordinary Cambodians the Buddha is considered to "be a sort of god" (Ebihara 1968:384) who is supplicated with the expectation of divine favour in this world, for protection against misfortune or for success (Kim 2001; Komai 1997). At the same time the Buddhist doctrine of self-reliance exhorts people to "rely on oneself". The Buddha taught that every person must save themselves by their own efforts (Aschmoneit 1998:7), as in Buddhism there is no god who is the saviour and "no one can add to the merit or demerit of another". This doctrine is

regarded as fostering an individualistic ethic and the absence of social responsibility (Ponchaud 1989:172). Arguing from the basis of Theravada Buddhist teaching, Ratanakul (1994) concurs with the idea of individual autonomy and individual striving but rejects the notion of individualism whereby the individual is isolated from the social context. He argues that Buddhism is “not preoccupied with egoism or individual rights” but affirms the connectedness of all and the existence of the individual in social contexts and interrelationships. From this understanding “one’s worth as an individual is partially tied to the relationships one has with others. In such relationships, duties and obligations are appreciated more than individual rights” (1994:125).

The concept of merit making is that, through one’s good conduct and avoidance of sin, one accrues merit which will ensure greater freedom from suffering in this life and/or determine the status of one’s future existence (Ebihara 1968; Kim 2001). There are a variety of ways to earn merit but becoming a monk is the supreme means (Komai 1997). In Cambodian Buddhism women have a lower state of merit and occupy a lower position on the religious hierarchy than men as they cannot become monks (Ledgerwood 1990). To be born female indicates a limited amount of merit has been passed on from previous incarnations and a woman must first be reborn as a male before she can proceed along the path to enlightenment (Ebihara 1968; Ledgerwood 1990).

Another important aspect of Khmer religious understanding which can impact on development processes is belief in the spirit world. *Neak ta* are guardian or ancestral spirits perceived as having the powers to influence the weather and people’s health in a geographical area. Illness and disaster are often attributed to spirits as a consequence of proper conduct not being followed, and it is believed they can be prevented by making offerings, supplications, rituals, charms, potions etcetera (Ebihara 1968). Recent research indicates that most Cambodian villagers continue to adhere to animistic beliefs and practices (Chay 2002; Chin 2000; Harmer 1995; Kim 2001). Ovesen, Trankell and Ojendal state that the social significance of the role of these spirits is not clear, but should not be underestimated (1996). They hypothesise that it is the common belief in the *neak ta* that brings cohesion to kin groups beyond the family/household in the village. “In the absence of any major unifying principle in the village community, the attention paid to the continuous well-being and good-will of the *neak ta* constitutes a focal area of activity in communal life of the village” (Ovesen et al. 1996:72; see also Hinton 2005). Similarly Ponchaud (1989:163) states that “village solidarity was manifested in the common worship of *Neak Ta* ancestors”.

In summary, Cambodian Buddhist beliefs may influence, to varying degrees, people's understandings of the social hierarchy, the deservingness of one's circumstances and ideas about agency and individual responsibility.

## **2.7 Social organisation**

In this section I look at some of the basic patterns of Cambodian social organisation — social stratification, power and leadership, and gender relations — which are relevant to aided development processes.

### **2.7.1 Social stratification**

In general social relations are hierarchically ordered in Cambodia, where each member of society has higher or lower status than others (Ledgerwood 1990; Marston 1997; Ovesen et al. 1996; Santry 2005) and this conditions social and gender relations (UNIFEM et al. 2004).<sup>10</sup> Traditionally age was a primary determinant of hierarchical status but older people are now not automatically given respect (HelpAge International 1998). Social status is determined by a number of dimensions including age, gender, wealth, knowledge (education), reputation of the family, political position (or connections), occupation or specialisations, employment, individual character and personality and religious piety (Ebihara 1968; Ovesen et al. 1996). Wealth and power seem to be increasingly significant determinants of status that override other factors (Giles 2004).

Status is reflected in the language used to address individuals of different rank and in the different systems of vocabulary used to speak to or about royalty, Buddhist monks, ordinary people, children and animals. For example the verbs “eat” and “sleep” change with the status of the person being addressed or referenced (Ebihara 1968; Ledgerwood 1990).

To be Khmer is to be ranked in a hierarchical relationship with other Khmer, to know who is to be respected and who is to be “looked down on”. This ranking depends upon having an agreed-upon scale of how people are ranked. There are rules that tell where people fit within a system of prestige and these rules are commonly known and acted upon, as Khmer as a community make decisions about people's rankings based on these common understandings (Ledgerwood 1990:322-23).

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<sup>10</sup> Marston (1997:61) states that “the word hierarchy implies that a schema of relations marking differences in status has in some way come to be inscribed as a common reference point for the relevant public”. It includes concepts such as dependency, dominance, and patron clientism.

As previously discussed, the overall conceptual framework for the social hierarchy is attributed to Buddhism (Keyes 1994) or Hindu/Brahmanism (Bit 1991). “Khmer Buddhism and its ideas of all beings as ranked on a scale of their level of merit is a “legitimizing ideology” (Ledgerwood 1990:25). The hierarchy has a moral aspect in that the ranking of each individual in the hierarchy reflects the result of the individual’s acts and the karmic consequences of these acts, thus it is assumed that higher status indicates that individual’s greater accumulation of merit (Ledgerwood 1990; Mulder 1996). Mulder (1996) argues that a core characteristic of hierarchy is the basic inequality of people. Some researchers in Cambodia agree. “There is no notion of social equality; all beings are ranked according to their *karmic* status” and so are inherently unequal (Kim 2001:19; see also Ledgerwood 1990).

How ordinary people perceive those with power and the attitudes of powerful Cambodians toward those they perceive as below them are related to the perception of a correlation between power and merit. People who are wealthy or virtuous (the “haves”) are leaders as a result of their accumulation of merit. Likewise the poverty and powerlessness of the “have nots” reflects spiritual shortcomings or less merit (Chandler 1996). Ponchaud contends that the doctrine of karma “gives religious sanction to the vast differences between rich and poor, educated and illiterate, and specifically validates the inheritance of privileged positions across generations” (1989:173).

The acceptance and legitimacy accorded to the hierarchical order and the exercise of power results in set expectations of appropriate behaviour when people of different statuses interact. In “Learning for Transformation” (O’Leary & Meas 2001) respondents were unanimous in saying that the attitudes and behaviours of the “little” people who are lower in the hierarchy, to the “big” people or those of higher status, are to show deference and respect and they feel afraid, whereas in the reverse, the big people behave as they want and are arrogant. Respect for the social order is how a moral way of life is understood (Mulder 1996) and to behave differently and to question or challenge the status quo are perceived as misbehaving and signs of ignorance, of not knowing one’s place, and the repercussions may be disgrace or punishment. Martin contends that the primary social rule is to “be discreet, unobtrusive, keep to your station” (1994:11). Expression of one’s personal opinion, friction and confrontation are to be avoided, irrespective of the problems originating from social structure and institutional order (Mulder 1996; see also Brown 1999; Chandler 1996). These social norms can be seen as potential constraints to development practitioners and communities acting for change, and has obvious ramifications for the enactment



of development processes that emphasise empowerment of poor people or women and which value equity, justice and human rights.

This understanding and ordering of social relations begins at home and behaviours are taught by the family, school, literature (poems and folk stories) and learned from experience (Martin 1994; O’Leary & Meas 2001).<sup>11</sup> Traditionally Khmer moral training taught that it was inadmissible to protest against a parent’s decision, to criticise one’s boss or to rebel against a husband (Martin 1994).

French concurs that the majority of Cambodians “have a deep-seated sense of the hierarchical — and fundamentally karmic — nature of social relations” (1994a:96) but adds two caveats. The first is that not all people accept their place and some rebel. Curtis reports the recent emergence of a more self-assertive attitude among some villagers which is opposed to the traditional deference to authority. He attributes this to a range of possible factors including a more democratic system, a better understanding of human rights and law and order, or the result of lack of social cohesion and more self-interested attitudes. Another factor is the increasing importance of monetised relations, leading people to expect remuneration for work rather than considering mutual assistance (Curtis 1998). Erosion of this order is also attributed to years of social upheaval, disruption, war and uncertainty (P. Dhamarak, personal communication, August 20, 2005). The second caveat is that nowadays there is less clarity about where people properly belong in the social hierarchy and less agreement about what is proper behaviour. French suggests there is a struggle over what constitutes the proper basis of status and authority and the moral basis of the social hierarchy, and that this is a major source of conflict today in Cambodia (L. French, personal communication, 22 March, 2005).

Some authors refer to Cambodians resistance to change (Santry 2005; UNIFEM et al. 2004). Ovesen, Trankell and Ojendal suggest that conservatism is a “quest for order, for restoring and/or upholding the ideal society and cosmological order which is a prominent feature of Khmer culture and worldview” (1996:36). Bit (1991) also highlights the quest for order and the maintenance of traditions, and argues that Cambodians are no different from other rural societies where there is a

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<sup>11</sup> The *chhap* (normative Cambodian poems), folk stories and proverbs have been extensively quoted by academics to illustrate the beliefs and values contained in these to the contemporary life and thinking of Cambodians (Ayres 2000; Giles 2004; Ledgerwood 1990). For example, the *chhap* “served and *continue to serve* as a guide for Cambodians about what constitutes appropriate forms of behaviour between people” which maintain and legitimise the system of social relationships that keep hierarchies in place (Ayres 2000:14) my emphasis.

common conservative attitude towards cultural change and risk aversion. Many Cambodian proverbs stress the importance of retaining the status quo, observing social codes of conduct and not being innovative (Watts 1999). “Don’t avoid a winding path, and don’t [automatically] take a straight one either. Choose the path your ancestors have trod” (Chandler 1996:78). Chandler suggests that “the *chhap* contributed to the apparent inertia and repetitiveness of Cambodian life in later eras” (p.59) and illustrate values which have made Cambodians deferent. Understanding both the norms reinforcing conformity as well as the changes taking place in the social order should warn practitioners against stereotyping or regarding culture as static.

### 2.7.2 Leadership and patronage

Power relationships, including political relationships, in Cambodia, as elsewhere in Southeast Asia, exist in the form of patron-client networks (Chandler 1996; Ledgerwood & Vijghen 2002; Thion 1993). This subsection explores the patron-client social structure in Cambodian social relations. It is crucial to the understanding of how development practitioners and development interventions might be perceived in Cambodian society.

Classical patron-client models see the basis for the patron’s power — at least in part — in terms of moral authority, and on mainland Southeast Asia this is often grounded in Buddhism; see previous sections (Ledgerwood & Vijghen 2002).<sup>12</sup> “These bonds within the community are moral responsibilities and obligations rather than mere economic exchanges. Reciprocity between patrons and clients, like all forms of reciprocity within the community, are the key social bonds that create a community” (2002:115). A patron is a patron because of that individual’s possession of wealth or other characteristics of power, taken as evidence of previously accumulated merit in this or previous lives (Ledgerwood 1990). For the client to provide services to such a patron would mean that this meritorious patron would in turn redistribute his wealth because of his moral character. This does not mean that those at the top exhibit more meritorious behaviour, although in theory there is an expectation that the leader will be good and act responsibly and properly towards those under him (Chandler 1996).

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<sup>12</sup> Ebihara emphasized the moral component to village leadership in her 1959-1960 study where the most important leader in the village was the *achaa* who had no official position but a good character. Ledgerwood & Vijghen argue that while there has been a significant change over the past thirty years in the extent to which Buddhist morality influences local-level leadership (synonymous with a patron-client relationship), they “want to retain the notion that there is a moral underpinning to the unequal exchange relationships that characterized the ties of people to their local leaders” in the present-day (2002:110). Collins argues strongly that the power of morality, what he refers to as *puttea’vake*, as opposed to *aanaacake*, or the power of the state (where control over resources is more crucial than integrity and humility) still underpins leadership in certain situations (Collins 1999).

Ledgerwood and Vijghen assert that “the Khmer peasant could not exist without a “patron” as she or he needs “someone behind” (2002:111). Inequity in the distribution of the benefits of development, and the denial of access to poor and marginalised people are consequences of not having links to the “patron” (McAndrew 1999).

Groups themselves are tiny hierarchies with a superior showering benefits on his nearest inferior, who in turn relays a portion to someone standing beneath him ... The coherence of Thai society rests largely on the value of becoming a client to someone who has greater resources than one alone possesses; a person is ill advised to try to fight one’s battles independently. Security grows with affiliation and the crowning moment of happiness lies in the knowledge of dependable benefits distributed in turn to faithful inferiors. (Ledgerwood 1990:16 citing Hanks 1962)

There is a general tendency for outsiders to view patron-client relations negatively and regard them as illegitimate, ignoring the positive role they play in providing an effective social security net, metaphorically referred to as “shade” (Hinton 2005; Meas 2000). This disregards the security people find in the linkages of the social bonds of patronage (Ledgerwood & Vijghen 2002) or the valuing of dependency (Marston 1997).

Ledgerwood and Vijghen contend that the model of patron-client relationships provides a useful framework to understand local-level leadership in terms of who participates in village decision-making, how leaders control or govern those who live in the village and why people accept them (2002:113). They argue that patron-client relationships in contemporary Cambodia vary from those described elsewhere and are characterised as follows: one, that patron-client relationships and kin relationships are not mutually exclusive— if the relationships between kin are negotiated in similar ways to those of other patron-client relations; two, the ties between the patron and client are flexible and under negotiation, not permanent;<sup>13</sup> three, the patron is not necessarily as responsive to his clients regarding providing protection and benefits as outlined in the classic model; and four, as already discussed, although Buddhist values have less influence on rural leadership now than in the past, moral authority and reputation for good character remain as ideals (2002:144). The decline in the patron’s responsiveness to his clients (point three) is attributed to the fact that in the

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<sup>13</sup> The transitory and opportunistic nature of patron-client relations in post-UNTAC Cambodia has been commented on by Curtis (1998) and Downie and Kingsbury (2001).

present-day there is a greater focus on amassing personal wealth, so as resources are invested outside the village the patron is less dependent on the clients.<sup>14</sup>

As discussed earlier, a number of authors argue that the tradition of patron-client relations, authoritarianism and deference to authority which existed in the past still prevail today despite the UN sponsored democratic election in 1993 and the framework for a pluralistic political society (Chandler 1996; Curtis 1998; Downie & Kingsbury 2001). The culture of impunity in Cambodia is defined as “a set of social expectations — structured by supporting laws, customs and behaviours — that the strong can do what they will and the weak will suffer what they must” (Etcheson 2005:167). Impunity, a major obstacle to the establishment of the rule of law (Etcheson 2005), is regarded as inevitable as long as patron-clientism holds sway, along with inadequate remuneration of the judiciary (Downie & Kingsbury 2001).<sup>15</sup>

The impact of the patron-client system has ramifications for development practice, one of which is the politicised environment.

[The patron-client system], both through the effects of its functioning and the psychological categories it implies, prevents the rise of a global political consciousness. Only factions may emerge from personal loyalties. Thus not only do these alliances prevent the growth of collective organization, they imply a lack of stability that has worsened over the past few decades. (Brown 1999:12).

Political polarisation is evident in post-UNTAC Cambodia. “The concept of neutrality has been difficult for Cambodians to accept, as, politically or militarily, everyone was regarded as partisan, either “with us or against us” (Downie & Kingsbury 2001:51). This is problematic for NGOs who value neutrality.

Second, from a Western perspective where an egalitarian system is the ideal for the implementation of NGO projects, patron-client relationships are considered to be corrupt and a political system based on family networks is perceived to be nepotistic (Brown 1999).<sup>16</sup> Ledgerwood and Vijghen

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<sup>14</sup> “Political power and control traditionally has involved the accumulation of an entourage of assistants, employees, and loyal followers who provide support in exchange for various forms of protection and assistance” (French 1994a:161).

<sup>15</sup> The political conditions which reinforce and promote patron-client relations are: the persistence of marked inequalities of wealth, status and power which are afforded a certain legitimacy; the relative absence of effective impersonal guarantees such as public law for physical security, property or position; and the inability of either kinship units or traditional village community to serve as effective vehicles of personal security or advancement. To defuse such relationships the necessary conditions are: promotion of economic, social and political equality; adequate reinforcement of civil and criminal laws; creation of kinship and village solidarity (Ovesen et al. 1996:71).

<sup>16</sup> Ladbury examines the complex issue of corruption and posits two approaches. The western bureaucratic approach takes a normative and moral stance to corruption, defined as “the abuse of public position for private gain” (2003:4). Political, economic and social relations based on systems of reciprocity are regarded as corrupt. The second “political economy approach” recognises

(2002) suggest that nepotism or favouritism shown by administrative officials is not regarded as unfair or unjust by the villagers as it is expected that the clientele of the village leader will benefit when possible. They suggest that those “outside” feel that they have to belong to the clientele rather than the system is corrupt and needs to be changed. They suggest that the perspective of helping one’s group is seen as a duty and therefore to be “fair” is the “antithesis of individualism”. Vijghen refers to this phenomenon as the “Khmer fairness ideology”. “The idea of putting one’s group before the individual who is in need may be part of a Khmer or even Asian value system” (2002:128). When attempting to implement development policies which involve the distribution of resources, it is important for practitioners to be consciously aware of and engage with the different value perspectives rather than assume common understanding of what is “just”.

As in the 1960s when, under Sihanouk’s government, “development was perceived as an act of royal beneficence” this trend continues in the present time. For example, the construction of schools and health clinics throughout the country is portrayed as personal gifts from political leaders rather than what citizens have a right to from their government (Downie & Kingsbury 2001). With regard to development interventions it is important to understand how the norms of patron-clientism might influence practitioners’ behaviour, as unwittingly or unthinkingly adopting a patron’s role. At the same time, practitioners must be aware of the possibility of being perceived as patrons (Curtis 1998; O’Leary & Meas 2001; Santry 2005) and of the ramifications of this pre-conception on their role and relationships they form in the village.

Attempts by development programs to introduce participatory development into villages and bypass the existing authoritarian government structures have often failed to be transformative. These have been thwarted by former “patrons” (village chiefs or their deputies or their relatives) re-establishing their power base by taking up new power positions as committee members of development projects, or by “new elites” emerging as brokers of development aid resources who

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that what is defined as corruption changes and depends on location and identity. In some countries power is based on vertical relations, where corruption is a means of enhancing personal wealth and a means of looking after clients on whom power rests. Ladbury suggests that asymmetric power relations “explain why elites in many countries exploit government resources but also why ordinary citizens do not necessarily rise against corruption” (2003:6). She argues that it is essential to both recognise the dilemmas facing leaders in states based on patronage relations, as well as understand the incentives that must be in place for the leader/institution “to refuse to honour ‘normal’ patronage obligations ... and take a stand against corruption”. If corruption is to be addressed, the nature of power in society must be changed “so that patron client relations cease to be the main modality for political, economic and social relations” (2003:7).

favour their own family members and supporters in traditional fashion (Biddulph 1996; Collins 1999; Soontornwong 1996; Vijghen & Ly 1996).<sup>17</sup>

In Cambodia, at all levels, leadership is associated with patronage. Power and wealth are seen as twin forces and are often regarded as indicative of merit. Traditionally this understanding has fostered authoritarianism on the part of the elite, and respect and deference by ordinary people to their authority. Two important points emerge for development practice. One is the incongruity which exists between western or development theory ideals and indigenous values regarding things such as participation, dependency, the role of leaders and so on. The second is the need for practitioners to be able to anticipate how their role and interventions might be construed by those they seek to “help” and how this might “interfere” with their intent to facilitate empowerment.

### 2.7.3 Gender

Gender equality is enshrined in the 1993 constitution and Cambodia is a signatory to the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (UNIFEM et al. 2004). Statistics reveal the systematic disadvantage and subordination of women in Cambodian society. Women comprise 52% of Cambodia’s population and over one-quarter of households are female-headed and constitute a vulnerable group in the population (2004).

Gender disparities in education result from poverty and the priority given to boys’ education based on the traditional role of men as “breadwinners”, as well as reliance on girls’ labour in the home and concerns about distance from home and the lack of facilities for girls (UNIFEM et al. 2004).

Boys and girls have similar enrolment rates to age ten, but by fifteen years male enrolment is 50% greater than female. Only one in 49 girls will complete secondary education at current enrolment rates and, with an average of three years of schooling, a majority will not achieve basic literacy. At tertiary level 85% of students are male (Beaufils 2000). Overall 64% of Cambodian women are literate as compared to 76% of men (UNDP 2005).

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<sup>17</sup> Ledgerwood and Vijghen identify six contemporary sources of power of patrons and power brokers at the village level which are not mutually exclusive but together comprise the village hierarchy (2002). The power dynamics of this village hierarchy, often unperceived or not understood by practitioners, have the potential to conflict with or undermine their interventions. The sources of power are in: the political domain including administrative officials and official village leaders and commune council members; the religious domain of monks, *achar* and *yeay chi* (Buddhist lay men and nuns) leaders; skilled professionals such as health workers and teachers; traditional healers (whose power is derived from the spiritual world, although they rarely act as leaders); wealthy people who have power and can exert influence over decisions about village affairs because others (their clients) depend on them for loans or paid work; and power derived from the management or “brokerage” of resources introduced by (western) development agencies which could be utilised to maintain a “clientele”.

Maternal mortality at 440 per 100,000 live births is one of the highest in Asia (UNDP 2005), resulting from lack of birth-spacing information, supplies and services, inadequate health facilities and poor access to and utilisation of maternal health services (UNIFEM et al. 2004). HIV/AIDS poses a serious threat to human development in Cambodia with a prevalence rate of 2.6% in 2003. The high rate of infection of married women relates to definitions of masculinity and cultural and social norms which encourage men to visit sex workers and at the same time make it difficult for women to negotiate condom use with their partners (2004). The incidence of gender-based violence (trafficking, domestic violence, rape, sexual exploitation) in Cambodia is increasing, and in 2000, 23% of women reported being physically abused at home (2004).

Gender inequalities are obvious in the labour market resulting from disparities in education and what is regarded as appropriate work for women. Eighty-two percent of women participate in the labour force. Fifty-six percent of subsistence farmers are women, few of whom benefit from agricultural extension services or credit (UNIFEM et al. 2004). Fifty three percent of women are unpaid family workers as compared to 37% of men. In most major occupations men get paid 33% more than women (UNDP 2005).

“Cambodia’s Gender Empowerment Measure is among the lowest in Asia” (UNIFEM et al. 2004:11) reflecting women’s low representation in decision-making. In 1998 the political representation of women in the national assembly was ten members compared with 112 males. There were two female ministers out of a total of 28, and four female secretaries of state among a total of 50. In 2003 12% or fifteen out of the 123 elected were women. Only 8.5% of commune councillors elected in 2002 are women (2004). Women hold around 14% of all administrative and managerial positions and 33% of all professional and technical positions in Cambodia (UNDP 2005).

Research has shown that many development programs which seek to improve the well-being and status of women are ineffective (O’Leary & Meas 2001; Santry 2005). If development practitioners are to be more effective in facilitating the meaningful participation and empowerment of women, it is crucial to understand why current practices are sustained by both women and men. At the crux is the tension between cultural and traditional practices and the (assumed) universal ideal of gender equality (Santry 2005). On the one hand, practitioners are urged to respect culture and tradition and to find culturally sensitive ways to proceed. On the other are arguments that gender-based injustices cannot be accepted simply because they are grounded in tradition (Nussbaum 2000, 2003; Sen 1999). However, practices are often not regarded as unjust — simply as the way things

are, have been and should be (if Cambodian identity and culture is to flourish). To take action for the equality of women the status quo has to be “seen” as undesirable.

In the hierarchical order of Cambodian society women are considered to be lower in status than men (Beaufils 2000; UNIFEM et al. 2004). As previously discussed in the section on religion, there is the belief in Khmer Buddhism that men are ranked higher than women.

To be Khmer means to live in accordance with a certain hierarchical order of society, which can be more fully understood through an examination of the gender roles of that society. To move outside these roles is to enter the realm of chaos where, having lost what it is to be female in Khmer terms, one loses also what it is to be Khmer (Ledgerwood 1990:3)

According to the *chhap* or the Khmer moral code of conduct and to Cambodian custom, women should be demure and obedient, respectful towards their husbands and parents. They should be fulfilled by their role as mother and caring for the family. Women are respected and honoured in stories and proverbs primarily through their role as mothers (Ledgerwood 1996) and are seen as the culture-bearers of society (Watts 1999). In general terms men have more prestige, but in practice all people are ranked at different levels.

Ledgerwood (1990) questions how studies of Cambodia posit men and women as “relatively equal” given the biases toward males inherent in Buddhism and clear male domination in the political arena. She concludes that “relative equality” results from the complementarity of the power that men and women have. Whereas women are dependent on men, they serve and feed them and bow before them, a man is also nourished and protected by his wife. Through her activities and behaviour a woman influences her own ranking in society but she can also affect the status of the males with whom she is connected (husbands, fathers, sons). They are dependent on her virtuous behaviour to maintain their reputation and well-being (1990).

A woman’s status in society is based upon her fulfilment of cultural ideals and moral codes of conduct, and this depends on the woman’s attitudes and behaviours in comportment, activities and her sexuality (Ledgerwood 1990). While men are judged by observing whether they have spiritual and political power and how they use it, women are evaluated according to their virtuousness. The successful Khmer woman who is valued by Khmer society is referred to as virtuous, not strong or powerful (1990). The proverb “men are gold, women are cloth” illustrates the dichotomy in attitudes toward men and women. Gold can be cleaned and it does not lose its value, whereas cloth, which has less value to begin with, once muddied cannot be truly cleaned. “Therefore a



woman cannot overstep the margins of virtuous behaviour while men who step outside are less harshly judged” (Giles 2004:79).

Giles’ research in 2004 indicated that the normal or commonplace behaviour of men is significantly different from the ideal behaviour presented in cultural texts such as the *chbaps*.<sup>18</sup> Inconsistency between what men say and do is tolerated because what is generally perceived as normal for men is aggression, to get angry easily, to need to win, to be violent toward their wives, to use fear to generate respect, to need/have sex with many women, to go where they want and to do what they want and to make decisions on their own, all of which seem contrary to the cultural ideal. In the cultural ideal a man should be faithful to his wife but this is not defined as “normal” behaviour. Having multiple sexual partners is generally accepted and seen as an indicator of masculinity, as there is a belief men have a strong sexual desire which must be satisfied.

It is obvious that gender relations are changing as a result of economic, social and political developments (UNIFEM et al. 2004). Women are now engaged in a range of occupations and their economic productivity is increasingly important for the household. Despite these changes, women are still judged more harshly than men when their behaviour is seen not to conform to traditional mores. Although men espouse a positive attitude toward equality, in general men expect traditional norms from women (Giles 2004). There are many conflicting ideals placed on women. For example, they are expected to be industrious and powerful in the marketplace but to defer to husbands in the public arena (Watts 1999:18, citing Ledgerwood 1992). Similarly, women are to be capable managers of the family yet have to submit to their husbands.

## 2.8 Summary

This chapter has explored aspects of Cambodian social and cultural life and their engagement with and response to key political and economic events/processes such as the devastation of the Pol Pot regime and 30 years of war and violence; the limited democratic reforms and the virtual re-assertion of one-party political control in the decade since the first multi-party elections in 1993; and the economic transformation to an unregulated free-market economy.

The Cambodian social context is evolving, dynamic and complex. There are social norms and practices in relationships within and beyond the family, between leaders and ordinary citizens, and between women and men. The literature indicates that, although these are in flux, the

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<sup>18</sup> Giles (2004) found evidence that the values underlying these dictates or *chbaps* were an inherent aspect of the consciousness of the project participants and a factor underlying many of their expressed attitudes and beliefs, even though their behaviour and justification for their behaviour were inconsistent with these.

underpinning values and beliefs are important in shaping how people construe their world and their role in it. These values and practices are often at odds with the purpose of development interventions and what development practitioners consider desirable such as gender equality, the empowerment of disadvantaged people and participatory, democratic decision-making processes.

In the following literature review chapter I investigate the values construct, and explore the values which underpin the international development discourse and development NGOs.

## **CHAPTER 3 LITERATURE REVIEW**

The literature review covers three topics: The theoretical conceptualisation of values and empirical research into the dimensions or types of values (3.1); development theories and concepts and the assumptions and values that underpin them (3.2); and NGOs as value-based organisations (3.3). The previous chapter explored the values embedded in and expressed through the social organisation, religious, cultural, political and economic practices and ideologies in Cambodia. In this chapter I look at the research on values across cultures which establishes both the centrality of values in people's lives and the relevance of values to development practice. It brings together the concept of values as influencing people's choices and their ways of being in different cultures; the different theoretical considerations of development and people's evaluations of what is necessary for a good life; and the values espoused by NGOs which are the organisational base that development practitioners are operating from in my research. This literature situates and informs my question of how values influence practice, as well as the conceptual framework and methodology to investigate it.

### **3.1 Values**

#### **3.1.1 Introduction**

My thesis is situated within the field of development studies where there has been little empirical research on the topic of values and development practice. This is despite development's intrinsic engagement with questions of value (Gasper 2004). The study of values is central to philosophy, anthropology, sociology and psychology (Braithwaite & Scott 1991), as well as political science and economics (Hofstede 1998) and social work (Banks 2001; Gray 1995; Reamer 1999; Shardlow 2002). Both social work and development practice are integrally concerned with people and change processes. Whereas throughout its history social work has consistently been concerned with values and regarded them as a key element in professional practice, along with knowledge and skills, development practice has tended to largely disregard values.

An understanding of the role of values in explaining attitudes and behaviour at both the individual and the cultural level of analysis in terms of the functioning of organisations, institutions and societies is crucial for my thesis. Extensive research has established that people's general value priorities determine their attitudes towards more specific issues and, in turn, attitudes guide their behaviour (Ball-Rokeach & Loges 1994; Kristiansen & Hotte 1996; Kristiansen & Zanna 1994;

Rokeach 1973). Schwartz and Bardi (2001) cite numerous studies from a wide range of countries that have established meaningful relations between value priorities and actual behaviour.

The purpose of this section is firstly to review the values construct. This is followed by a review of empirical research into the content or dimensions of values at the individual and cultural levels, including methodological issues in studying values. I focus on cross-cultural research and the value priorities associated with cultural variation or behavioural differences in different cultures. I look briefly at empirical research which establishes a correlation between values/attitudes and behaviour, and at the literature on cognitive dissonance and cognitive tolerance. The last area of theoretical research is development ethics and values, where I concentrate on aspects most relevant to ethical development practice.

### 3.1.2 Definition of values

Rokeach is credited with achieving conceptual clarity of the values construct in the 1970s by devising a model of the belief system in which values, beliefs and attitudes were clearly differentiated (Braithwaite & Law 1985; Braithwaite & Scott 1991; Smith & Schwartz 1997).

Perhaps the most commonly cited definition of a value is that of Rokeach:

[A value is] an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end state of existence. Sets of values formed value systems, defined as 'enduring organization[s] of beliefs concerning preferable modes of conduct or end-states of existence along a continuum of importance. (1973:5)

Schwartz, whose work extends that of Rokeach, defines values as “desirable trans-situational goals, varying in importance, that serve as guiding principles in peoples’ lives” (Schwartz et al. 2001:519). Reamer’s definition is: “generalised, emotionally charged conceptions of what is desirable; historically created and derived from experience; shared by a population or a group within it; and provide the means for organising and structuring patterns of behaviour” (1999:10).

Values are constructs, in that they exist through definition only and not in an absolute sense. A person’s values cannot be directly observed but must be inferred from what she or he says or does (Hofstede 1998; Rokeach 1972). Hofstede (2001) contends that, as a child’s values are learned early in life as responses to her or his environment, they are non-rational. Five features are typically present in theorists’ definitions of values (Schwartz 1994; Smith & Schwartz 1997). One, values have three components: a rational or cognitive component which can be expressed as a statement articulating a person’s belief about what is good or bad; an emotional component that is capable of

arousing affect of varying intensity; and a behavioral or volitional component that disposes a person to act in certain ways (Braithwaite & Scott 1991; Hill 1991; Kluckhohn 1962; Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck 1961; Rokeach 1972).

Two, the value domain comprises a specific class of enduring beliefs defined in terms of what is desirable, either as goals or end states of existence (sometimes called “terminal” values such as security, happiness, freedom, equality), or ways of behaving (that is, “instrumental” values such as with sincerity, justice, reason compassion, humility) which promote these goals (Rokeach 1972:124). Kluckhohn defined what is “desirable” as what one ought to do, and the “desired” as what one wants to do (1962).<sup>19</sup> The usefulness of the terminal/instrumental distinction between values (Rokeach 1972) has been contested. For example, any terminal value may be instrumental to the pursuit of other values, and all types of motivational concerns can be expressed in both terminal and instrumental terms. Schwartz (1992, 1994) found no evidence for the distinction in the structure of values in his empirical work.

Three, values are abstract ideals that transcend specific objects or situations. Rokeach differentiates attitudes and values by the types of beliefs composing them, and it is this abstractness or generality that primarily distinguishes values from attitudes (Feather 1994; Schwartz 1992). Values are more central and are determinants of attitudes, which are comprised of interrelated beliefs focused on a specific object or situation (Braithwaite & Scott 1991). According to Rokeach’s theory an adult typically holds many attitudes, while values are said to be few in number (Feather 1994).

Four, once a value is internalised it becomes a conscious or unconscious standard which guides the choice and evaluation of behaviour, people and events (Rokeach 1972). Personal values are the goals and modes of conduct that individuals aim for in their personal lives which frame individual decision-making (Braithwaite & Blamey 1998).

Five, values are hierarchically ordered in value systems, according to their relative importance to each other. Values are assumed to be relatively stable, but not static across the life span (Feather 1994:130). However, this view of the value system as a stable, ordered set of values which transcend situations is contested. A commonly held view is that values systems are not static and rule-bound but dynamic and are reordered to meet the demands of new situations (Seligman &

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<sup>19</sup> Hofstede (1998) distinguishes between values as the desired – that is, what people actually desire, versus values as the desirable – which is what they think they ought to desire. The desired refers to the actual values held by the majority in the collectivity, and relate to pragmatic issues. The desirable refer to what is ethically right and is ideological. Throughout the thesis I use values in the sense of the desirable as explained in the text.

Katz 1996). Individuals reorder their value priorities according to the specific context. Values may be viewed as an integrated system, where attitudes and behaviours are guided by tradeoffs among relevant competing values (Schwartz 1996).

People hold beliefs about many things, and regard some beliefs or values as more fundamental than others. People tend to make choices which are consistent with their value systems (Hill 1991). Values are systematically organised into what is referred to as a “world view” which represents an individual’s personal response to the world (p.5).<sup>20</sup> “Cultures and individuals can be characterised by their systems of value priorities” (Smith & Schwartz 1997:80). These defining features do not provide any information about the substantive content of values, that is, the different types of values or the structure of relations among different types of values (Schwartz 1994) which is addressed in the following sections.

Rokeach also postulated strong ties between an individual’s self-esteem and values. Values are central to the self and serve to maintain and enhance the self-concept (Braithwaite & Scott 1991; Mayton et al. 1994). As values are the standards by which individuals judge and justify their behaviour as moral or competent, behaviour and beliefs which are consistent with their value systems will maintain and enhance self-esteem (Ball-Rokeach & Loges 1994; Seligman & Katz 1996). The cross-cultural validity of these assertions is discussed later in this section.

Values, as abstract principles such as equality and human dignity, apply at both the micro or individual level, and at the macro or societal, institutional or cultural level in terms of what the individual or collective considers preferable (Braithwaite & Blamey 1998; Hofstede 1998; Mayton et al. 1994; Smith & Schwartz 1997). At the level of collective entities and cultural practices, “values represent shared understandings that give meaning, order and integration to social living” (Braithwaite & Blamey 1998:2). Social goals are separate from personal goals through being directed toward the nature of society rather than the behaviour of the individual (Braithwaite & Scott 1991). They are the goals that individuals would like their society to achieve, such as “a world at peace” (p.4).

In this subsection I have described how values are defined, and established that the beliefs an individual holds about what is desirable influence the way they live their lives, regardless of whether these are consciously or unconsciously held. An individual holds competing values and

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<sup>20</sup> Hoksbergen (1986:295) contends that one’s worldview comprises a “set of empirically unverifiable statements ... about the nature of the world and about the nature and purpose of life” which are accepted on faith and simply to be believed.

the priority accorded to one value relative to another is dynamic and dependent on the specific situation.

### 3.1.3 Values research methodology

The purpose of this subsection is to situate my thesis within the current study of values. The lack of clarity and consistency in how the term values is used and difficulties in researching values have been noted by a number of authors (Banks 2001; Braithwaite & Blamey 1998; Braithwaite & Scott 1991; Hechter 1993; Roe & Ester 1999; Schwartz 1996; Smith & Schwartz 1997). Typically the methodology used by contemporary cross-cultural researchers to investigate the content of values and variation between individuals and cultures is a questionnaire or values survey instrument which presents a number of values as single words, phrases or paragraphs describing a goal orientation and asks respondents to rate (and/or rank) the values to differentiate the strength of the response (Braithwaite & Scott 1991; Smith & Schwartz 1997).

A key challenge with this research approach is in obtaining meaning equivalence when value constructs are transported across cultures (Braithwaite & Scott 1991; Hofstede 1980). Another issue with using questionnaires is that the researcher determines the value domain. With regard to developing the content of values, the criteria for item selection is crucial. At the methodological level Rokeach's work was criticised for the arbitrary and subjective choice of item sampling, as was Hofstede's influential study for imposing an instrument formulated in the USA on other cultures (Smith & Schwartz 1997). Deriving the item sample can be done empirically through consulting the participant population about what they value (Braithwaite & Law 1985) or by basing it on what the researchers perceive to be problems encountered in all cultures (Schwartz 1992).<sup>21</sup> For my research I deemed it inappropriate to pre-determine the value set as my interest was to explore the range of values which emerged in discussions. Another issue is that the measurement of values has not been consistent with the notion of values as the "desirable" but as for example, personal influences and preferences (Braithwaite & Scott 1991:662).

Values have been researched across cultures, particularly in anthropology, through inferring values indirectly by observing behaviour, through discussion of specific topics or from cultural products such as literature (Berry et al. 1992). This approach is premised on the understanding that people may not be able to articulate abstractly defined systems of values. The danger is that the

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<sup>21</sup> There is widespread agreement among cross-cultural social psychologists that some basic universal principles exist in the domains of social behaviour. This is based on the assumption that "many (perhaps most) kinds of social behaviours get done in all cultures, but that they get done in very different ways, depending on local cultural circumstances" (Berry et al 1992).

researcher's interpretations may influence the inferences made, or misinterpretations may occur (Smith & Schwartz 1997).

Although the literature provides some support for the assumption that values explain behaviour, the usefulness of values as a predictor of behaviour is limited (Braithwaite & Blamey 1998; Hechter 1993; Roe & Ester 1999; Smith & Schwartz 1997). This is regarded to partly result from inadequate research methods, a lack of understanding of how relations between compatible and opposing values interact with other variables such as needs and the environment, and how different individuals resolve such conflicts with regard to achieving value-behaviour consistency (Braithwaite & Blamey 1998; Braithwaite & Scott 1991; Schwartz 1996; Smith et al. 2002). Braithwaite and Blamey (1998:11) suggest that factors which are specific to the context have greater explanatory value of specific human behaviours. However, in order to understand macro-level processes from principles operating at the micro-level, it is the abstract nature of values which provides the bridge between unlike units of analysis.

Research into values as abstract ideals which is not linked to a specific context can provide “indirect indicators or the cultural values that prevail across many contexts to which people are exposed in their life within a society” (Smith et al. 2002:189). But behaviours always take place within a specific context and the context is relevant to the meaning which the individual gives to her or his behaviour. “The contextualised quality of behaviours poses problems for anyone who wants to draw practical implications from characteristics of cultures in terms of values. To see why particular behaviours prevail in a particular culture, we need to understand better how generalised values are linked to specific actions” (Smith et al. 2002:189). Smith and Schwartz (1997:80) contend empirical evidence increasingly suggests that “analyses of the multiple, competing value priorities relevant in a situation can reveal consistent relations of individual's values to their attitudes ... and behaviour”. Using priorities for value types rather than for single values permits consistent, theory-based prediction of behaviour (Schwartz 1996).

### **3.1.4 Value dimensions or value types**

In this section I review the literature on individual- and culture-level values and the implications of this research for development practice. Values research at the individual level examines the relation between individual differences in value priorities and other attributes such as age, education, gender and occupational status. It is assumed that attitudes and behaviour are not guided by single values but reflect compatibility or tradeoffs among competing values (Smith & Schwartz 1997).



Research into the culture-level dimensions presupposes that there is something that can be compared between cultures (Hofstede 2001) which can be understood by aggregating the value priorities of societal members (Braithwaite & Scott 1991; Hofstede 1998; Smith & Schwartz 1997). In societal institutions, the dominant cultural values are expressed by their goals and modes of operation (Smith & Schwartz 1997). Relationships among different value priorities at the cultural level may differ from those at the individual level. For example, while authority and humility appear incompatible at the individual level, they may be compatible at the cultural level “if people accept authority as a desirable basis for organizing human relations and humility the appropriate response toward those with greater authority” (Smith & Schwartz 1997:83). Value dimensions provide an insight into people’s motivations and are relevant to understanding people’s receptivity to development interventions.

#### *Individual-level values*

At the individual level values are regarded as “cultural products” in that the desirability of a particular value is acquired through socialisation to dominant group values (Braithwaite & Blamey 1998:4) and through the unique learning experiences of individuals (Schwartz 1994). Numerous studies conducted at the individual level have established that individuals’ values relate to their attitudes and behaviour, and variation in individual values is systematically related to differences in individual behaviour (Mayton et al. 1994; Schwartz 1992; Schwartz & Bardi 2001; Seligman & Katz 1996). Rokeach’s seminal work used the Rokeach Values Survey to assess the relative importance of 18 terminal values/goals in life and 18 instrumental values/modes of conduct as guiding principles in life.<sup>22</sup> Rokeach reported ranking differences within the USA according to race, age and education.

The Rokeach Values Survey has been used extensively by researchers worldwide to relate specific values to a range of social and political attitudes and behaviours including racial and ethnic discrimination, political ideology, political reasoning and political activism, voting behaviour, beliefs about justice and justice related behaviour (Braithwaite 1994; Braithwaite & Law 1985; Braithwaite & Scott 1991; Feather 1994; Mayton et al. 1994; Schwartz 1996; Smith & Schwartz 1997). Feather (1994) postulates that values play a role in individuals’ moral judgements, their belief in a just world and their ideas about distributive justice. For example, subjects who believe in

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<sup>22</sup> Terminal values: a comfortable life; an exciting life; a sense of accomplishment; a world at peace; a world of beauty; equality; family security; freedom; happiness; inner harmony; mature love; national security; pleasure; salvation; self-respect; social recognition; true friendship; wisdom. Instrumental values: ambitious; broadminded; capable; cheerful; clean; courageous; forgiving; helpful; honest; imaginative; independent; intellectual; logical; loving; obedient; polite; responsible; self-contained (Rokeach 1973).

a just world, that is, a world in which people get what they deserve, are positively related to conservative social attitudes, the protestant ethic, deference to authority and conformity to the rules.

Feather investigated the relation between value priorities and distributive justice, and how rewards are allocated in groups according to either: equity or proportionality considerations (allocation in accordance with member inputs or contributions); equality (equal distribution of rewards); or individual need. He found that “what is judged to be fair also depends on aspects of the situation and the characteristics of the person” (1994:136). Research on individualism and collectivism (discussed later in this section) found that in individualist cultures equity rather than equality or need is the norm for distribution of resources, whereas in collectivist cultures equality is used more than equity (Berry et al. 1992). These normative values impact on development practice regarding the desirable method for distribution of resources.

A qualitative study aiming to understand the relationship between values and behaviours argued that quantitative approaches would not provide the desired insights into the personal values or aspirations Australians hold and how these relate to their aspirations for Australian society and their civic behaviour, or the role of the individual in achieving social ideals (Flowers 2002). Values were deliberately not defined in the research so that participants’ views could be understood “rather than imposing a benchmark” (p.4). Researchers observed that participants interpreted values differently. Values were mostly inferred from the discussion rather than voiced by the participants “for the simple reason that they had not reflected on their values to make an articulate summary” (p.4). Braithwaite and Laws likewise found that Australian subjects were not experienced in verbalising their values, and concluded that “values were very much taken-for-granted phenomena” (1985:253). These findings influenced my research methodology and design.

Flowers (2002) found that participants did not make a connection between achievement of personal aspirations, and achievement of their aspirations for society. A major barrier to civic action is that people control their emotions or reactions to social issues so they can maintain a comfortable and self-focused life. People tend to “resolve their reaction to the problem, rather than the problem itself — waiting for the advertisement to finish or the moment to pass, or allowing themselves to be distracted” (p.8). Participants managed their discomfort by managing their reaction to situations, which implies that comfort was a higher priority than engaging in social action according to, for example, values of social justice. This finding is also relevant to the ideal of

people's participation in community development and action for social change which is explored in section 3.2.

Schwartz developed a systematic theory of basic human values which conceptualises the content and organisation of individuals' value systems. He postulated that values are distinguished by the motivational goal they express, and accordingly grouped single values into ten value types (Schwartz & Bardi 2001). These value types, which he contends are universal, were derived from the analysis of three universal requirements of human existence: to satisfy biological needs; to achieve coordinated social action; and to meet the demands of group survival and smooth functioning (Schwartz 1996; Smith & Schwartz 1997). These constructs have been empirically validated across 44 countries (Schwartz 1994; Smith & Schwartz 1997).<sup>23</sup> Schwartz developed a theory of dynamic relationships among these value types, which assumes that "actions taken in pursuit of each type of value have psychological, practical and social consequences that may conflict or may be compatible with the pursuit of other value types" (Schwartz 1996:4). For example, the values of benevolence and universalism are congruent as both involve concern for the enhancement of others and transcend self-interest; however, pursuit of these values may conflict with pursuit of achievement values which are self-centred (Schwartz 1996:4).

Schwartz conceptualised that values are clustered into two bipolar dimensions: "openness to change" versus "conservatism" and "self-transcendence" versus "self-enhancement" (Schwartz 1996:5). The "self-enhancement versus self-transcendence" dimension reflects a conflict between values that motivate people to pursue their own relative success and dominance over others versus values which motivate people to transcend selfish interests, accept others as equals and be concerned with others' enhancement (Schwartz 1996; Smith & Schwartz 1997). Value priorities have been shown to have "systematic, meaningful, and predictable relations" with numerous attitudes (religiosity, political orientation), personality traits (interpersonal behaviour) and behaviours (choice of study major, alcohol use). Values priorities are affected by individual

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<sup>23</sup> Following is the list of the ten motivational types of values, defined in terms of their goals (Schwartz & Bardi 2001): Self-direction — independent thought and action, choosing, creating, exploring; Stimulation — excitement, novelty and challenge in life; Hedonism — pleasure or sensuous gratification of oneself; Achievement — personal success, competence according to social standards; Power — attainment of social status and prestige and control/dominance over people/resources; Security — safety, harmony, and stability of society, of relationships and of self; Conformity — restraint of actions, inclinations and impulses likely to upset or harm others and violate social expectations or norms; Tradition — respect, commitment, and acceptance of the customs and ideas that one's culture or religion impose on the individual; Benevolence — concern for the welfare of close others, preservation and enhancement of the welfare of close others; Universalism — understanding, appreciation, tolerance and protection for the welfare of all people and for nature.

personality and life experiences (Hofstede 1998) and background variables such as age<sup>24</sup> and gender (Hofstede 1998; Schwartz et al. 2001; Smith & Schwartz 1997).<sup>25</sup>

Braithwaite's analysis of 18 social goals (that is, abstract beliefs about a good society and the goals towards which we as a society should be striving) identified two dimensions in the social domain, "international harmony and equality" and "national strength and order" (Braithwaite & Blamey 1998). The findings indicate that the social values system is linked to the personal value system in a highly coherent way. For example, people who value personal growth and inner harmony are likely to endorse international harmony and equality and have a low regard for national strength and order. Conversely, those who value social standing and achievement are likely to pursue national strength and order and disregard international harmony and equality (Braithwaite & Blamey 1998). The international harmony and equality and national strength and order value orientations have been empirically shown to explain social attitudes, political activism and political behaviour.

Braithwaite claims that social attitudes and political behaviour result from the relative dominance of one value orientation over the other, rather than in the "absolute strength of either value orientation" (Braithwaite 1994:68). That is, all groups may believe the same goals are desirable for society but differ in the priority they believe should be attached to those goals (Braithwaite & Blamey 1998). Even those values types which are incongruent are independent of each other, signifying the importance of circumstance in determining the prioritisation of particular values at a given time. Similarly, Dembour argues against the notion of the absolute strength of a dominant principle. She contends that where hierarchy is the dominant principle movements toward equality are also embraced, whereas when equality is the dominant principle hierarchical tendencies and practices are also present (Dembour 2001). Uphoff's "both and" concept of synthesis posits that neither extreme in a dualistic or polarised scheme should be fully accepted or rejected as they are held with different intensity and prioritised according to the situation (1996a:318). This thinking cautions against stereotyping people as adhering to one value dimension or its opposite, but instead taking up positions according to their perceptions of the circumstances.

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<sup>24</sup> The value hierarchy may be modified by the characteristics of the sample. For example, age correlates most positively with conservatism (tradition, conformity, security) and most negatively with openness to change (self-direction, stimulation) (Schwartz et al. 2001).

<sup>25</sup> Schwartz initially postulated eleven motivational types of values. The eleventh, referred to as "spirituality values", was concerned with the goal of finding meaning in life. Schwartz debated whether the question of ultimate meaning is a basic human need/requirement and if spirituality values constituted a universal value type (Schwartz 1992:10-11). As the spirituality type was not sustained by the findings, he concluded that spirituality may not exist as a motivational goal for all people or that, as different spiritual forms are pursued by eastern and western religions and philosophies, there may be no particular set of universally distinct spirituality values.

### *Culture-level dimensions of values*

Cross-cultural research on values is relevant to my thesis as the results establish a relation between differences in value priorities in societies and the cultural variation between them. This is pertinent to understanding the difference in the world views of northern donors, northern NGOs and expatriate staff and those of Cambodian NGOs and Cambodian practitioners. Most current models of cultural variation (such as collectivism and individualism) are based upon analysis of value differences. In this literature I found no studies which looked at Cambodia specifically, and only one that included one of Cambodia's immediate neighbours. In these models, the value priorities prevailing in a society "are a key element, perhaps the most central, in its culture, and the value priorities of individuals represent central goals that relate to all aspects of behaviour" (Smith & Schwartz 1997:79). At the same time, this does not mean that attitudes and behaviour are solely determined by values. Daily experiences in the changing ecological (physical environment, climate, resources) and socio-political contexts affects values and behaviour (Smith & Schwartz 1997).

While most of the literature has focused on how, when and for whom values and attitudes instigate behaviour, the reverse is recognised. That is, attitudes and values are just as likely to derive from behaviour (Smith & Mackie 2000; Sweeting 1990). Uphoff argues that behaviour is influenced by the interaction between external structural influences and normative internal factors. That is, norms respond to situations as well as situations being structured by persons who are value driven, and that "what matters is not which values one has — we all have many — but which values are activated and applied in a given situation" (1996:337).

Hofstede's (1980) "Culture's consequences: International differences in work related values", a landmark study in values,<sup>26</sup> initially identified four value dimensions of national cultures as the explanation for the consistent differences between national groups in the way they solve the common basic problems of all societies. These dilemmas are: human inequality; togetherness; gender roles; and dealing with uncertainty. I focus here on the first two issues. The first dimension, concerned with how society deals with the desirability or undesirability of human inequality and dependence versus independence in society, is referred to as "power distance".<sup>27</sup> It is defined as

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<sup>26</sup> Hofstede's initial survey of people's expectations of management, leadership and organisational life was conducted with the subsidiaries of a large international corporation, IBM. It was carried out in 1968 and again in 1972 with employees in 72 countries, resulting in some 116,000 questionnaires (1980). The respondents were matched by occupation, age and gender. Hofstede (2001) analyses an extensive array of research which has been carried out on each of these dimensions since "Culture's consequences" was published in 1980.

<sup>27</sup> Power Distance Index (between subordinates and managers) was based on respondents' perceptions of: subordinate's fear to disagree with superiors; superior's actual style of decision-making; and the type of decision-making style subordinates prefer in their managers (Hofstede 2001:85).

the extent to which less powerful members of organisations and institutions accept and expect that power is distributed unequally.<sup>28</sup> Cultures with high power distances experience a high degree of inequality between those who are more and less powerful. Hofstede contends that hierarchies exist in both societal types but their meaning differs in view of the basic values with regard to inequality (2001:97). An analysis of political systems, religious life and philosophical and ideological thinking in various countries shows differences which are interpreted as consequences of power distance norm differences, but which feed back into the norm and support it (Hofstede 1980).

In high power distance societies, societal norms are such that a few should be independent and most should be dependent and there should be an order of inequality in the world in which everyone has his/her rightful place. Hierarchy means existential inequality which is viewed as the basis of societal order, by which both high and low are protected; superiors are seen as superior persons and subordinates are seen as a different kind. Power is a basic fact of society and its legitimacy is irrelevant. Power holders are entitled to privileges, do not need to obey the same rules, and “are expected to use their power to increase their wealth” (Hofstede 2001:111). In high power distance societies, power, wealth and social status and rights go together (Hofstede 1980). In low power distance societies, societal norms are the opposite of those above. For example, subordinates regard superiors to be people like themselves, and the use of power should be legitimate and is subject to judgement. All individuals should have equal rights. Patterns of inequality between groups in society are supported by both dominant and subordinate values systems. Authority only exists where it is matched by obedience (Hofstede 1980).

According to the description of hierarchy and leadership in chapter 2 I would argue that Cambodia has a high power distance norm, as in other Southeast Asian countries (Hofstede 2001). In organisations the consequences of high power distance differences is associated with the “concentration of authority” (Hofstede 1980) where leaders are dominant, subordinates expect to be told and gaps in power are accepted (Fowler 1997). This norm, reflected in the hierarchical structures of (Cambodian) NGOs, is a powerful challenge to espoused values of participation and empowerment. The existence of high power distance norms in many cultures indicates that attributing, for example, deference to authority to any single factor such as trauma is simplistic, as a number of factors interact and reinforce certain norms.

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<sup>28</sup> Inequality exists in societies as: “physical and mental characteristics ...; social status and prestige; wealth; power; laws, rights, and rules” (Hofstede 2001:80).

Hofstede suggests that people's values concerning power distance, as with the other value dimensions, are acquired early in life through socialisation by the family, the school and the other institutions of society, and are very difficult to change (2001:100). In high power distance societies children are socialised to hard work and obedience, independence is not encouraged and respect for parents and elders is regarded as a basic virtue. Hofstede states that the pattern of dependence on one's elders creates "a strong *need* for such dependence" (Hofstede 2001:99, emphasis in the original). This resonates with literature on Cambodia which suggests that dependence is valued (Marston 1997). In high power distance societies, the parent-child inequality is replicated by the teacher who is treated with respect and deferred to. The teacher-centred education system in Cambodia mirrors Hofstede's description for high power distance societies (O'Leary & Meas 2001).

A second dimension, individualism versus collectivism, relates to the ties between individuals and the degree to which individuals are self-reliant or remain integrated into groups, usually around the family.

*Individualism* pertains to societies in which the ties between individuals are loose: everyone is expected to look after himself or herself and his or her immediate family. *Collectivism* as its opposite pertains to societies in which people from birth onwards are integrated into strong, cohesive ingroups, which throughout people's lifetime continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty. (Hofstede 1994:51, emphasis in the original)

Studies on this dimension have been numerous and widespread in the fields of sociology, anthropology, psychology, communication and organisational behaviour (Hofstede 2001; Kim et al. 1994; Triandis 1988).<sup>29</sup>

A major theme concerns the individual's development of his or her self-concept. "Our cognition, emotion, and motivation all differ depending on whether our culture has provided us with an independent or an interdependent 'self-construct'" (Hofstede 2001:210). In collectivist societies "children learn to think of themselves as part of a 'we'-group or in group, a relationship that is not voluntary but predetermined by birth" (p.225). The self is construed as an interdependent part of this group and is motivated by social expectations, that is, the views, needs, goals and norms of the in-group (Hofstede 2001; Kim et al. 1994; Smith & Schwartz 1997). Internal attributes are not seen as central to the self and are less relevant to a person's identity, which lies more within the

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<sup>29</sup> As empirically derived by Hofstede individualism/collectivism is a culture-level concept, not an attribute of individuals. Many researchers have, however, used this concept at the individual level to look at individual differences in relation to acceptance of values, norms, and attitudes associated with individualism or collectivism (Smith & Schwartz 1997).

individual's roles, positions and relationships. In this case, behaviour is perceived to be more a function of situational demands and the obligations and responsibilities conferred by the individual's roles and statuses. Consequently, behaviour is not typically viewed as an accurate reflection of the individual's thoughts and attitudes (Heine & Lehman 1997). Triandis states that in collectivist cultures the perception of the other's social behaviour is controlled by the context of the behaviour, that is, "*who* does it (ascribed attributes)" is key, whereas in individualist cultures it is the behaviour itself that controls perception, that is, "*what was done* (achieved attributes)" (1988:290, emphasis in the original).

In contrast, individualistic societies emphasise "I" consciousness, where the self is construed as an independent entity, defined primarily by the individual's internal attributes such as the individual's attitudes and opinions. The "I" is motivated by personal standards (Hofstede 2001). Behaviour is seen to be under the control of the individual, arising from his or her own internal thoughts and feelings and judgments, and so behaviour is perceived to be indicative of the self (Heine & Lehman 1997; Kristiansen & Hotte 1996). Because the self is viewed differently in different cultures, it is postulated that the experience of dissonance (that is, discomfort resulting from inconsistencies between one's attitudes and behaviour) is culturally based (Smith & Mackie 2000). In collectivist cultures where the self and meaning are construed by reference to the thoughts, feelings and actions of others, inconsistencies between one's attitudes and behaviour are likely to be less important to an individual's self-identity than in individualistic cultures. In the latter, as identity depends on one's internal attributes, dissonance that is experienced involving these attributes is likely to be a threat to one's self-integrity (Kristiansen & Hotte 1996). It is postulated that, as a consequence, individuals with an interdependent sense of self in East and Southeast Asian countries would place less value on "cognitive consistency" and demonstrate less dissonance reduction than independent individuals (Heine & Lehman 1997).

The UN Declaration of Human Rights (1948) states that "all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights", regardless of their ascribed or achieved status, and they have a duty to respect the rights of others (cited in Kim 1995:32). The privileging of individual rights over communal duties has led to the universality of human rights being challenged.

Given their individualist underpinnings, these rights entail dissolving the very foundations of cultures which are organized around the notions of communal obligations, commitment and service. In most Latin American or African villages, collective or communal rights have clear priority over *personal* or *individual* rights: legitimate hierarchies (of the elders, for example) have primacy over equality



(which in the real world always means illegitimate hierarchies); and concrete customs, rather than abstract universalizable laws, support communal bonds and organize social support. (Esteva & Prakash 1997:27)

Rahnema contends that such an individualist conception of rights is inconceivable to people in most other cultures where the most important goal is the collective good and which emphasise communal duties and obligations (1997).

There is considerable debate around culture and human rights (Bauer & Bell 1999; Cowan et al. 2001; Gasper 2004; Nussbaum & Glover 1995; Overseas Development Institute 2001; Verhelst 1989; Verhelst & Tyndale 2002). While the concept was intended to have universal validity, the language and terms are clearly rooted in the liberal democratic norms of highly industrialised countries (Weeks 1993:203). While some authors from the South such as Rahnema (1997) argue human rights are not universally applicable, others contend they are intrinsic to cultures of the South in the traditional values of dignity and respect (Sen 1997).

In collectivist societies individuals are guided by the principles that self-interest and personal goals are to promote the collective good, harmonious social relations, the principle of conformity and the maintenance of “face” which is emphasised in East Asian cultures (Hofstede 2001). Face, which is defined from the social perspective, can be described as the individual’s proper relationship — according to one’s particular status and role — with her or his social environment in the socially prescribed manner. Face is lost (in the sense of being humiliated) when a person fails to fulfil her or his social role and obligations. In the interests of social harmony the cultural expectation is that, if the individual does not agree with existing social norms, she or he will suppress the conflicts and not display them in public (Kim 1995). Hofstede suggests that in an individualistic society self-respect is the counterpart characteristic, which is defined from the individual’s point of view (Hofstede 2001).

It is also argued that individualism and collectivism values relate to culture differences in moral-political philosophies. Two moral orientations, or processes of moral reasoning, are used to describe the different ways people conceptualise morality, or how they frame and resolve moral problems and evaluate the choices they make (Gilligan & Attanucci 1988). In individualist societies where the emphasis is on distinct and independent individuals, abstract principles, rules and norms provide mechanisms for unrelated individuals to interact with one another (Kim 1995).<sup>30</sup> This

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<sup>30</sup> In individualist cultures a child who breaks the rules learns to feel guilty, based on the individual’s internalised conviction of wrongdoing. In contrast to these “guilt cultures”, collectivist societies are “shame cultures”. Shame relies on external sanction in

relates to the “justice” process of moral reasoning which involves situation free values (Kristiansen & Hotte 1996).

By contrast, in collectivist cultures moral attitudes and behaviour vary according to the individual’s perceptions of the needs and relationships of the people affected in the particular context, referred to as a “care” orientation to justice (Kim 1995:48). A care orientation embraces responsibility and relationships, and values are situationally determined (Kristiansen & Hotte 1996). Gilligan argued that a justice orientation to moral development tends to conceptualise morality as a conflict of rights which is resolved by the rational application of principles by an autonomous, detached individual. On the other hand, a care orientation to justice conceptualises morality as conflicting responsibilities which are resolved through contextual, narrative thinking. “The care approach emphasises context, relationship, and compassion” (Hollinger 2002:50). This is discussed further in Chapter 3.1.7. Gilligan (1998) contended in the North American context that the tendency of one orientation to predominate was gender related. A justice ethic approach was typically used by males and the care ethic used by females (1988:8). This has since been disputed and the approaches are viewed as not being mutually exclusive (Banks 2001; Larrabee 1993).

Cambodia has been described as having a loose kinship structure or a loosely structured social system (Curtis 1998; Ebihara 1968:205) similar to Thailand (Clammer 1996; Mulder 1996). In chapter 2 individualist attributes of Cambodian society are described, such as a more tolerant attitude toward individual variations in behaviour. At the same time Cambodian society is very hierarchical. While Southeast Asian countries and cultures are typically characterised as having a collectivist orientation (Hofstede 2001; Mulder 1996; Sinha & Kao 1988b) my assessment is that Cambodia does not strongly conform to the patterns described above.

A fifth dimension called long-term (or future) versus short-term (or past and present) orientation was a later addition to Hofstede’s dimensions. This dimension was revealed through the use of the Chinese value survey which was constructed from an eastern rather than western perspective. This instrument contained fundamental and basic values for Chinese people such as thrift and perseverance which are not highly valued in the west and so were not included in western-designed surveys (Hofstede 2001; Smith & Schwartz 1997). The failure to identify this orientation using western-designed surveys indicates the researcher’s cultural bias which is inevitably present

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that a person feels shame only when the wrongdoing is known by others. “This becoming known is the source of shame, more so than the infringement itself” (Hofstede 2001:229).

(Hofstede 2001). As Goulet reflects, “the values we discover are part of the research approach” (Goulet 1971:342).<sup>31</sup>

Drawing on analysis of data from the World Values Survey (WVS)<sup>32</sup> Inglehart presents a number of theories based on cultural differences in worldviews or values which he argues systematically relate to a society’s level of economic development and associated trends in industrialisation and modernisation (Inglehart 2003; Inglehart et al. 1998; Inglehart & Norris 2003). In attempting to explain national differences in value priorities, Smith and Schwartz (1997:106) conclude that “the causal path from development to values is probably stronger than the path from values to development”.<sup>33</sup>

Inglehart et al (1998:8) argue that the WVS provides evidence that the central claim of modernisation theory — that economic, cultural and political change go together in a coherent pattern — is largely correct, based on the fundamentally different characteristics of industrial versus preindustrial societies.<sup>34</sup> They assert that, while a simplistic, linear view of modernisation and predictable social change has been discredited, there is strong empirical evidence to show that certain trends in cultural patterns are linked to economic development in a probabilistic not deterministic fashion (Inglehart 2003; Inglehart et al. 1998; Inglehart & Norris 2003). Despite these assertions the explanations of these trends appear to be very prescriptive and strongly imply a linear progression of development. Although Inglehart emphasises that economic factors are not the only important factors involved in shaping different cross-cultural perspectives between the members of richer countries and poorer countries (Inglehart et al 1998:3), the lack of attention to

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<sup>31</sup> “Long Term Orientation stands for the fostering of virtues oriented towards future rewards. Its opposite pole, Short Term Orientation, stands for the fostering of virtues related to the past and present, in particular, respect for tradition, preservation of ‘face’ and fulfilling social obligations” (Hofstede 2001:359). Surveys found that East Asian societies (those surveyed were China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan, South Korea and Singapore) scored high on long term orientation, Western countries scored low, and some Third World countries scored lowest. In long-term oriented cultures the virtues of education, frugality and persistence are taught, whereas respecting traditions, social spending and maintaining face are emphasised in short-term oriented cultures. To me, it is not obvious where Cambodia would fall on this dimension.

<sup>32</sup> The WVS 1990-1993 surveyed more than 60,000 people in 43 societies covering the full range of economic development levels and political, religious and cultural traditions. These represented more than 70% of the world’s population. The survey provided means of people’s values and goals concerning politics, economics, sexual behaviour, gender roles, family values and ecological concerns (Inglehart et al. 1998).

<sup>33</sup> Other authors have related cross-cultural differences in values to other factors. Weber, for example, postulated that it was the presence of the Protestant work ethic which gave rise to capitalism in Europe, and the failure of economic development in, for example, Asian countries, was ascribed to its absence (Clammer 1996; Norris & Inglehart 2004; Sinha & Kao 1988a).

<sup>34</sup> Inglehart differentiates between agrarian, industrial and advanced industrial or postindustrial societies according to their mean per-capita GDP and score on the Human Development Index (HDI) which is based on longevity, educational achievement, and standard of living. Agrarian societies are the 97 nations (including Cambodia) with lower levels of development, 58 nations classified as “industrial societies” have moderate development levels, while “postindustrial societies” includes the world’s 20 most affluent nations (Inglehart & Norris 2003:169).

the diversity within and between nations poses the risk of essentialism — that all people in a particular type of societies are homogenous and will progress in the same way as other nations.

Inglehart and Norris (2003) present a revised version of modernisation theory which conceptualises the impact of modernisation taking place in two phases. The first “modernisation” phase describes the shift from agrarian or preindustrial to industrial society which consistently brings increasing urbanisation, growing economic specialisation and social modernisation. The worldview of agrarian societies, said to be “shaped by a steady-state economy” is one which “discouraged social mobility and emphasized tradition, inherited status, and communal obligations, backed up absolute religious norms” (Inglehart et al. 1998:9). By contrast, industrial society values emphasise “economic achievement, individualism, and innovation” with a change to “secular and flexible social norms” where social status can be achieved and communal rights are de-emphasised (p.10).

The second “post-modernisation” phase involves the transition from industrial to advanced industrial society. The cultural shift is from materialist (survival) values, representing sustenance and safety needs valued by those who have experienced economic or physical insecurity, to post-materialist (self-expression) values concerned with social and self-actualising needs, characteristic of young generations who have grown up in peace and economic prosperity (Inglehart et al. 1998; Inglehart & Norris 2003). These post-materialist concerns are evident in the policies of donors and northern NGOs. Clark’s empirical study of human values, which investigated poor people’s conceptions of the good life as compared to the theoretical formulation of central capabilities considered necessary for a good life (developed in post-industrial circumstances), found that the latter overlooked the basic need for physical security and economic resources (Clark 2002). This should not be taken as evidence for Maslow’s (1968) hierarchy of needs which prioritises survival needs at the expense of cultural, spiritual and psychological values and which, as Gasper contends “unwisely treats culture as supplementary, not as central and pervasive” (Gasper 1999:22).

These two phases in modernisation are postulated to correspond to the transition from traditional to secular/rational values (Inglehart & Norris 2003). Norris and Inglehart (2004) present a revised version of secularisation theory (that is, the belief that the importance of religiosity would diminish with modernisation and the adoption of a more rational worldview) which is based on the assumption that the importance of religiosity depends on the extent to which people experience

existential security,<sup>35</sup> which they relate to national development levels. Norris and Inglehart's thesis is that, because in poorer nations people are more vulnerable to physical, societal, and personal survival-threatening risks, religiosity is more important. In agrarian societies people are at the mercy of the forces of nature and events are frequently attributed to gods or spirits. The shift to industrialisation and greater security, predictability and prosperity reduces vulnerability which profoundly changes people's experiences which are not so closely tied to nature. Less importance is therefore given to religious practices, values and beliefs in people's lives and that of their community. The tendency of development theory and practice to ignore spirituality corresponds to this pattern. Norris and Inglehart emphasise that secularisation is a tendency, not a law, as evidenced by the importance of religion in the United States and Ireland as compared to other countries at their economic level (2003:18). They emphasise that "the world as a whole now has more people with traditional religious views than ever before — and they constitute a growing proportion of the world's population", despite the trends in rich nations (2004:5).

Analysis of the World Value Surveys also reveals patterns of social change concerning gender equity. It is argued that modernisation brings systematic, predictable but not determined changes in gender roles (Inglehart et al. 1998; Inglehart & Norris 2003). In agrarian societies the central role of any woman is typically child bearing and child rearing. With the industrialisation phase, women are brought into the paid workforce, female education rises, fertility rates decrease, women's political participation increases and the role of the traditional family decreases. They postulate that, in the post-industrial phase, gender equality is improved as women move into higher-status economic roles and gain more political influence (Inglehart & Norris 2003).

#### *Implications for development*

Each of the major culture-level studies has produced maps of national cultures relative to each other. Hostede's depiction of the "less developed Asian" culture area appears to be the most appropriate category for Cambodia. This grouping includes countries high in power distance and low in individualism, thus valuing beliefs and institutions that provide certainty and conformity. This is in contrast to Nordic and Anglo cultural areas which are high in individualism and low in power distance (Smith & Schwartz 1997:104). Similarly, Schwartz's mapping of his culture dimensions describes "East Asian" nations as:

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<sup>35</sup> Existential security is the feeling that survival is secure enough that it can be taken for granted (Norris & Inglehart 2004). Human security has increasingly been recognised as an essential component of well-being, and in recent years has become important in international development (p.14).

Especially high on Hierarchy and Conservatism and low on Autonomy and Egalitarianism. Thus, this cultural area emphasized compliance with ascribed, unequal, role obligations and maintenance of the traditional order in contrast to developing individual independence and uniqueness and voluntary commitment to the welfare of others who are seen as equals. Western European nations showed exactly the opposite pattern of priorities, reflecting opposing cultural emphases. (Smith & Schwartz 1997:105)

In mapping the culture position of countries on “survival values versus well-being values” and “traditional authority values versus secular-rational authority values” Inglehart contends that almost all of the economically less-developed countries surveyed fall into the survival/traditional authority quadrant, whereas donor countries embrace well-being/secular values (Inglehart et al 1998:18). Although neither Cambodian nor any of its Southeast Asian neighbours were included in the survey, I expect Cambodia would generally fit into the survival/traditional authority quadrant although some features do not mesh well.

The effectiveness and sustainability of external development interventions has been related to their integration into the “local cognition” (Hofstede 2001:437) or existing forces, systems and processes (Fowler 2000b). The above highlights the cultural gaps which typically exist between donor and receiving countries on the dimensions of individualism/collectivism and power distance which influence north-south NGO relationships and cause tensions (Fowler 1997; Hofstede 2001). As an example, leaders in receiving countries may want aid to benefit certain in-groups over others (such as repaying their own villages or tribes for their past support) whereas donors want to serve certain target-groups or sectors regardless of their affiliations. Or, in relation to power distance, donor programs may want to promote equality and democratic processes whereas local leaders, acting from a different perspective, may want to use resources in ways that will maintain the status quo (Hofstede 2001:438). My research in 2001 (O’Leary & Meas) explored how Cambodian social values such as conformity, respect and obedience, harmony and social stability, which tolerate inequality, are in tension with values emphasised in mainstream development literature such as empowerment, participation, gender equity and social justice, which are premised on equality. Verhelst suggests that values that accept hierarchy and respect the “natural order” have ideals other than those that are supposedly being pursued in development practice (1990:31).

### **3.1.5 Values and action**

Whereas there is considerable literature that seeks to establish the correspondence between attitudes and behaviour, much of it based on the work of Ajzen and Fishbein (Ajzen 1987; Ajzen & Fishben 1980; Feather 1992; Sweeting 1990), there is little literature on relations between values

and actions (Feather 1992; Kristiansen & Hotte 1996). In response to the question of when values instigate action, Feather has proposed the “expectancy value theory” (Feather 1992, 1994). The theory considers values, valences and expectations to be important determinants of action. Values induce positive or negative valences on objects, events or potential outcomes (that is, they become attractive or aversive), depending on the person’s value priorities. Integral to Feather’s theory is the understanding that values are beliefs, but also motives.<sup>36</sup>

The theory conceptualises the relation between values and action to bridge the gap between knowing and doing. The theory relates a person’s behaviour in a specific situation to the expectations that person holds (that is, beliefs about what is or is not possible, both in terms of personal capacities and also environmental demands) as well as to the person’s subjective valuation of the outcomes (that is, beliefs about the various positive and negatives consequences that may follow that outcome) (Feather 1992). “The major emphasis is on how present behaviour can be accounted for in terms of a conceptual analysis that considers immediate conditions involving the person and the situation” (p.119). He acknowledges that application of the expectancy-value approach in real-life contexts is affected by the influence of other factors such as group pressures, social norms, task requirements and other imposed conditions on actions. There have been other theoretical analyses of relations between values and actions, both social-cognitive theory and the theory of moral development (see Feather 1992). My purpose here is simply to indicate that such studies postulate the combined influence of a number of key factors on behaviour, each of which the individual evaluates in making a decision.

Theories such as Ajzen and Fishbein’s (1980) theory of reasoned action (TRA) which provide evidence for the link between attitude and behaviour likewise posit the actor’s evaluation of a number of factors. Their theory, based on the premise that humans are rational, asserts that behaviour is correlated to people’s intention and subjective norms. Intention is determined by the individual’s attitude toward the behaviour (that is, individuals are motivated by their positive or negative beliefs about the behaviour) and their beliefs concerning the outcomes that are likely to result from performing the behaviour and their evaluations of those potential outcomes. The subjective norm relates to the person’s perception of significant others approving or not approving of the behaviour in question, and her/his motivation to comply with their opinions. Ajzen and Fishbein assert that, generally speaking, individuals will perform a behaviour when they believe that

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<sup>36</sup> “[Values are] organised summaries of experience that capture the focal, abstracted qualities of past encounters, that have a normative or oughtness quality about them, and that function as criteria or frameworks against which present experience can be tested. They are tied to our feelings and can function as general motives” (Feather 1994:130)

significant others think they should. They argue that a person's intention is the best single predictor of behaviour. There may be inconsistencies in that a person may evaluate a behaviour as favourable but not intend to perform the behaviour because the motivation to comply with significant others who do not favour the behaviour predominates (1980).

Ajzen's extension of the theory, called the "theory of planned behaviour", incorporates perceived behavioural control as a direct influence on intention and behaviour.

Individuals also consider beliefs concerning their possessing (or lacking) the requisite resources and opportunity necessary to accomplish the behavior. Thus in formulating a behavioural intention, people examine their perceived control over the behavior in question, in addition to evaluating the likely outcomes of the action (attitude toward the behaviour) and considering the expectations of others (subjective norms). (Fazio 1990:78)

That is, people attempt only what they believe they can achieve. In looking at how attitudes guide behaviour, Fazio suggests two types of attitude-behaviour process. One involves conscious deliberation (such as the theory of reasoned action and theories of action) and the other is based on spontaneous processing. The latter model postulates that:

an individual's social behaviour is largely a function of the individual's perceptions in the immediate situation in which the attitude object is encountered. Given that the situations are typically at least somewhat ambiguous and that social stimuli frequently have multiple meanings, some degree of interpretation on the part of the individual is required. Such definition of the event that is occurring is presumed to determine the direction and nature of the individual's behavior in the immediate situation. (Fazio 1990:78)

Airhihenbuwa and Obregon (2000) critique the applicability of models to explain health behaviour such as the Theory of Reasoned Action, the Health Belief Model and Social Learning/Cognitive Theory<sup>37</sup> which are premised on rational decision-making by individuals. They suggest that, in cultures where decisions originate from group norms and processes, as in the self-effacing cultures

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<sup>37</sup> The Health Belief Model attempts to explain and predict health behaviours and posits that human behaviour depends on the individual's perceived seriousness of the disease, severity of the disease, perceived benefit of services and barriers to accessing such service (Airhihenbuwa & Obregon 2000). The perceived threat to one's health motivates people to take action, but beliefs about potential behaviours determine what they will do. It is based primarily on two variables: the value placed by an individual on a particular outcome; and the person's estimate of the likelihood that a given behaviour will result in that outcome (Sweeting 1990). Social Learning Theory proposed by Bandura argues that a person's behaviour is based on perceived outcome expectations and perceived self-efficacy (i.e. people's judgements about what they can do) — which are learned from personal experience, role models and verbal persuasion (see Sweeting 1990). The theory suggests that each of the factors — cognition, environment and behaviour — affects the other.



of Asia, Africa and Latin America, contextual theories and models are more relevant than those based on individual psychology.

Kristiansen & Hotte (1996) suggest that the nature of people's moral reasoning (in terms of Kohlberg's preconventional, conventional and postconventional levels of moral development), their moral orientation (justice versus care orientations), their self-conceptions (independence versus interdependence), as well as the nature of the moral issue affect the value-attitude-behaviour relation. Their model extends the Theory of Reasoned Action by adding in these components. In their schema they suggest, for example, that the attitudes and behaviour of a person with an independent self and postconventional justice reasoning is likely to be largely guided by her or his "rationally determined, transsituational values". In the case of this justice orientation, principles tend to be applied and contextual information may be ignored. They postulate that a person with an interdependent self and a care moral orientation is likely to be guided by contextually relevant norms (p.94). International development theory typically postulates the application of principles derived from theorising in postindustrial situations to development practice in agrarian societies.

### 3.1.6 Dissonance

Festinger (1962) argued that when people become aware of inconsistency among their beliefs, attitudes, or actions the result is discomfort or cognitive dissonance (Sweeting 1990). In Rokeach's System of Beliefs cognitive dissonance occurs when: self concept is not consistent with one's values; values are not consistent with one's attitudes; or attitudes are not consistent with one's behaviour (1990). Cognitive dissonance theory declares that people will not be able to tolerate opposing beliefs within themselves and are motivated to reduce dissonance in order to maintain self-integrity (MacLachlan & Carr 1994).

Since the theory was proposed in 1957 hundreds of experiments have verified the existence and effects of dissonance. A state of cognitive inconsistency is regarded as a necessary condition for change. For actions to produce dissonance, and for that dissonance to produce attitude change, the individual must: perceive the action as inconsistent; take personal responsibility for the action; must experience psychological arousal; and attribute the arousal to the action (Smith & Mackie 2000). Rokeach (1972) proposed self-confrontation rather than confrontation to induce a state of inconsistency, the essential premise of which is that people have idealised conceptions of themselves as competent and moral. When people are provided with information and privately confront themselves about whether or not their values, attitudes and behaviours conform to their

idealised self-conceptions they undergo belief and behaviour change. When self-dissatisfaction arises “people can change their value priorities to reflect their goals, or they can change their behaviour to conform to their values” (Mayton et al. 1994:6); see also Grube, Mayton and Ball-Rokeach (1994), Seligman & Katz (1996) and Waller (1994).

There has been little research into whether dissonance reduction exists at a comparable level across cultures, although some authors contend that individuals from certain cultures might not experience dissonance (Carr et al. 1998; Carr et al. 1995; MacLachlan & Carr 1994). MacLachlan and Carr (1994) refute the universality of the dissonance reduction process, based on empirical evidence revealing people’s tolerance for both medical and traditional beliefs in Malawi. That is, Malawians get health treatment but attribute cause to non-medical factors. They query whether people fail to experience any inconsistency, or experience it but are not motivated to remove it — that is, they do not suffer from it (1994:125). They question whether there is a “dissonance-tolerance” dichotomy, or a “cognitive dissonance – cognitive tolerance” continuum (1994:126).

Argyris and Schon’s (1974, 1978) theories of action explore the inconsistency between what people espouse and what they do. It assumes the validity of cognitive dissonance and dissonance reduction in working with organisations to improve their effectiveness (see chapter 4.) The cross-cultural application of this model to improve practitioner effectiveness is therefore questionable.

### 3.1.7 Values and ethics in development practice

In this section I consider issues related to ethical development practice, taking ethics to mean values in operation. I examine the current situation with regard to the multidisciplinary nature of development practice, its “professional” status and practice standards. I review the development ethics literature, specifically, the ethics of development assistance and its “delivery”. The issue of values and ethical behaviour — as being internally developed or externally imposed — is briefly considered, as are the ethics of justice and the ethics of care.

#### *Background*

The term “ethics” is used in a variety of ways. Banks (2001:3-4) makes the distinction between ethics as “moral norms or standards” and ethics as moral philosophy.<sup>38</sup> In this first usage, ethics are described as “values in operation”. Values form the basis of ethical principles for practice (Reamer 1999). A set of principles for ethical practice is referred to as a “code of ethics” or code of

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<sup>38</sup> The terms ethics and morals are commonly used interchangeably, explained by reference to the fact that the former is derived from the Greek whereas the latter has a Latin origin (Banks 2001; Gasper 2004; Lawrence 1999).

conduct (Banks 2001:5). In this sense also, a variety of terms such as norms, standards, rules, principles or character traits are used to describe ethics, and there is debate as to whether ethics are “internally developed by the moral agent or externally imposed by an outside authority” (Banks 2001:4). The second usage of ethics concerns the study and analysis of “morality, moral problems and moral judgements” (Banks 2001:4).

Development ethics is concerned with the normative assessment of both the ends and the means of development in terms of what ought to be (Crocker 1991) as how development is pursued is regarded as being of equal importance to what benefits are gained (Goulet 1995). Crocker (1991) argues that the assessment of what changes are desirable and what is authentic or good development depends on value judgments and the particular views different people have about the meaning of the good life (Goulet 1995). “The very idea of development as societal improvement is value-relative” (Gasper 2004:14). Development ethics recognises that development theories, policies and practices have evaluative assumptions. A key question concerns the nature of the good life or human flourishing, individually and societally, across the divide of multiple cultures and values systems (Gasper 1999).

Two main approaches to ethics are identified. Principle ethics focuses on the question: What ought we do? The second approach, which is character and virtue based, focuses on: What ought we be? (Hollinger 2002:45). These questions are relevant to my thesis in terms of whether practice can be improved by focusing on codes and principles and/or on the moral sense of the practitioner. In principle ethics, moral actions are inherently right or wrong and involve situation-free values. Right action is determined by certain principles or rules which set out what is morally good and what people ought to do, and which are to be applied (see section 3.1.4) (Banks 2001; Hollinger 2002). It is concerned with rights and duties. The character ethics approach looks at virtue and moral character and is concerned with the attitudes and dispositions of individuals. According to Hollinger (2002:46) character can best be understood as “the inner and distinctive core of a person from which moral discernment, decisions and actions spring. It is an enduring configuration of the intentions, feelings, dispositions, and perceptions of any particular self”. Internalised qualities and habits “to do what we ought to do” are referred to as virtues (Ratanakul 1994). Ratanakul argues that, although virtues cannot be taught academically, individuals can be encouraged to nurture and cultivate these qualities in themselves.

“The development literature, in general, has been relatively silent about the people who deliver international aid, even though there is considerable evidence to suggest that *individuals*, rather than

simply the materials with which they are associated, determine the success of an aid project” (Raymond-McKay & MacLachlan 2003:167, emphasis in the original). With few exceptions such as the development ethics literature, it is only in the past decade that writers in the development studies field have drawn attention to the relationship between personal values and development practice (Chambers 1993; Chambers 2004; Chambers & Pettit 2004; Edwards & Sen 2000; Giri 2002; Kaplan 1996; Rahnema 1997; Scott-Villiers 2004; Uphoff 1996a; Vaux 2001).

### *Development practice*

To a large extent one’s occupation as a “development practitioner” is self-defined. Development practitioners are drawn from a range of backgrounds including those who are technical/sector based such as health workers, water engineers, agriculturalists, and educators, and those trained in social science disciplines such as development studies, politics, international relations, sociology, anthropology and social work (community development). As development practice encompasses work carried out in a broad range of sectors and practice settings it is difficult to put clear boundaries around “development practice”.

Development practice is new and no specialised area of competence is defined (Community Development Resource Association 2002).<sup>39</sup> There are no standard forms of training or universally recognised qualification. CDRA posits: “one of the greatest constraints to success in the development sector is a lack of ‘practice’ ... there are many good ideas in the sector; less honed expertise in putting these ideas into practice” (2002:27-28). They argue that this is reason to pursue professionalism in development practice; however, I found very little literature concerned with this issue in development studies.

Banks contends there is no consensus as to what constitutes a profession<sup>40</sup> but there is considerable debate as to whether “professional status” is helpful or desirable. Arguments supporting professionalism focus on having standards of practice to ensure the quality of work and commitments to ethical practice. Professional status also confers a degree of credibility and influence (Ife 1997). CDRA (2002) argues that the purpose of professionalism is to help build

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<sup>39</sup> In the UK and Ireland, as elsewhere in the north, undergraduate degree programs in development studies were not considered as pre-requisites for “a career in a profession as conventionally understood” but as providing the basis for postgraduate studies which could then lead to a career in the international development community (Development Studies Association 2004:4). To some extent social work education is regarded as a requirement for social work practice (although a person can be called a “social worker” without necessarily having academic qualifications).

<sup>40</sup> A profession can be characterised as having the following attributes: “A basis of systematic theory; authority recognised by the clientele of the professional group; broader community sanction and approval of this authority; a code of ethics regulating relationships of professionals with users and colleagues; a professional culture sustained by formal professional associations” (Banks 2001:84 citing Greenwood 1995).

institutional, methodological and theoretical boundaries around development practice, rather than being about control and performance standards.

Arguments against professional status consider it elitist and unhelpful to working with disadvantaged people, as the inherent superior status typically exacerbates power inequalities in the practitioner - “user” relationship and this is contrary to solidarity and impedes progressive, egalitarian practice. The imposition of standards can stifle creativity and ensure practitioners conform to the rules (Chambers 1993; Community Development Resource Association 2002; Ife 1997). Post-structural commentators argue that efforts to try to pull social work (in their case) under a unified theory is harmful because it denies context and deters from recognising diversity and culture as primary (Pease & Fook 1999).

Gasper (1999:2,30) considers development ethics to be quasi-professional ethics “since ‘development theory, planning and practice’ do not define a single profession or well-bounded set of professions and agents” but a “quasi-professional field of development practice and theory”.<sup>41</sup> Development studies is a multidisciplinary field combining elements from disciplines including economics, anthropology, sociology, political science, social psychology and social work. By its nature, development is difficult to define as a coherent field (Davies 1998). The British Development Studies Association (DSA)<sup>42</sup> (Development Studies Association 2004) argue that “Development Studies” should be considered as a distinct inter-disciplinary field as a body of development theory and literature exists which is explicitly related to international development issues.<sup>43</sup> Others argue that although it draws on other disciplines the specific expertise evolving in development studies itself is increasingly distinctively different and should be considered as an independent discipline (Coles & El-Bushra 2002).

The key principles regarding how NGOs and their staff ought to behave are grounded in commitments to a range of NGO values such as: equality as human beings, participation, empowerment, social justice, human rights and gender equity. Gasper suggests that NGOs have been influential in raising the profile of ethical issues in development.

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<sup>41</sup> Development ethics was recognised as an interdisciplinary field both within development studies and within philosophy with the founding of the International Development Ethics Association (IDEA) in 1987 (Crocker 1991; Gasper 1999; Goulet 1995).

<sup>42</sup> Development studies was established as an academic field in the mid 1960s with the setting up of the Journal of Development Studies. At that time it focused on economic development issues. The Development Studies Association was formally established in 1978, the same year the first undergraduate development studies program was introduced at the University of East Anglia (Harriss 1999). In the past fifteen years university courses in development studies in Britain and Ireland (and elsewhere in the north) have proliferated at the undergraduate level with postgraduate programs even more numerous (DSA 2004:4).

<sup>43</sup> The DSA was not suggesting that development studies represents a distinct discipline on the basis that development studies specialists tend to have their “home” discipline within, for example, economics or political studies (DSA 2004:3).

The rise and rise of *NGDOs* (both international and Southern) in the past 15-20 years has created a much larger ‘market’ for ethics ... *NGDO* staff and funders tend on average to be more concerned with purposes of development, equitable process, and multi-directional accountability than are their government, bank and inter-government counterparts. (Gasper 1999:6)

Despite the stated purpose of improving *NGDO* accountability and practice, standards or codes are regarded with scepticism if they merely provide long lists of values and/or principles which are highly general and do not provide much help for the practitioner in terms of how they are to behave, and if there are no enforcement mechanisms (Banks 2001; Gasper 1999; Shardlow 2002). Banks (2001) contends that professional ethics have been largely dominated by a principle-based approach whereby actions are justified and/or issues solved through the rational application of principles. This approach tends to preclude a “situational ethics” approach “where the resolution of ethical issues requires an understanding of the specific context within which they are located” (Ife 1997) and the relationships and commitments people have to each other in that context (Banks 2001).

Expectations that codes will result in ethical behaviour are generally regarded to be problematic (Gray 1995; Ife 1997). Gray argues that moral sensibility is necessary for ethical practice. She contends that respect for other people “is the fulcrum” on which the social work value system turns, and that the “technical application of moral rules does not necessarily result in ethical behaviour” (Gray 1995:55). A moral disposition to help stems from empathy and a true concern for the well-being of clients, and moral sensitivity develops from seeing clients in a moral light and being mindful of their value as human beings (1995). The question arises as to whether “true concern and empathy” can be developed in practitioners, or whether it is assumed that the individual who chooses to “help” already has this disposition.

Guidelines and codes are not a substitute for attitudes of care and qualities of character: rules have to be interpreted, and are sometimes lacking or inadequate, and many matters lie beyond the realm of obligation. We need to attend to ethics of care and ethics of character as well as ethics of justice. (Gasper 1999:30)

### *Ethical issues*

Development ethics covers three areas of concern: the ethics of aid; how aid should be delivered; and ethical aspects of culture and development (Gasper 1999). While the development ethics literature addresses these concerns largely at the international level, the issues involved are relevant to my thesis question of how values influence development practice. The first area considers the ethical basis for aid in terms of whether aid is based on: self-interest; on the moral obligation of the

rich to help the poor; or on discretionary charity, that is, the beneficence of the rich whereby recipients do not receive by right and donors do not give as a duty (Gasper 1992). Beliefs about the moral basis for aid influences how aid is disbursed and evaluated.<sup>44</sup> At the macro-level, Gasper argues that rich country donors have largely taken self-interest and charity as their bases for giving which he attributes as creating the situation where most donors consider accountability to be one-way, accept little effective responsibility and set numerous conditions on the recipients who are obliged to conform to their demands (1999:1).<sup>45</sup>

This discussion of development assistance at the macro-level provides a backdrop to development practice at a micro-level. Internalisation and enactment of the language of rights and partnership is influenced by a practitioner's beliefs about the basis for provision of aid or facilitation of development, and this is crucial in shaping the relationship the practitioner develops with the "partners", "recipients", "beneficiaries" or "clients". The term used is indicative of the relationship and connotes how people should be treated (Gasper 1999; Shardlow 2002).<sup>46</sup> Goulet (1971) observes that structural paternalism is inherent in aid relationships between unequals. He contends it is only when there is reciprocity that relationships can be non-manipulative and genuinely developmental. This requires, essentially, the developer's realisation of her or his own intrinsic vulnerability. Anderson likewise posits the importance of aid donors and recipients acknowledging openly the innate inequality in their circumstances and "the good luck of donors in being better-off", as well as reaffirming their essential human equality and "the belief that all humans, as humans fundamentally equal to each other, at least in principle, have a right to, and deserve help when they face difficult circumstances" (2001:295). She argues that to hide the inequality or

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<sup>44</sup> Gasper (1999) describes a spectrum of views regarding the provision of aid. 1. An obligation exists, the same as intra-nationally. 2. Lesser obligation — considered a moral obligation upon richer countries, groups, individuals, but subject to certain major conditions — less priority than home. 3. Charity — international aid is beyond obligation — to give is an act of supererogatory virtue and commendable. 4. My country first and only. 5. A matter solely for individuals to decide. 6. Morally indifferent. 7. Culturally relative — some cultures into helping others are not. According to Gasper view 4, the provision of aid in pursuit of national self-interest, influences some governmental aid, though not NGO aid. View 2 partly fits Scandinavia and the Netherlands. The view that fits most aid, both governmental and NGO, is the third — aid as charity not as obligation. Gasper (1999:15) discusses how charity, which was a central principle to aid, in the sense of voluntarily giving to those in need, has evolved from meaning "Christian love to now typically meaning something cooler, more condescending and discretionary" (Gasper 1999:1 citing Williams 1976).

<sup>45</sup> International aid increasingly comes with conditions of democratisation, good governance and promotion of human rights. Development ethics questions whether the conventional style of conditionality and donor control is ethically defensible. Mahbubani questions how to successfully transplant democracies into societies that historically have very different social and political systems (1999:46).

<sup>46</sup> Also relevant are practitioners' notions about the "deserving poor". Feather's (1994) conceptual analysis of deservingness identifies variables that influence the degree to which a person is seen to deserve or not deserve a positive or negative outcome that is linked to the person's actions. Two important variables included are personal responsibility for an outcome, which is related to the person's intentions or social role obligations.

pretend equality may damage both giver and receiver, undermining “the dignity, worthiness, and humanness of both” (p.295).

The second focus of development ethics is on how aid should be delivered or the ethics of the means. Development ethics literature has focused on the actual operation of overseas aid programs including technical assistance and cooperation and how expatriate practitioners relate and interact and the lifestyles they choose (Crocker 1991; Gasper 1992).<sup>47</sup> However, the issues of power, interpersonal relations and work-style are also relevant to local development practitioners whose salary, education and lifestyle often set them apart from the people they are to serve.<sup>48</sup>

The third area of development ethics covers ethical issues in relation to culture and development. A core understanding is that each culture is the source of the criteria for determining for its members what is the good life, what its basic needs are and its preferred ways of meeting those needs (Goulet 1995). From this perspective, development can only be measured in terms of a given culture’s values (Gasper 1995). Integrally related to this point is the notion that most people in developing countries “depend on their traditions and indigenous values for their identity, their cultural integrity, and a sense of meaning to their lives” (Goulet 1995:109). Human development then should not destroy people’s sense of identity and cultural integrity. As is evident in the review of technical assistance provided to Cambodia (Godfrey et al. 2002) and in development theories (chapter 3.2), westerners (those who are “developed”) have tended to assume that they know what is best for “developing” countries and impose their ideas.

The research I undertook with Cambodian practitioners in 2001 (O’Leary & Meas 2001) indicated that capacity building efforts largely ignore how development is perceived within the culture, and are inattentive to cultural values that may have different priorities. Capacity building of practitioners provided training to equip practitioners with the skills and knowledge to carry out the development project, and ignored values as though the project existed in a vacuum. The attitudes, beliefs, perceptions and coping mechanisms of the practitioner were overlooked, as were those of the cultural milieu in which they intervened (O’Leary & Meas 2001). A similar issue has been

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<sup>47</sup> Expatriates “consume a great proportion of aid and can vitally affect (well or badly) the capacitation and empowerment of local staff” (Gasper 1999:21). Hofstede also reports on studies which analysed the effectiveness of expatriate technical assistance personnel. While competent in technical terms, and able to adjust to life abroad, it was found that they were less effective in transferring job skills through intercultural interaction and training which was seen as the most crucial dimension of expatriates’ success by local counterparts. Research has also shown that even in local management training institutes in poor countries the course content can be problematic as it is difficult for teachers “to free themselves from the implicit ethnocentricity of the foreign theories they teach and the methods they learned to teach them with” (2001:440).

<sup>48</sup> Rahnema (1997:384) writes: “Even when their ‘managers’ [of development projects] were of their own country and shared the native tongue, they nevertheless spoke a strange new language which the local population had difficulty understanding”.



identified in social work in terms of its focus on developing a theory base and a range of technological approaches (how to do it) at the expense of reflecting on the value dimensions of social work and understanding social work's moral aspects (what one ought to do) (Gray 1995:59).

The paradigmatic shift away from positivist to constructivist thinking is grounded in the recognition that there are many paths to knowing, based on subjective interpretations of reality (Gray 1995). Relativists argue that people's identities, values and moralities have been shaped by the values of the local communities of which they are members, each with their notion of good. These values are not absolute but are constructed and relative to the shared understandings of a given society (Clark 2002; Glover 1995; Squires 1993). In terms of cultural universals the question is whether it is possible to identify common values which are desired by all societies, developed and non-developed, and which development claims to facilitate (Goulet 1995). A number of theorists argue that values are not totally subjective and contest the relativist position that "anything goes", arguing that this "undermines efforts to work for a just social order" and the recognition of a common humanity (Glover 1995; Weeks 1993). Gray contends that, whereas positivism ignores the influence of the person's values, post-modernist thinking runs the risk of overlooking the commonalities in human experience across cultures and therefore the possibility of shared meaning (Gray 1995).

The concept of pluralism embraces solidarity and difference, however, respect for difference is in tension with the affirmation of human solidarity (Squires 1993; Weeks 1993). All cultures, including Cambodian culture, have both positive and negative aspects. Negative aspects produce living conditions which negate fundamental human freedom and dignity and discriminate on the basis of gender, race or creed (Verhelst & Tyndale 2002). Evaluating aspects of a culture as negative runs the risk of ethnocentrism, while ignoring or avoiding the issue to avoid tensions risks tolerating or perpetuating injustices on the basis of being traditional (Edwards 1993; Nussbaum 2000). Commentators contend that development programs tend to treat cultural values instrumentally: as aids or obstacles to the achievement of (too often externally determined) development goals (Crewe & Harrison 1998; Goulet 1992, 1995). The failure of mainstream development is frequently attributed to the failure to take account of culture and diversity (Clammer 1996; Rahnema & Bawtree 1997; Sinha & Kao 1988b; Verhelst 1989). For many authors, indigenous development is a fundamental contradiction in terms because development is imbued with western values (Escobar 1995; Esteva & Prakash 1998; Goulet 1995; Rahnema 1997; Sachs 1992).

### 3.1.8 Summary

This review establishes that, at both the individual and cultural level, differences in value priorities, or what the individual or the collective consider desirable, systematically relate to variation in attitudes and behaviours. It also demonstrates that, while values influence attitudes and behaviours, the reverse is also true. In addition, attitudes and behaviours are not solely determined by values as other factors are influential. Theories concerning the relation between attitudes and behaviour posit that peoples' attitude towards the behaviour, their evaluation of its potential outcome, the approval of significant others and whether they believe they have the resources to accomplish the behaviour are important. Research has revealed that values are hierarchically ordered and this order changes according to the specific context. The literature also reveals that in their value orientations people hold a preference for one value over another rather than holding one or the other.

Cultural differences in attitudinal and behavioural norms, such as acceptance of inequality and power differences, influence how people relate and their expectations of each other. The review demonstrates the importance of cross-cultural understanding. A core principle of development ethics is that what is good, and what constitutes desirable change depend on value judgements and these are influenced by a given culture's values. At the same time cultural relativism may be balanced by the recognition of commonalities in human experience. Ethical behaviour can derive from two bases: from the application of principles, as in following codes of conduct and ethical standards; and from a person's moral sensibility regarding what she or he ought to be. Discretionary giving, or charity, is conducive to paternalism as inequality is a given in this relationship. With the recognition of our essential human equality and mutuality assistance becomes obligatory.

A number of theories have emerged about what ought to happen in development and its practice. The next section investigates the discourse of international development and identifies the values and assumptions that underpin the different theories which have evolved over the past five decades about what development means and how it is to be achieved.

## 3.2 Assumptions and values underlying development theories and approaches

### 3.2.1 Introduction

Development theories and concepts are important because they give expression to what are considered to be the desirable goals of development, and the actions by which these ought to be

achieved. Funding priorities and practice strategies are rationalised by using particular theories or concepts. Practice without a theory is likely to be ill-defined, inconsistent and ultimately ineffective. The assumptions and values underlying theories and approaches to development have frequently been implicit, as have the attitudes and values underlying mainstream development practice. Economic, social, sustainable and human development have different goals and priorities.

In this section of the literature review I examine the assumptions and values which underpin the orthodox notions of development that emerged in the post-war period. I then briefly present some of the major theories and concepts of development and underdevelopment that have evolved over recent decades and which have been influential in development practice. I conclude by identifying the assumptions and values which are inferred by these theories, and reflect on their impact in shifting practice. Despite the evolution in theorising about development, this section indicates that one reason why aided development may not have worked in practice is the persistence of certain assumptions and values which constrain the enactment of more inclusive and equitable ideals.

Academics in a range of fields have recognised the importance of values clarity. They argue that if practitioners are unaware that value choices are involved they are likely to unconsciously adopt certain values rather than being neutral (Gasper 2004:1). Glover contends that the first agenda item in development ethics is to devise a more precise account of the values and principles employed in making development decisions, thereby making explicit what is valued (1995). This involves a process of firstly, conceiving “the good and the right” for the promotion of the good life and the good society and secondly, discerning how these values may be actualised (Prilleltensky 1997).

### **3.2.2 Background**

Development has ambiguous meanings which are used interchangeably. Development is used normatively to depict an ideal or desirable state, implicitly concerned with the good life and human well-being. Development is also a process encompassing the deliberate efforts or activities aimed at improvement and the associated institutions, policies and practices (Gasper 2004; Goulet 1995; Rist 1997; Thomas 2000). Development discourse moves between what ought to be and what is, and what is hoped for and what can be observed (Crewe & Harrison 1998). Development can refer either to the means or the ends of social change.

Development is conceived in multiple ways because there are a multiplicity of “developers” including multi-lateral and bilateral agencies, international financial institutions, international NGOs and local civil society organisations (Hinton 2004). Different institutions generate their own

form of discourse which shapes the thinking and actions of the developers (Chambers 2004; Ferguson 1990; Hinton 2004; Hinton & Groves 2004a). The dominant development discourse “can be understood as language, concepts, knowledge and thinking, reflecting the perceptions, interests and culture of powerful organisations” such as the World Bank and UN agencies (Chambers & Pettit 2004:142). However, the diversity of theories, approaches and practices which have evolved over time within the aid system do not represent a linear process, and donors and other development agencies are in constant flux (Chambers 1997b; Robb 2004).<sup>49</sup>

Theories about and approaches to development encompass conceptualisations at both the macro level (global, regional, national) and the micro level of communities, and these are interwoven. Local level development interventions and results are influenced by national, regional and international politics, the policies of multi-lateral and bilateral agencies, the world economic environment, and commercial and political interests. For instance, the oil crisis in the 1970s and its resulting economic impacts on developing country balance of payments and their ensuing debt levels had, and continues to have, a huge influence on peoples’ experience of poverty at the local level. Development interventions are conducted amid multiple and changing realities, impacted by the pervasive influence of the broader, unpredictable global system (Chambers & Pettit 2004; Eade 1997; Hinton & Groves 2004a).

### 3.2.3 Modernisation and economic development

Many writers state that the “era of development” was inaugurated by US President Truman in 1949 (Edwards 1999b; Esteva & Prakash 1997; Rist 1997). Development here implicitly refers to international or “aided development” (Davies 1998) whereby industrialised or developed nations of the north provide assistance to developing nations of the south.<sup>50</sup> The vision of development is apparent in President Truman’s address:

We must embark on a bold new program for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of

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<sup>49</sup> Development, international development, international cooperation and aid are terms used interchangeably in this review of “aided” development in describing interventions by the various institutions of the aid system.

<sup>50</sup> Developed, northern, first world nations and developing, southern or third world nations are terms used to collectively describe countries on the basis of the proportion of the population living in poverty. In the thesis I use the terms interchangeably. All have negative connotations. Developed and developing imply an evolutionist interpretation of development. The early post 2nd World War era was divided into three worlds — the capitalist, western plus Japan, (first world), the communist Soviet (second world) bloc and the third world, referring to those countries inhabited by non-Europeans that were poor and for the most part previously colonised by European powers (McMichael 1996). However, differentiation in rates of economic growth has meant the third world is no longer a coherent entity (Fowler 1997; Rist 1997; Rowlands 1997). Rist (1997:158) states that in the late 1970s “the supposedly neutral, geographical term “south” began to take over from ‘third world’”, and, according to Fowler has come to mean those countries receiving aid from the north, being those countries providing aid (2000a).

underdeveloped areas. ... The old imperialism — exploitation for foreign profit — has no place in our plans. What we envisage is a program of development based on the concepts of democratic fair dealing. (Cited in McMichael 1996:30)

A number of core themes are evident. Development was a program where “we” are to bring development to “them” — those who are “underdeveloped”. The basic premise was that economic growth, investment and technical expertise are the solution to what is lacking, as underdevelopment was understood. “Economic development” focused on productivity and income per head, the purchasing power of people to satisfy their needs. The assumption was that economic growth would solve poverty.

Whereas colonialism had been justified by its “civilising” mission, there was the belief that “underdeveloped” countries could catch up to modern, “developed” countries. The process of industrialisation which had taken place in Europe was to be reproduced elsewhere, regardless of different histories and contexts (Rist 1997:72). Esteva and Prakash contend that the division of humanity into those who were modern and developed and those who were underdeveloped meant:

two billion people became underdeveloped overnight in the post-war era. With the launching of global development, they were placed in the undignified position of having started on a road that others know better towards a goal that others have reached, a one-way street. (Esteva & Prakash 1998:282)

Authors critical of mainstream development agree that the motives of both developed nations and multi-lateral agencies have been, and continue to be, mixed, but contend that these are primarily concerned with furthering the interests of the more powerful, developed nations (Edwards 1999b; Fowler 2000a; McMichael 1996; Rist 1997). From the time of their establishment in 1944-45 the international financial institutions (such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development or the “World Bank”) have been governed by the United States and northern, industrialised countries rather than the United Nations, reflecting the dominance of western economic thinking then, and now (Edwards 1999b).

During the Cold War international assistance was guided more by northern governments’ national geopolitical interests than poverty reduction and concerns about justice (Edwards 1999b; Rahnema & Bawtree 1997; Robb 2004). Fowler refers to “the structural nature of aid pathology” as beginning in the Cold War context where the “link between actual development achievement — be it growth or poverty reduction — and level and distribution of aid allocation” was uncoupled as aid was provided regardless of corruption, incompetence or human rights abuses (p.292). The

ongoing effect of measuring achievement by disbursement rather than development performance is the promotion of short-termism, and the use of aid as a mechanism to maintain bilateral relations and promote trade. Corresponding to donor-driven agendas is the “disempowerment and loss of ownership of the development process for many recipient governments and their populations” (Fowler 2000a:592).

### 3.2.4 Underpinning assumptions

Several assumptions which were taken-for-granted premises underlying modernisation and economic development theory and have been touched on are now examined in more detail. These include notions of evolutionism, universality, value free technology, economic advancement as the primary motivating force in people’s lives and underdevelopment as below “normal”.

The **evolutionistic** idea of economic development was explicitly articulated in the highly influential work of Rostow who argued that all countries have to pass progressively through certain stages to reach prosperity.

It is possible to identify all societies, in their economic dimensions, as lying within one of five categories: the traditional society, the preconditions for take-off, the take-off, the drive to maturity, and the age of high mass-consumption. (Rostow 1960:4)

This linear progression from tradition (characterised by low productivity and ignorance of modern technology) to modernity — which is taken to be the standard — was conceived to be natural and unequivocally good (Edwards 1999a; Rist 1997), and “pre-modern viewpoints were irrelevant or obsolete” (Goulet 1971:343)

While Rostow’s categories primarily described economic dimensions, modernisation as a concept embraced the following: in economic terms — industrialisation, urbanisation and the technological transformation of agriculture; in social terms — the weakening of social ties and the promotion of personal advancement; in political terms — the rationalisation of authority and the growth of bureaucracy; and culturally — the secularisation of society through the spread of scientific knowledge. These evolutionary changes were regarded to be synonymous with Westernisation as symbolised by the changes that had occurred in Western Europe and North America in the 18th and 19th centuries (Ingham 1993).

A consequence of social evolutionist paradigms which envisage societies on a development continuum is that “advanced” societies construe developing societies or cultures as inferior

(McMichael 1996). Said explores how the image of the incapable “other” enabled the West to justify their actions and underpin “the construction of their own superiority” (Edwards 1993:30 citing Said 1993), which is apparent in the paternalistic attitudes of aid-givers and a tendency to dependency by aid recipients (Fowler 2000a; Robb 2004).

The development process was assumed to be **universally** applicable to everyone, everywhere. As a result, culture and traditions were regarded as obstacles to development and modernisation was equated with westernisation. It has been widely argued that development/modernisation, along with human rights, were based on inherently western values which are not shared by all societies (Cowan et al. 2001; Crocker 1991; Escobar 1997; Tucker 1999; Verhelst & Tyndale 2002).

Another common assumption is that **technology** can solve poverty through, for example, large scale infrastructure projects, and is a morally neutral, scientific intervention (Crewe & Harrison 1998; Robb 2004). Technological advances are seen as a vital key to, or even synonymous with development (Crewe & Harrison 1998). Goulet (1995) posits modern technology as both creating and destroying values. He argues that values with specific conceptions of rationality, efficiency and problem solving are embedded in Western technologies. These privilege certain ways of seeing the world and, for example, disregard values concerning the sacred or kinship obligations. Advanced technology and technical expertise are used to “rationalise” aid. The division between indigenous and technical knowledge is based on value-laden ideas regarding the source of the knowledge whereby the knowledge of the expert is viewed as inherently “superior” regardless of the actual utility of the technology (Crewe & Harrison 1998:104). Whilst not denying links between poverty and technology there is concern with the harmful way in which technology is introduced. Numerous studies have demonstrated that technological change is very often detrimental to women, and that approaches and interventions by development programs tend to reaffirm existing social inequalities (Crewe & Harrison 1998).

In economic theory a key assumption is that humans are inherently self-seeking and motivated by the desire for **economic gain**. The dominance of neo-classical economics in mainstream economic thinking universalises human motivation and decision-making and establishes a country’s Gross National Product (GNP) as the measure of its development (Crewe & Harrison 1998).<sup>51</sup> Economic growth became regarded as the goal of development rather than the means by which development goals may be achieved (Crocker 1991; Goulet 1995). Gasper argues that GNP

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<sup>51</sup> An allied assumption is that growth is limitless and an ever expanding demand for commodities is desirable.

measures economic activity and not human well-being (2004:39). Through his analysis of the major documents on development Rist (1997) argues that virtually all theories and strategies about development which have been proposed over the last 50 years adhere to the basic belief that economic growth is the solution to underdevelopment. Rist argues that by construing “**underdevelopment**” as a lack (of finance, capital, technology and knowledge (Fowler 2000b)) and the “underdeveloped” simply as poor rather than as the result of historical circumstances, development policy depoliticised development and made growth and aid (conceived in technocratic, quantitative terms) the only possible answer (Rist 1997:78).

From these beginnings a range of theories have emerged over the last three decades, each of which has attempted to correct the limitations of the prevailing paradigms. I briefly present some of the key theories and concepts. While risking simplification, my purpose here is to highlight the dominant belief or value of each in order to identify consistent, or persistent, themes.

### 3.2.5 Dependency theory

By the 1970s the failure of development to make real its promises of closing the gap between much of the developed and developing world was beginning to stimulate a variety of responses. These ranged from theories and positions that accepted the basic premises of economic development but argued that efforts had not gone far enough, to those which challenged or rejected the fundamental assumptions upon which development was conceived. Analysis by the proponents of dependency theory concluded that “underdevelopment” in the Third World was the result of historical conditions and the structure of international trade meant that countries on the “periphery” would never be able to catch up with countries at the “centre” (McMichael 1996; Rist 1997; Robb 2004). They argued that the inherently unequal trade relationships between developed and developing countries meant “the more the First World invested in and traded with the Third World, the more exploitative this North/South relationship became” (McMichael 1996:122).

One factor which discredited the dependency theory was the rise of “Newly Industrialised Countries” such as Singapore and South Korea in the 1980s (Rowlands 1997:4). However, a key theme of anti-poverty campaigns today is the persistence of unfair structures of trade which entrench crippling poverty in poorer nations as rich nations maintain their advantages and higher standards of living. Donor countries’ resistance to fair trade and the consequences of this



overwhelm any benefits derived from their aid which, in real terms, is worth much less to recipient poor countries and usually comes with conditions attached.

### **3.2.6 Basic needs approach**

The basic needs approach arose in response to the realisation that rising economic growth in some countries was not accompanied with improvements in living standards (Clark 2002). In 1973 the World Bank President Robert McNamara supported this approach and, by declaring the overall objective of the Bank to be poverty reduction, signified a shift in the aid system towards meeting the basic needs of the poor through the process of development (Qizilbash 1996; Robb 2004). This heralded a change in emphasis from development as simply economic growth and rising income levels to the provision of minimum requirements of food, water, shelter, health and education (McMichael 1996; Robb 2004). Rural poverty and rural development became the focus of World Bank lending (Chambers 1997a). The basic needs approach was problematic because of its emphasis on a minimal level of living rather than the attainment of a full life (Qizilbash 1996). It was also not clear how needs were to be defined, or by whom.

### **3.2.7 Structural adjustment and conditionality**

The 1980s have frequently been referred to as the “lost decade” in terms of development (Schoorman 1993). The debt crisis which hit many developing countries had a severe negative impact on their (economic) development. This period marked a change in the delivery mechanisms for official aid from a “project” lending approach to “policy” lending in the form of structural adjustment loans (Robb 2004:26). Whereas previously aid had been relatively unconditional, these loans were given on the condition that the recipient governments enacted policy reforms to restructure their economies. These included cuts to the public service, reduced spending in health and education and cuts in food subsidies, market liberalisation, currency devaluation, privatisation of state enterprises and a reduction of wages to attract foreign investors and reduce export prices (McMichael 1996; Rist 1997; Robb 2004).

Conditionality, where aid is contingent on recipient compliance, is symptomatic of donors’ belief that they know better than the recipients and is a clear indicator of unequal power (Crewe & Harrison 1998; Pasteur & Scott-Villiers 2004). The resurgence of neo-liberal thinking in the eighties asserted the primacy of the free-market and advocated liberalisation, privatisation and control of inflation. These structural adjustment policies reflected the ideology of the North which argued for a reduced role for the state in development and economic intervention and an increased

role of private enterprise and the market. The focus was on growth rather than the distribution (Edwards 1999b; Robb 2004). At the same time, conditionality is now strongly linked to donors' good governance agendas and concerns about corruption. The World Bank in Cambodia states: "good governance is the most important pre-condition to economic development with sustainability, equity and social justice" (2004:1).<sup>52</sup>

### 3.2.8 Community development

The failure of bureaucratic top-down approaches and "trickle-down" theories to bring economic growth to the poorer sections of the population led to community based approaches that prioritised bottom-up development and local-level analysis. There was a corresponding growth in the role and importance of NGOs and grassroots organisations (Rowlands 1997:4).<sup>53</sup> Based on my experience many NGOs in Cambodia, and particularly those operating in rural areas, describe their goal and methodology as "community development".

Community development programs were operational in Latin America in the fifties, (Guijt & Shah 1998b) and were associated with British colonial strategies to promote cultural change in local peoples' attitudes and behaviours (Mayo 2000). Freire's (1970; 1972) work is often credited with being a source of inspiration for community development practice, particularly the link between the personal and the political. In the post-war period community development emerged as "a process designed to create conditions for economic and social progress for the whole community with its active participation" (Mayo 2000:90 citing United Nations definition, 1955).

The broad aim of participatory development, as of community development, is:

To increase the involvement of socially and economically marginalized people in decision-making over their own lives. The assumption is that participatory approaches empower local people with the skills and confidence to analyze their situation, reach consensus, make decisions and take action, so as to improve their circumstances. The goal is more equitable and sustainable development (Guijt & Shah 1998b:1).

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<sup>52</sup> The bilateral and multilateral emphasis on "good governance" is intended to promote accountable, transparent, democratic government which adheres to the rule of law and to the international agreements on human rights (Crew & Harrison 1998; Fowler 1997). The concept of good governance is not value-free and relates to "free markets and a limited and enabling State" (Slim 1995:147), and has become the new condition for receiving development assistance (Slim 1995; Van Tuijl 2000).

<sup>53</sup> While the concepts of participation and empowerment are integral to community development practice I will address each individually as over the last decade they have become prominent in international development discourse, quite separate to the notion of community development.

Generally, community development is based on value commitments to participation and empowerment (Mayo 1998) but also diversity (local definition of issues), social inclusion (reduction of inequities) and self-determination (people's ownership over their own development) and the belief in wisdom from below (Ife 2002).

There are a variety of perspectives within community development which prioritise different aspects of the role and importance of community. One, emphasising the “development of the community” is based on the belief that through collective action on local issues the “community” will become more cohesive. This perspective is concerned with the development of social capital, often in concert with activities aimed to strengthen civil society (Ife 2002).<sup>54</sup> A second perspective focuses on strengthening people's capacities to better meet their own needs (Korten 1990). A third alternative focuses on institutional reform and emphasises “community-based” projects which address specific communal needs (Mayo 1998). The cause of poverty is regarded as functional: the result of ineffective institutions such as the health, education or justice systems. The solution is to reform, strengthen and improve the existing institutions. A fourth alternative embraces community action to combat the structural origins of exclusion and inequality, aiming for societal transformation (Mayo 1998, 2000). The problem is viewed as situated within oppressive and inequitable social structures such as patriarchy, capitalism, institutional racism and income distribution. To address oppression or structural disadvantage major restructuring of society is required (Ife 2002).

In their analysis of the failures of participatory development, Guijt and Shah state that the common assumptions of homogeneity and harmony within the community ignore or simplify the complexity of social difference and divisions according to gender, age, economic, religious, caste and ethnicity. “This mythical notion of community cohesion continues to permeate much participatory work, hiding a bias that favours the opinions and priorities of those with more power and the ability to voice themselves publicly” (Guijt & Shah 1998b:1)

Also problematic are assumptions that local-level empowerment and actions can, by themselves, change the structures of power without recognition of the links to national and international systems which reinforce the existing structures (Korten 1990:120). Trends accompanying globalisation and which influence what can happen within the local context are the inter-related

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<sup>54</sup> Social capital is often referred to as the “glue” which holds society together (Ife 2002:15). It is the web of relationships connecting people. Civil society comprises voluntary associations of people with common interests which exist in the space between the state, the family and the market, and includes non-state, non-market organisations such as NGOs, community groups, churches, social movements, trade unions, business associations (Edwards et al. 1999).

characteristics of economic rationalism, managerialism, rationality and competencies (Ife 1997). These are underpinned by values which are not necessarily conducive to the values inherent in community development such as social justice and equity (1997).<sup>55</sup>

### 3.2.9 Key principles

In this section I look at the principles of participation, gender equality, empowerment, cultural diversity and sustainability.

#### *Participation*

The realisation “that development could not be externally directed, but required local ownership and sufficient capacity to guide the process” (Fowler 1997:3) led to a shift in development priorities in the 1980s and 1990s marked by an increase in policies and practices which emphasised participation (Brock & McGee 2002). Putting people at the centre and facilitating local people to analyse their situation and be involved in making decisions in the interventions that affect their lives was at the heart of participatory processes. Robert Chambers, an influential proponent of participatory approaches, argues that “behaviour and attitudes matter more than the methods” (1997:129). Participation is assumed to be universally good, both as a means and as an end in itself. “The whole point of development is to enable people to participate in the governance of their own lives” (Community Development Resource Association 1998:20). While the promotion of self-reliance is implicit in participation, external intervention and the bringing of resources by developers tend to create dependent relationships, which are a force against the development of what is being sought (Rahman 1993).

#### *Gender*

Development literature in the fifties and sixties did not differentiate between women and men as it was assumed that men and women benefited equally from development (Jahan 1995). Led by the seminal work of Ester Boserup (1970) mainstream theories and development practice that disregarded women’s contribution and their needs have been critiqued and influenced by feminist analysis since the early 1970s. Early efforts, referred to as Women in Development (WID), focused on bringing women into the development process and making more resources available to women in an effort to increase their economic contribution through their existing roles (Hunt 2004; Rowlands 1997). It did not question the patriarchal structures or the causes of women’s

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<sup>55</sup> Ife argues that for community development work to be successful it must overcome its previous fragmented perspectives and incorporate six dimensions: social development; economic development; political development; cultural development; environmental development; and personal/spiritual development (2002:131)

subordination. Very often this approach increased women's workloads, reinforced inequalities and actually widened the gap between men and women (Williams et al. 1995).

Gender and Development (GAD) turned the focus to the dynamics of gender relations and the socially constructed roles of both women and men. It advocated that improvement in women's position required not only women's involvement in development activities but their empowerment. This demanded a change in men's attitudes and behaviour. Changing the power relations between men and women is key to women's emancipation and requires cultural, economic and political changes (Hunt 2004; Jahan 1995; Rowlands 1997).

Jahan's study, which analysed the progress and impact of gender policies on the practice of four donors,<sup>56</sup> concluded: "The agencies were far more successful in discussing the issues and coopting the language of change than they were in actually changing policies and programmes and reallocating resources to bring about changes on the ground" (1995:106). Crewe and Harrison concur with this and argue that there is little real understanding of the power relations between women and men. The failure to confront the essentially political nature of gender relations ultimately results in a continuation of the WID approach in targeting women and dealing with them separately (Crewe & Harrison 1998:49).

### *Empowerment*

Powerlessness has been identified as the common theme underlying poor people's experiences of multiple and interlocking dimensions of illbeing or poverty (Narayan et al. 2000a).<sup>57</sup> The World Bank defines empowerment as "the expansion of assets and capabilities of poor people to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control, and hold accountable institutions that affect their lives" (Narayan 2002:xviii). The meaning of empowerment depends on how power is conceived. Rowlands identifies four forms or conceptions of power: power over (power seen as finite and controlling); power from within (inner power based on self-acceptance and self-respect); power to (generative or productive power) and power with (people acting together) (1997:13). The question of how disempowered people get to the point of claiming their rights is often ignored as much of

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<sup>56</sup> Jahan's research assessed the gender work of two bilateral (Norway and Canada) and two multilateral (the World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme) agencies in Tanzania and Bangladesh (1995).

<sup>57</sup> The ten dimensions of poverty and illbeing are: livelihoods and assets are precarious, seasonal and inadequate; places of the poor are isolated, risky, unserved and stigmatised; the body is hungry, exhausted, sick and poor in appearance; gender relations are troubled and unequal; social relations are discriminating and isolating; security is lacking in the sense both of protection and peace of mind; behaviours of those more powerful are marked by disregard and abuse; institutions are disempowering and excluding; organisations of the poor are weak and disconnected; capabilities are weak because of lack of information, education, skills and confidence (Narayan et al. 2000a:2).

the literature treats empowerment as instrumental with little attention given to the psychological aspects of the process (Rowlands 1997; Townsend et al. 1999).

Rowlands defines empowerment as a process which involves dynamic interactions between an array of different elements (such as culture, age and ethnicity) within three dimensions. “The first dimension involves “fundamental psychological or psycho-social processes and changes” central to which are the development of self-confidence and self-esteem, a sense of agency and dignity, leading to “undoing the effects of internalized oppression” (1997:111). The second dimension is collective empowerment where individuals work together to achieve their goals. The core elements are the development of group confidence through a sense of collective agency, self-organisation and management, and a sense of identity and dignity as a team (p.117). The third dimension is relational empowerment which refers to the ability to “negotiate and influence the nature of a relationship and decisions made within it” (1997:15).

Understanding empowerment as a process involving psychological and psycho-social change within the person indicates that empowerment is not something which can be done “to” people (Rowlands 1997; Townsend et al. 1999). However, the latter notion pervades the relationship between the powerful developer and the “powerless” person they are helping.

### *Culture*

The failure of development interventions led some to a growing awareness of the importance of culture.<sup>58</sup> The conventional view of development regarded culture as either a help or a hindrance (World Commission on Culture and Development 1995). Cultural development was conceived as a change in people’s traditional values, attitudes and beliefs which were holding them back, towards a more enterprising way of thinking, necessary for economic growth (Clark 2002; Crewe & Harrison 1998; Verhelst & Tyndale 2002). The 1995 UNESCO report of the World Commission on Culture and Development (WCCD) contends that culture — understood as the flourishing of human existence — is the end and aim of “development” (p.24).

The report argues that there is “an underlying unity in the diversity of cultures, which is defined in a global ethics”, and that “universalism is the fundamental principle of a global ethics” (1995:16).

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<sup>58</sup> Culture can be defined as “the complex whole of knowledge, wisdom, values, attitudes, customs and multiple resources which a community has inherited, adopted or created in order to flourish in the context of its social and natural environment” (Verhelst & Tyndale 2002:10) Goulet (1995:140) defines culture as “the living sum of meanings, norms and habits, and social artefacts which confer identity on one as a member of some visible community”.

This is embodied in universal human rights which declare that all people are born equal and have the same rights regardless of class, gender, race, community or generation. In valuing cultural diversity a tension exists when traditions engender injustice (as perceived from a universalistic viewpoint). A moral dilemma exists between the application of a universal ethic which, for example, recognises women's rights regardless of culture versus relativism which situates rights within the context of local culture and traditions which may deny women their rights. Sen argues that "conflict between the preservation of tradition and the advantages of modernity calls for a participatory resolution" where the affected people participate in deciding what they want (1999:32)

The view that traditions and culture are a barrier to development is persistent and prevails across the development sector. Explanations for the 'failure' of a project are generally sought within communities and the intended beneficiaries while the project of development itself is rarely questioned (Crewe & Harrison 1998). The failure to take culture seriously continues to result, for example, in the undervaluing of the spiritual "despite the fact that religious beliefs are the prime source of guidance and support for most human beings, especially those who are materially the poorest" (Verhelst & Tyndale 2002:1)

### *Sustainability*

The notion of sustainable development emerged as global environmental problems became apparent. The UN's World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) defines 'sustainability' as the ability to meet the needs of the present generation without compromising the needs of future generations (Ratner 1997:3 citing WCED). WCED's 1987 report "Our common future" established the need to integrate environmental issues with mainstream development work. However, while the report acknowledged the limits to development, economic growth continued to be emphasised as evidenced in the following excerpt: "What is needed now is a new era of economic growth — growth that is forceful and at the same time socially and environmentally sustainable" (cited in Rist 1997:183).

Ratner's theoretical conceptualisation of sustainability and his empirical study of how sustainability is operationalised in natural resources management suggests that "fundamental divisions derive from the way that *values* are addressed (1997:3, emphasis in the original). Ratner identified spheres of values associated with three different goals of sustainability — ecological, economic and

social.<sup>59</sup> Ecological values are concerned with biodiversity and ecosystem integrity and are embodied primarily at the international level of action on sustainability. Economic values are concerned with economic growth, incomes, productivity and efficiency, reflected most in national level interests, and social values, concerned with community welfare, coherence and identity, equity and spiritual or religious meaning, are reflected in local or community interests. There is conflict inherent in the three levels stemming from the different priorities given to ecological concerns, economic development and local people's rights to determine the use of environmental resources. Ratner concludes it is appropriate to see sustainable development as a dynamic dialogue of values which are "defined in specific contexts and dependent on the interaction of contending social groups" (1997:175).

In relation to development interventions it is suggested that conceiving of sustainability as "achieving the ability to keep moving, changing, and improving one's 'response-ability' to inevitably shifting circumstances" is more useful than considerations such as financial sustainability (Community Development Resource Association 1998:20).

### 3.2.10 Social development

Social development refers to an improvement in the social conditions in which people live, reflected by measures such as life expectancy, literacy rates and income (Edwards 2002:23).<sup>60</sup> The Human Development Index (HDI) introduced by the UNDP in 1990 measures these three variables. In 1993 its Human Development Report asserted: "there is no automatic link between income and human development" (cited in Slim 1995:145). Rist identifies this as the first time that a "good life" is distinguished from the accumulation of wealth (1997:209). That poverty consists of much more than lack of the minimum nutritional intake to sustain life, or lack of income to satisfy basic needs, has been an emerging understanding (Fowler 1997). This view of development with a "human face" emerged in the wake of increasing inequality, insecurity and environmental degradation resulting from free-market economics (Edwards 1999b; Rowlands 1997).

Although concern with social development issues has been voiced by development agencies such as the World Bank, the market-based growth model of development continues to underpin aid strategies (Fowler 1997). The 1995 UN World Summit for Social Development led to the

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<sup>59</sup> Sustainability can also be defined in terms of: technical sustainability (the continuation of technical innovations); and institutional sustainability. Social sustainability is the extent to which change is integrated with societal norms and values (Marcussen 1996).

<sup>60</sup> High life expectancy, while valuable in itself, is indicative of the quality and delivery of health care. Literacy is an indicator of people's ability to communicate and obtain jobs, and purchasing power is an indicator of people's ability to meet their basic needs (Ingham 1993).



emergence of a global social development agenda and eventually to the 2015 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which set goals for poverty reduction, with a renewed emphasis on the role of the state.

### 3.2.11 Globalisation, post-development theory and social movements

International development is undertaken in the context of globalisation which is grounded in neo-liberal beliefs in the rationality of an open world economy of free trade, deregulated money markets and privatisation. To critics, this model has “resulted in profits for transnational capital and for the elites of the South, while at the same time resulting in hunger and starvation for many of the poor, the breakdown of village communities, the creation of urban fringe-dwellers and the decline of basic health, education and social services” (Ife 2002:86).

Post-development theory rejects development because of its (lack of) results as well as its underlying premises and motives.

Development, as it imposed itself on its ‘target populations’, was basically the wrong answer to their true needs and aspirations. It was an ideology that was born and refined in the North, mainly to meet the needs of the dominant powers in search of a more ‘appropriate’ tool for their economic and geopolitical expansion ... The hidden — yet clear — message that every development project has carried to people at the grassroots has been that their traditional modes of living, thinking and doing have doomed them to a subhuman condition; and that nothing less than a fundamental change in their ways of confronting modern realities will allow them to emerge from that condition and earn the respect of the civilised world.  
(Rahnema 1997:384)

The mindset of orthodox or mainstream development has been reductionist in its view of human existence. Thus, according to Sachs, “it is not the failure of development that is to be feared, but its success” (Sachs 1992). Criticism of post-developmentalism asserts that it advocates self-organising capacity so that states and institutions are not held accountable. It is a program of resistance rather than transformation or emancipation (Pieterse 2000).

Responses of social movements to this failure of development range from withdrawal to attempts to reframe development as a question of rights and fundamental social protection (McMichael 1996). Social movements in the South affirm values of decentralisation, flexibility, simplicity, grassroots autonomy and reassertion of cultural values over those of the market (1996).

### 3.2.12 Human development

Human development is people-centred and envisages human flourishing in its fullest sense (Alkire 2002:182). A philosophical foundation for human development is provided by the capabilities approach. Sen has reconceptualised development as freedom and “the expansion of the ‘capabilities’ of persons to lead the kind of lives they value” (Sen 1999:18). From this perspective, poverty is conceived as “the deprivation of basic capabilities rather than merely as lowness of incomes” (1999:87). Capability refers to “what people are actually able to do and to be” (Nussbaum 2000:5). It is argued that capabilities is a better conceptual space in which to evaluate social welfare (equality and inequality) than economic growth or utility or the distribution of primary goods (Sen 1992).<sup>61</sup> A key principle of the capabilities approach is that people should be treated as ends, “as sources of agency and worth in their own right, with their own plans to make and their own lives to live, therefore deserving of all necessary support for their equal opportunity to be such agents” (Nussbaum 2000:58).

There has been considerable debate among scholars regarding whether or not a list of central capabilities should be devised, and Sen has been criticised for not doing this (Alkire 2002; Carmen 2000; Gasper 2000; Nussbaum 2000, 2003). While Sen is clear that the requirement of development is to remove “unfreedoms” such as poverty, tyranny, poor economic opportunities, social deprivation and neglect of public services which oppress people (1999:1, 33), he argues that the selection of capabilities requires a value judgement which in turn requires public discussion, as people should be able to define their own ends (1999:76-83). A number of authors (Alkire 2002; Carmen 2000; Clark 2002) argue that operationalising the capabilities framework in practice is problematic if the central question of what beings and doings are “valuable” is not addressed. I would argue that NGOs/practitioners are constantly making valuations concerning valuable beings and doings when development interventions are designed and evaluated.

Hence the need to develop norms of justice (Nussbaum 2003). Nussbaum argues from a universalist framework that is “committed to cross-cultural norms of justice, equality and rights,

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<sup>61</sup> Sen (1999:19) and Nussbaum (2000:60) critique the limitations of economic growth, utility and resource distribution as measures of well-being. GNP per capita does not tell us about the distribution of wealth and income, how deprived people are doing or what people can do with the incomes they get. Utility, which asks how satisfied people are, is extremely limited by the issue of adaptive preferences, that is, that people’s preferences can be shaped by injustice or distorted as a result of unjust background conditions. Unjust practices can be accepted as “normal” because they are traditional, customary or cultural, for example, women may accept their second-class status. Distribution of resources measures who is better or worse off in terms of resources but does not account for individual differences in need, or relative abilities to convert the resources into valuable functionings. I would argue that as we are all the product of our culture and environment development practitioners also accept unjust practices as “normal”.

and at the same time sensitive to local particularity” (2000:7).<sup>62</sup> When considering theories of justice in a cross-cultural context, the questions of what are universal requirements and what is acceptable cultural variation loom large. While context shapes both choice and aspiration, there is a widespread belief that in the part of our common humanity that crosses cultural boundaries there are many shared common values, and that there is the ability to reach a cross-cultural consensus on some common commitments (Gasper 1995; Glover 1995; Nussbaum 2000; Nussbaum & Glover 1995; Sen 1999). This claim to universality is contested by a range of leaders in Asia and the Muslim world who regard “certain elements of human rights legislation as a Western imposition, an instrument of moral imperialism or simply as representing an alien value system” (Molyneux & Lazar 2003:7; see also Eyben & Ferguson 2004; Ife 2002). This issue is also discussed in section 3.1.

### 3.2.13 Rights based development

Democracy and human rights moved to the forefront of the international development agenda in the nineties. The term “rights based development” was coined to describe the integration of principles of democratisation, rights, justice, empowerment and good governance into development practice (Molyneux & Lazar 2003:1).<sup>63</sup> The core principle in the rights based approach is that “all people are citizens with rights, rather than passive beneficiaries of aid” (Eyben & Ferguson 2004:163). The framework establishes rights and justice as the basis for the provision of development assistance, rather than discretionary charity or philanthropy (Eyben & Ferguson 2004; Harris-Curtis 2002).

The UN Declaration of the Right to Development establishes the relationship between human rights and economic, social, cultural and political development, with the “human person” identified as the central subject of development. It is widely argued that the “philosophical and moral strength of human rights lies in their universalist principles; all humans have certain rights by virtue of being born” (Harris-Curtis 2002:3) although, as already discussed, this is contested.

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<sup>62</sup> Nussbaum posits ten universal norms of capability for a life worthy of the dignity of the human being: life (being able to live to the end of a human life of normal length); bodily health (being able to have good health); bodily integrity; (being able to move freely and to be secure against violent assault); senses, imagination, thought (being able to use the senses, to imagine, think, and reason); emotions (being able to have attachments to things and people outside ourselves); practical reason (being able to form a conception of the good and to engage in critical reflection about the planning of one’s life); affiliation (being able to live with and toward others, and having the social basis of self-respect and nonhumiliation); other species (being able to live with concern for and in relation to animals, plants and the world of nature); play (being able to laugh, to play, to enjoy recreational activities); control over one’s environment (political and material) (Nussbaum 2003:41-42).

<sup>63</sup> Democratisation and the active participation of civil society are seen as essential to holding governments accountable and reining in corruption.

Rights based development involves a conceptual shift from the dominant needs-based and service driven approach to a more strategic intervention which incorporates rights issues with the aim of changing society at large as well as the lives of the project users (Harris-Curtis 2002; Hinton & Groves 2004a; Molyneux & Lazar 2003). Rights based practice involves a commitment to the genuine participation of the target population; an emphasis on empowerment; a focus on democracy — both in government processes as well as internal to the organisation; and a sensitivity to difference (Harris-Curtis 2002; Molyneux & Lazar 2003).

Harris-Curtis' research with NNGOs showed that while many mentioned a rights based approach in their mission statements almost all had adopted it only very recently, and a review of practice indicated that the approach “is far from being core within development work” (2002:1). Some of the problems in implementing a rights based approach are: the difficulty of people claiming their rights if their government has not ratified UN conventions or does not respect and protect them; powerful transnational companies and international organisations such as the World Trade Organisation have not adopted a rights based framework; and human rights are not universally accepted and are seen by some nations as essentially Eurocentric in nature (Harris-Curtis 2002; Sen 1999).

Table 1 summarises the range of development theories and concepts which have emerged over the past five decades. Theories are constantly evolving as complexity of the “problems” and of “human development” are better understood. The ideas and concepts of a particular theory/approach may build on and overlap with others, and there are not the clear lines between them as the table implies. The theory or approach being espoused by a particular institution or practitioner and the actual behaviour displayed may shift at different times and in different contexts (Hinton & Groves 2004a).

**Table 1. Evolution in development theories and concepts**

<b>Theory/ Concept</b>	<b>Definition of the problem</b>	<b>Strategies or solutions</b>	<b>Espoused values/ assumptions</b>
Modernisation Economic development	Underdevelopment due to lack of resources and technology. Poverty due to income deprivation	Economic growth, technical assistance, industrialisation	Primacy of economic/ material wellbeing Universality Evolutionist
Dependency	Structural disadvantage in international systems. First world advantage historically linked to Third World exploitation	Fair trade not aid — changing the rules of engagement Alternatively — disengagement	Independence, Equity
Basic needs	Addressing poverty through economic growth inadequate in meeting poor people's basic needs	Targeting the poor, provision of resources — water, food, shelter, health, education	Physical wellbeing Assumption of Maslow's hierarchy of needs
Community development	Local inertia, lack of cooperation, trust, disunity, lack of social capital, lack of capacity  Structural disadvantage and oppression	Bottom-up participation Self-reliance through capacity building and inputs, Community building Community action to address power inequalities	Collective action/ cooperation Participation Self-reliance Social cohesion/ Well-being
Participation	Lack of voice and ownership, dependency, lack of sustainability	Participation (as the means and an end in itself)	Self-determination Equality, self-reliance Assumption of relation between participation — ownership — sustainability
Women in development  Gender and development	Women marginalised in development, their interests and needs not the same as men and neglected Women's subordination and gender inequities	Targeting resources to women, in projects for women, positive discrimination Change in gender relations, empowerment of women	Equality of women and men Equity
Empowerment	Dependency, power inequalities, lack of opportunities	Facilitating power within/to/ with — knowledge, skills, confidence Changing structures	Dignity Equal opportunity Agency Capacitation
Culture	Lack of sustainability and ineffectiveness of programs attributed to disregard for cultural difference View of culture as obstructive	Culture valuable in itself; end and aim of development, what is valued is culturally determined	Diversity Identity
Sustainability	Environmental degradation related to notion of unlimited economic growth and need Lack of continuance of outputs/ outcomes	Conservation, appropriate technology, indigenous knowledge Capacity building	Common wealth, Biodiversity Conservation Sustainability
Social development	Poverty related to poor health and education, inadequate or ineffective public services	Institutional reform — better health and education systems	Assumption better health and education lead to improved economic situation
Human development	Deprivation of human capabilities, people limited by “unfreedoms”, multi-dimensionality of poverty	Expansion of capabilities and opportunities for people to live the life they value	Agency, equality Fulfillment of potential Being and doing
Rights based approach	Discretionary assistance reinforces dependency and inequality Deprivation of rights linked to poor governance and lack of democracy	People are citizens entitled to their rights; empower citizens to claim their rights, onus on the state to deliver, to improve governance, decrease corruption	Human rights; egalitarianism, equality, justice, democracy, transparency, accountability

### 3.2.14 Beliefs and assumptions underlying practice

Theorists have espoused new visions of development based on more comprehensive understandings of poverty and human flourishing. These embrace concepts such as participation, gender equity, empowerment, human rights and citizenship. However, a gulf exists between the ideals and how the reality is enacted at institutional, procedural and individual levels (Brunnstrom 2003; Chambers 2004; Chambers & Pettit 2004; Fletcher 2004; Gasper 2004; Hinton & Groves 2004a; Molyneux & Lazar 2003; Mysliwiec 2003; Pasteur & Scott-Villiers 2004). A difficulty in operationalising theories or approaches is that concepts are abstract and idealistic, and actions are driven by context and expediency (Pasteur & Scott-Villiers 2004). Mosse (2004) argues that policy serves to legitimise rather than drive practice. He contends that policy models are “poor guides to understanding the practices, events and effects of development actors, which are shaped by the relationships and interests and cultures of specific organizational settings” (p.663).

Critiques of the failure of development practice to enact theories repeatedly identify, at all levels, developers’ lack of attention to and understanding of power as a primary obstacle to facilitating developmental change. Analysis reveals that a number of themes identified in the assumptions and values underlying development in the post-war period such as inequality, control and standardisation still persist in today’s practices (Chambers & Pettit 2004; Craig & Porter 1997; Crewe & Harrison 1998; Edwards 1999b; Kaplan 1999).

#### *Equality*

“Aid, by its very definition, is a manifestation of inequality” (Robb 2004:21). The stereotype of the person “receiving” development as the dependent “other” who needs help persists. This reinforces unequal notions of power and responsibility (Edwards 1999b:43). Scott-Villiers contends that the “dominant culture of aid is materialistic and rooted in an ideology of charity and disrespect” (2004:203). She argues, and this is confirmed in “Voices of the Poor” (Narayan & Petesch 2000c), that disrespect is pervasive and changes in the development discourse will have little impact as long as “we believe that poor people are ‘below’ us”. This thinking asserts that “we *should* be more powerful than them” (Scott-Villiers 2004:203, emphasis in the original). A symptom of this inequality is that those intervening are primarily accountable to the funding source, and only secondarily to those who are receiving (Anderson 2001).

The discourse on partnership implies mutual reciprocity but is fraught with difficulties when parties are essentially unequal (Brunnstrom 2003; Chambers & Pettit 2004; Owusu 2004; Townsend et al. 1999). Power differentials pervade relationships across the development sector, resulting not in partnership but in domination and control. The failure to be conscious of, or to acknowledge and confront this power imbalance means the donor, or practitioners, avoid having to face letting go of control of the consequences or having a say in what happens (Townsend et al. 1999).

Despite the rhetoric of participation and learning from indigenous knowledge, the higher status accorded the knowledge of the “technical expert” remains, and the capacity of local people is dismissed (Chambers 1993). The concept of “capacity building” implicitly assumes that people lack capacity and developers have the capacity to fill the lack as a result of their superior knowledge (Scott-Villiers, 2004:203) which tends to smother all other contending ways and worldviews (Porter, 1991).

“It might indeed be argued that the whole aid industry rests on the assumption that greater economic power implies superior wisdom and hence confers the moral duty, not merely the right, to intervene in the lives of those who are less fortunate” (Eade 2002ix). This assumption leads to developers’ not valuing the historical, social, cultural and political context into which they intervene (Brunnstrom 2003; Crewe & Harrison 1998; Eyben & Ferguson 2004; Kaplan 1999).

Consequently, the understanding of local people’s priorities and perspectives is limited.

Development is often conceived of as the delivery of resources from outside to those who are lacking them. There is a tendency, therefore, not to perceive development as an intervention into development processes which are already in existence and need to be treated with respect (Kaplan 1999).

### *Participation*

Critical analysis argues against seeing the upsurge of participation and empowerment within the mainstream development thinking as evidence of a paradigm shift.

The use of participation as a legitimating device ... draws on the moral authority of claims to involve the poor to place the pursuit of other agendas beyond reproach. According to this perspective, much of what is hailed as ‘participation’ is a mere technical fix that leaves inequitable global and local relations of power, and with it the root causes of poverty, unchallenged. (Cornwall 2000:15)

The failure of development to be participatory is primarily attributed to the lack of reflexivity and change in practitioners' attitudes and behaviour and their resistance to sharing power. The rights based approach to development stresses partnership, empowerment, ownership, participation, accountability and transparency. However, the persistence of "embedded traditions, vested interests and bureaucratic inertia mean that old behaviours and organizational cultures persist", and so the gap between rhetoric and practice (Hinton & Groves 2004a:5).

Inherent in the very notion of participatory development is practitioners' belief that the situation, as they conceive it, is "amenable to, and justifies, their existence and intervention within it" (Cooke & Kothari 2001:15). In a similar vein, "the moral notion of allowing people to define their needs is weakened by the fact that it is the same individual, or group, who is in the relatively powerful position of choosing to allow something" (Crewe & Harrison 1998:161-2).

The proponents of participatory development have generally been naïve about the complexities of power and power relations. This is the case not only 'on the ground' between 'facilitators' and 'participants', between 'participants' and more widely between 'donors' and 'beneficiaries', but also historically and discursively in the construction of what constitutes knowledge and social norms. (Cooke & Kothari 2001:14)

Inequality in power relations in the development sector is unlikely to be challenged in Cambodia where unequal relationships, typified by patron-client relationships, are prevalent.

### *Control orientation*

Most development projects are characterised by the belief that all factors can be manipulated to achieve the desired objective in a controlled and predictable manner (Brock 2002; Edwards 1999b; Hinton 2004; Kaplan 2002; Uphoff 1996a). Projects have been the primary vehicle for development aid, at all levels, and have tended to be top-down. The project cycle envisages projects, in a closed system, as moving linearly through a series of defined stages, from needs assessment to planning, implementation and monitoring and evaluation, with the focus typically being on inputs, activities and outputs rather than outcomes and impact. Projects are regarded as "economic or technical interventions, rather than social processes" (Robb 2004:26). Despite criticisms, the Logical Framework Approach to project planning, which demands this type of thinking, remains a widely used project management tool.

The fundamental tendency of western scientific rationality is to analyse a situation and reduce it to its component parts. This reductionist view of what are complex realities results in, for example, a



focus on individual institutions within the system and ignores the inter-dependencies among all the actors and the cultural and political context in which they operate (Hinton & Groves 2004a). The assumption that the parts can be manipulated to bring about a particular outcome is problematic when the situation is invariably one of uncertainty and unpredictability (Kaplan 2002; Porter et al. 1991; Uphoff 1996a).

This control orientation has implications for how developers approach their work in that: “developers are predisposed to find a uniformity and predictability within the communities with which they work that does not exist in reality” (Crewe & Harrison 1998:16). Development interventions are better understood as “an ongoing, socially constructed and negotiated process, not simply the execution of an already-specified plan of action with expected outcomes” (Lewis et al. 2003:546 citing Long 1992), the backdrop to which is the global and national political and economic system.

#### *Standardisation*

Ferguson observes that many aspects of development interventions are “remarkably uniform and standardized from place to place” regardless of the diversity of different countries (1990:258). He attributes this to “context-independent” development expertise which can be generalised and applied to any given situation. This again can be related to a tendency to simplify complexity, and is similar to the universalist worldview described at the beginning of the chapter. Standard pre-set project packages simplify and speed-up the process of implementation, but ignore the unique circumstances of local realities and priorities and reduce the likelihood of integration (Chambers 1997b:75). Standardisation applies to procedures such as the use of specific participatory tools and techniques which has been referred to as an “homogenising ‘tyranny’” (Fowler 2000a:593).

#### *Depoliticisation of poverty*

Despite the language of “rights” much practice continues to act out of welfarist models which do not challenge the existing power structures or the political or cultural causes of poverty and injustice (Edwards 1999b; Hinton & Groves 2004a; Korten 1990).

By uncompromisingly reducing poverty to a technical problem, and by promising technical solutions to the sufferings of powerless and oppressed people, the hegemonic problematic of “development” is the principal means through which the question of poverty is de-politicised in the world today. (Ferguson 1990:256)

Viewing solutions to poverty as functional rather than structural often tends to place the cause of poverty with the poor themselves.<sup>64</sup> Political questions of land, resources, jobs or gender inequality are cast as technical problems to be solved by technical interventions.

### 3.2.15 Reflection

It has been said that “the idea of development stands today like a ruin in the intellectual landscape” (Sachs 1992). After half a century of development assistance worth hundreds of billions of dollars, and involving millions of development workers and numerous projects, together with major shifts in development strategies and approaches, there are still 1.3 billion people living in absolute poverty on less than US \$1 per day, and rising inequality both within and between countries (Edwards 1999:2; Fowler 1997:3).

A major factor in the perpetuation of poverty and the ineffectiveness of development derives, I believe, from conceptualising the situation in terms of us and them, and a profound acceptance of inequality. This is embodied in development relations at all levels, where helping and giving are grounded in discretionary charity rather than based on obligation and respect for the fundamental dignity of all and each person’s right to a decent life. While developers (practitioners in international agencies, donors, and NGOs) continue to see themselves as superior to or different from people who are poor because of what they have (by good fortune), the espoused ideals in the development discourse will not be enacted in development relationships and practice. Practitioners are situated within broader global and national political and economic systems that entrench disadvantage and exclusion, for example, the perpetuation of unjust structures of trade by rich nations whose governments, at the same time, lament poverty and talk about giving more aid. Likewise national governments who espouse pro-poor policies but whose actions maintain the status quo.

The evolution in the development discourse and appearance of new theories and approaches indicate a shift from a uni-dimensional view of development — that of economic well-being — to a multi-dimensional vision which embraces social, political, cultural and spiritual well-being. Despite this, as in the post-war period many developers today view economic development as the basis on which all other aspects of human development are built. Dominant assumptions and

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<sup>64</sup> Structural analysis relates the causes of personal and social problems to the socio-economic structure rather than to inherent personal inadequacy (Fook 1993:7).

beliefs about what is of value are the driving force behind the formulation of theories and concepts about development, and what actually happens in practice.

A somewhat simplistic conceptualisation posits economic development theory at one end of the spectrum and human development theory at the other. (A holistic view of development is not either/or but both/and.) Underlying economic (modernisation) theories of development are assumptions of: the primacy of individualistic and materialist bases to motivation; economic growth is unlimited; technological progress is essential; people/countries evolve from a state of underdeveloped to developed; the process is universal; culture is an obstacle to development; the dominance of western rational thought; the separation of spirit from matter, culture from economics; and people as recipients of development. The core underlying values are: individualism; materialism; competition; and secularism.

At the other end of the spectrum, the underlying assumptions of human development are: the multi-dimensional nature of human existence — social, economic, political, environmental, cultural and spiritual; environmental limits; respect for local knowledge, diversity and autonomy; culturally determined good life; the validity of other ways of knowing; open-ended processes; spiritual and material integrity; people as agents of development. The core values are: inclusion; diversity; reciprocity; cooperation; and spirituality. It sees economic development as a means to expanding capabilities, but not the desirable goal of development.

This section shows the widespread failure of development practitioners, at all levels, to embody these values and transform their ways of working to be gender equitable, empowering and participatory. As previously discussed, development is profoundly concerned with questions about what constitutes well-being or what is necessary for human flourishing. There is now an awareness, grounded in the past failures of development and the realisations of post-modern thought, of the need to be conscious of value judgments which underpin development planning and decision-making (Alkire 2002; Glover 1995).

“Development ultimately should increase people’s freedom to live the lives they value” (Narayan & Petesch 2000c:462). Tension exists between the notion of a universalist development ethic and the idea that the values which guide practice should be relative to different cultural and social contexts. Spirituality and values are neglected in development literature. There is still little place for the spiritual in the secularised world of the development sector, despite spirituality and

development (in the broader sense) being intimately linked to how people make meaning of their lives and discern what is of value to them in terms of progress and well-being.

This section has investigated the gap between the values and assumptions that are embodied in the discourse of development theories and those identified in development interventions which block the realisation of more cooperative, inclusive development assistance. In the next section I review the literature on NGOs, focusing on what NGOs espouse to be and do as self-identified value-based organisations as compared to evaluations of their actual performance.

### **3.3 NGOs**

#### **3.3.1 Introduction**

The policies, practices and organisational culture of the NGO is the platform from which the development practitioner intervenes into communities. Understanding NGO organisational values is important as they are regarded as forming the core of management and practice (Padaki 2001). The purpose of this section is to examine the nature and goals of NGOs. I explore NGOs as value-based organisations and their claims to hold a “comparative advantage” within the development sector in their delivery of development programs. The history and growth of NGOs are explored, particularly in terms of the influences of the new political and economic agenda of the North. The legitimacy of NGOs is questioned, along with their accountability to multiple stakeholders. The section concludes with an exposition of NGOs in Cambodia. The chapter reveals inconsistencies between the values and the practices of NGOs. This is most obvious in the values and goals NGOs espouse for transformative and structural change. The literature suggests that, on the whole, NGO practice does not truly embody these values. Section 3.2 demonstrated the failure of evolving theories of development to shift practices.

It is important to situate NGOs within the broader aid system or development establishment. In the big picture, NGOs are important but highly dependent minor actors (Fowler 2000c).<sup>65</sup> Situating NGOs thus indicates that NGO practitioners’ internalisation of values is but one issue influencing practice, which is not unrelated to wider forces. It raises a larger question, beyond the scope of this thesis, as to whether NGO failure to bring about change is a failure to internalise and practice the espoused values, the lack of adequate paradigms from which to carry out their work (J.

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<sup>65</sup> Research involving 40,000 poor people from 50 countries found that NGOs do not figure highly in the lives of poor people as they have limited presence and outreach (Narayan 2000:130, 271).

McAndrew, personal communication, October 2005), or the nature of the development promise itself.

### 3.3.2 NGO definition

Non-government organisations (NGOs) are defined as not-for-profit, legally constituted non-state organisations, established to serve third parties. As a subset, non-government development organisations (NGDOs) typically function as intermediaries in the international aid system and are distinguished by their mission to alleviate poverty and address social injustice (Fowler 1997, 2000a).<sup>66</sup> NGOs are formed voluntarily by a group of interested people for a common purpose. Voluntarism is a component of NGOs, at least for governance. NGOs do not create wealth and are not for personal private profit or gain. They are not part of or formally controlled by a state body and are self-governing (ACFID 2004; Fowler 1997).<sup>67</sup>

NGOs are typically included in the “third sector” of society, distinct from both the state and the market or private sector. The value-driven purpose of third sector agencies is the pursuit of social justice, as compared to those of the first sector which aims to “protect, secure and regulate the lives and actions of its citizens” and the second sector which is to establish a livelihood and create and accumulate wealth (Fowler 1997:22-3). The position of NGOs is disputed. It is argued by some that the third sector comprises community based or “grassroots” membership organisations who undertake voluntary collective action and self-help (Uphoff 1996b). In this view NGOs are assigned to the private sector (in a not-for-profit sub-sector) on the basis of the essential difference in their relationships — and accountability — to the people they serve as “clients” or “beneficiaries” rather than as members. NGOs act much like private businesses in terms of how decisions are made as “recipients” of aid do not, for example, decide about conditions or amounts of benefits (1996:23-7).

### 3.3.3 Value-based organisations

The fundamental mission of development agencies is humanitarian (Eade 2003). The fundamental moral value of humanitarianism, or principle of humanity, can be defined as “concern for the

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<sup>66</sup> Throughout the thesis I use the terms NGO and NGDO as equivalent, although NGDO is more appropriate as the organisations I am referring to work in developing or aid-recipient countries. This definition does not consider NGDOs focused on emergency and humanitarian assistance. For my purposes it does not include community based organisations (CBOs) such as village project committees.

<sup>67</sup> I use NGO to refer to both Northern or International NGOs (NNGOs and INGOs respectively) and Southern NGOs (SNGOs) unless specified. While there are different issues facing Northern and Southern NGOs there are also many similarities. This is partly because the forms and practices adopted by local NGOs as they emerged, or were “planted” in the south closely resemble those of the north (Fowler 2000b:3).

person in need” (Vaux 2001:2).<sup>68</sup> NGOs’ avowed reason for being is poverty reduction and their goals typically include improving the status of the poor and marginalised, strengthening organisational capacity, social justice, good governance and building social capital (Brown 1988; Edwards & Hulme 1996; Fowler 2000b).<sup>69</sup>

NGOs basically subscribe to a normative mission, whether this is explicit or not. They have a vision of how the world should be; a particular type of social order and human relationships. They have beliefs about what is wrong with the status quo, and how they can best apply their resources to improve the situation (Eade 2003; Fowler 2000a). NGOs are perceived to be, and perceive themselves to be value-based and value-driven organisations (Community Development Resource Association 2002; Fowler 1997; Hailey 2001; Korten 1990; Marcussen 1996; Paton 1999). The Guidelines to the Australian NGOs’ Code of Conduct state:

All Australian NGDOs have principles that flow from their values and philosophy ... These values and principles are used by signatories as a foundation to inform the development of policies and program strategies, defining each signatory’s own contribution to global development. (Australian Council for International Development 2004:3).

The use of the term “value-based” assumes certain desirable values. Because NGOs’ intention is to “do good” it is often assumed that they are ethical and benign (Porter et al. 1991; Vaux 2001). Typically, NGO values involve commitments to: equality of human beings; people-centred development; inclusion; participation (as both a means and an end in itself); empowerment (psycho-social and political); social justice; physical well being and security; human rights; good governance and democratisation; gender equity; local definition and ownership of change; sustainability; and learning from experience (Eade & Ligteringen 2001; Fowler 2002; Hailey 2001). These are similar to the values embodied in the conceptualisation of rights based and human development theories (see section 3.2).

For the majority of NGOs values and beliefs are rarely talked about explicitly or clearly stated (Fowler 1997). Typically these can only be deduced from NGOs’ purpose, vision or mission (if developed), the causes they pursue in society and the methods they use. In recent years there has been a trend toward making values more explicit in NGO management and decision-making

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<sup>68</sup> In current usage “humanitarian” is narrowly defined as those agencies involved in emergency relief work (Gasper 1999).

<sup>69</sup> Fowler states that building social capital is a recent addition. It emphasises strengthening and expanding relationships based on trust and reciprocity, between people, groups, organisations and institutions. He suggests that this is paradoxical as this goal contrasts with the current context of “an economic system which stresses competition, (market) segmentation and mistrust” (Fowler 2000b).

(Paton 1999). More attention is being given to values in relation to the personal development and reflexivity of practitioners (Chambers 1997a; Chambers & Pettit 2004; Edwards 1999a; Edwards & Sen 2000; Gilbert 2005; Scott-Villiers 2004; Vaux 2001; Villarreal 1992). The spiritual dimension of development and practice is also being raised (James 2003; Tyndale 2001; Ver Beek 2000; Verhelst & Tyndale 2002).<sup>70</sup> Despite this: “NGOs may speak about the primacy of values in their mission statements but less often do they operationalize values in day to day practice, organizational structure and processes” (Edwards 1999a:259; see also James 2003). In reality value commitments are not fixed but are constantly “discovered, absorbed, reconstructed, elaborated, selectively emphasized, and above all *used* — with an eye to internal and external legitimacy” (Paton 1999:36, emphasis in the original).

The belief that NGOs’ understanding of their mission informs their policies and practices (Eade 2003:ix) may be undermined by a number of factors. One already mentioned is NGOs’ lack of clarity and analysis of development and why poverty exists (Fowler 1996, 2000b; Korten 1990). The NGO tendency to action over reflection and to be “more descriptive than analytical” may result in the relations between mission, strategy, approach and methods not being articulated (Eade 2003:xi). The fallacy of ignoring the broader political landscape and basing actions on implicit assumptions rather than on critical analysis is accompanied by NGOs not questioning their role and who they are ultimately working for. “[This] has led to the false linguistic consensus of the 1990s and, to be somewhat harsh, to an intellectually lazy reliance on a handful of concepts and words as a substitute for thought” (Eade 2003:xi citing Pearce 2000:32). Padaki highlights the problems that arise when there is incompatibility between values premises of the formal management system with the organisation’s cultural values comprising the actual system of decision-making (2001).

What NGOs do in development is not neutral or value-free — even if no conscious choice is made. An approach that essentially maintains the status quo maintains existing power relations and resource allocations. If transformative it is aimed at changing power relations or resources allocation (Rowlands 2003). Development approaches such as participation and empowerment are underpinned by certain values, beliefs and assumptions. Methods or the specific ways these approaches are put into practice also have a value base, which should be compatible with the

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<sup>70</sup> Despite the growing interest in spirituality in the corporate world, secularism prevails and the spiritual dimension is ignored in NGO work even among faith-based NGOs (apart from those which are proselytising). This is understood to be a result of history and the imposition of religion which made it a source of oppression (James 2003).

chosen approach. When these value sets are incompatible the result is inconsistency between what is said and done (Rowlands 2003:4).

### 3.3.4 NGO development practitioners

“Many development projects reflect the values of aid workers rather than those whom they seek to assist” (Carr et al. 1998:99). This can be both positive and negative. Values are contentious when there is tension within the NGO’s values, and between the NGO’s values and those of the target group, as for example in the case of respect for diversity and indigenous knowledge and holding certain views about what is just, such as gender equity. It is argued (Edwards 1993; Nussbaum 2000) that respect for diversity should not lead to acceptance of indigenous injustice which is based on a different system of ethics. However, cultural sensitivity is often used as justification for inactivity.

A perceived strength of NGOs is highly motivated staff who are committed to performing well as a result of their own personal beliefs and values (Brown 1988; Fowler 1997). It is assumed that people who join NGOs have a personal commitment to NGO values. However, the actions of NGOs aspiring to humanitarian principles are often adversely influenced by personal motives and emotions so that interventions are not as altruistic as they should be. These include ideological prejudices, self-righteousness, institutional rivalries, personal ambitions, personal and organisational interests, fund raising imperatives, enjoyment of power and even racism (Vaux 2001:203). Vaux argues that without maintaining a clear, informed focus on the person in need there is a danger that personal prejudices can intervene unconsciously, with the potential for doing harm. Altruism and selfishness exist on a continuum and the practitioner’s aspiration to be altruistic is in constant tension with one’s self-interests (Uphoff 1996a; Vaux 2001).

Empirical research has found that field workers, at the interface between the NGO and their target group, use their discretion both positively and negatively to influence project implementation according to their personal attitudes, such as pursuing or avoiding gender policies (Goetz 1996; Jackson 1997). The notion of “professionalism” may be an obstacle to development if personal and professional concepts, values, methods and behaviour prevent learning and are responsible for persistent beliefs in the superiority of expert knowledge and the inferior knowledge and lack of capacity of local people (Chambers 1997b).

Translation of NGO values into practitioners’ practice is not automatic. The choice of approaches and methods “are profoundly shaped by assumptions that are made about people”, such as



whether people have capacity, value and potential and are equal, and also about what can and cannot be done, how change happens and how learning takes place. These assumptions may be based on research and experience, or on beliefs and values (Rowlands 2003:4). The presumption that an organisation's values and commitments can be implemented by "mechanisms" is debatable. As people and organisations pursue multiple goals some inconsistency between values and action is inevitable. A frequent tension exists between process and the demands of good practice, and product which is the requirement of good management (Padaki 2001). The operationalisation of NGO values in development practice calls for an organisational embodiment of values such as solidarity and equity, which are at odds with an environment where the accepted norm is large power differences (Fowler 1997).

Conflicts occur between values and invariably there are tradeoffs which result in one task compromising another. The notion of a values hierarchy is important as situations arise where it is essential to analyse which values matter most (Paton 1999). The paradoxes in humanitarian work have been examined (Terry 2002; Vaux 2001). The same choices exist in NGO development practice, such as deciding to work with government despite corruption and inefficiency, or to implement directly setting up parallel structures which draw funds from inadequate government services.

### **3.3.5 NGOs' comparative advantage**

Traditionally NGOs have claimed, and are perceived, to have a comparative advantage over other development agencies because of their ability to reach the poor and respond to their real needs through their strong local contacts, their capacity to work in remote areas, their promotion of "authentic" local participation, the use of low-cost technologies, their cost-effectiveness, flexibility, non-bureaucratic nature, innovativeness in terms of development interventions, their adaptability (Ebrahim 2003; Fowler 1997; Hailey 2001; Marcussen 1996; Riddell 1999) and their capacity to democratise development and strengthen civil society (Pearce 1997). This advantage is attributed, in part, to their commitment to values rather than market share (Edwards 1999:80). In contrast, bi/multi-lateral agencies and the state are perceived to be top-down, large-scale bureaucracies with standardised practices, too trickle-down oriented, too supportive of elites and corrupt officials, unable to collaborate with the grassroots (Porter et al. 1991), ineffective, inefficient and wasteful (Crewe & Harrison 1998; Marcussen 1996).

Research indicates however that the “true impact of NGO development work remained unclear and that there was little consensus on which tools and methods were the most appropriate to find out” its impact (Roche 1999:3). Extensive research with people who are poor indicated that NGOs have a mixed record. On the positive side, there were many localised examples of NGOs providing valuable services and having the trust and confidence of poor people. On the other side NGOs had problems with coverage, implementation and ultimate effectiveness (Narayan et al. 2000a). It is argued that there is little evidence to suggest that NGOs are any better in generating sustainable progress than official aid agencies, where sustainability is estimated to occur in approximately 15 per cent of interventions (Fowler 2000b) or that they are any more successful in reaching poorer areas than formal institutions (Edwards & Hulme 1996; Narayan et al. 2000a).

From his research Narayan concludes there are very few NGOs addressing the fundamental causes of structural social inequity and argues that “perhaps the biggest weakness of NGOs is that they generally do not tend to support the long-term capacity for local self-governance” (Narayan et al. 2000a:140). Korten (1990) outlines three generations in the evolution of (Northern) NGO development action which relates to their strategic orientation or their understanding of the causes of and solutions to poverty. “First generation” NGOs respond by meeting immediate needs through a focus on welfare and relief. They alleviate suffering and symptoms but do not theorise about or attack the fundamental causes of poverty, and essentially maintain the status quo. The “second generation” of community development interventions focuses on self-reliance and building the capacities of local communities. The assumption of “local inertia” supposes that poverty is caused by people’s lack of capacity at the local level. Sustainable systems and organisational strengthening form the core of “third generation” NGOs whose agenda is activism and who seek to make changes in the policies and institutions at local, national and global levels which create structural injustices and maintain poverty.

Korten suggests this evolution in generations results from NGOs’ critical reflection on their own experience and their realisation of the need to change their strategies. However, his assessment is that much NGO work is essentially relief and welfare as their interventions do not empower people or enable their self-reliance, but in fact create dependence (1990:141). This tendency of NGO interventions to be palliative rather than transformative is well documented in the literature (Crewe & Harrison 1998; Marcussen 1996; Porter et al. 1991). The failure of NGOs to understand socio-economic complexities with communities, particularly power dynamics, is regarded as compromising their aims “to do good” (Guijt & Shah 1998a; Rowlands 1995).

There is considerable literature which contends that NGOs are not genuinely participatory (Carr et al. 1998; Chambers 1997b; Crewe & Harrison 1998; Hailey 2001; Marcussen 1996). This is attributed in part to the failure of NGOs to democratise themselves (Chambers & Pettit 2004; Edwards & Hulme 1996; Owusu 2004; Uphoff 1996b). A barrier to NGOs relinquishing some of their power in decision-making with the grassroots is the risk of losing control. While this negotiation is regarded as important for downwards accountability (Ebrahim 2003; Edwards & Hulme 1996), in reality hierarchy remains the “dominant practice” (Carr et al. 1998:57). Research and experience suggest that the assumptions and ideologies of NGOs are similar to those of official development agencies (Crewe & Harrison 1998).

NGOs have been accused of inefficient management (Hailey 2001:165). It is also argued that NGOs lack transparency, accountability and legitimacy and that the very features of NGOs that made them more effective are now being compromised by their increasing dependence on official aid (Chambers & Pettit 2004; Edwards & Sen 2000; Owusu 2004; Slim 1995). In becoming more “professional” and accountable to meet their donor requirements, the flexibility and innovativeness of NGOs is diminished, decreasing their ability to satisfy the needs of poor people (Marcussen 1996).

### 3.3.6 History and growth

The rapid increase in the numbers and size of NGOs (both in the north and south) during the 1980s and 1990s has been widely noted (Edwards & Hulme 1996; Hailey 2001; Hulme & Edwards 1997; Malhotra 2000; Marcussen 1996).<sup>71</sup> Insight into some of the difficulties confronting NGOs can be gleaned from understanding their different histories, their growth as a sector and the competing demands of their different constituencies. While much of what follows pertains more directly to northern NGOs, their ideology and cultures impact on their southern NGO “partners”.

The NGO archetypes emerged in the early 1900s as a humanitarian response to situations of suffering and vulnerability, particularly those caused by war. Their inspiration was largely based on “religiously informed and culturally conditioned values of compassion” and from a sense of mutual obligation (Fowler 2000b:2). With decolonisation in the 1950s and 1960s, NGOs became

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<sup>71</sup> For example, in OECD countries the number of registered development NGOs rose to 2970 in 1993, almost double the number in 1980 and their spending during that period increased from US\$2.8 billion to US\$5.7 billion (Hulme & Edwards 1997:4). In 1999 the number of International NGOs was estimated to be 30,000 (Crewe & Harrison 1998:6). NGO numbers have also increased rapidly in the south (for example, in Nepal from 220 in 1990 to 1,210 in 1993, in Bolivia from 100 in 1980 to 530 in 1992, in Tunisia from 1,886 in 1988 to 5,186 in 1991) as well as in size (for example, NGOs such as the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee which, in 1993, had more than 12,000 staff and worked with more than three million people) (Edwards & Hulme 1996:1).

motivated more by political thinking than compassion, and there was a new focus on structural transformation in the light of liberation movements. At this time support from NNGOs was informed by solidarity (Fowler 2000b). NGOs relied on private support and were outside the “institutionalised system of overseas assistance” (p.3). Up until the early 1980s NGOs delivered welfare services to poor people due to the limitations of state institutions (Hulme & Edwards 1997). In the 1970s official aid was influenced by “basic needs” thinking which resulted in a shift towards the targeting of vulnerable groups and the provision of social services where NGOs were directly operational. This is regarded as the beginning of interaction between NGDOs and the official aid system (Fowler 2000b).

Over the past fifteen to twenty years changes in economic and political thinking have seen the growing dominance of neo-liberal economics and liberal democratic theory which believe the most efficient way to achieve economic growth and provide services is through the free-market and private initiatives. In this view the state should have a minimal enabling role in the economy (Hulme & Edwards 1997). NGOs came to be seen as a means for operationalising economic and political goals. Privatisation of the state’s traditional roles has increasingly resulted in NGOs and consultancy companies being contracted by bilateral and multilateral donors and governments to provide large scale delivery of social and welfare services instead of the state (Edwards 1999b; Hulme & Edwards 1997; Malhotra 2000). More recently, as civil society has come to be perceived as essential to the promotion of liberal democracy and the good governance aid agendas of donors, NGOs are regarded as important vehicles for “democratisation” (Edwards 1999c; Fowler 2000a, 2000b; Hulme & Edwards 1997; Pearce 1997).

A consequence of this trend is that NGOs have entered the mainstream, with many NGOs receiving more than 50% of their funds from official aid sources (Fowler 2000b).<sup>72</sup> This shift from the periphery has raised serious dilemmas regarding NGO identity and relevance. Studies in Britain have shown that NGO behaviour can and does change as a result of becoming more dependent on official development aid (ODA), for example, emphasising accountability to funders rather than to those being served (Edwards & Hulme 1996; Fowler 2000a, 2000b). A tension exists between what NGOs need to do to fulfill their social mission and institutional imperatives such as ensuring their survival (Edwards 1999a). As a result of their funding dependence NGOs are more

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<sup>72</sup> Donors contributed 1.5% of total income to NGDOs in the early 1970. This rose 30% by the mid-1990s when the five largest NGDOs in the UK received between 20 to 55% of their funds from the government (Hulme & Edwards, 1997:7). In 2000, Fowler estimated NGOs disbursed \$12 to \$14 billion per annum. Approximately 12% of the total annual official aid disbursement is disbursed to and through NGOs (2000A:601).

likely to be influenced by donor priorities and avoid speaking out on injustices likely to be unpopular with donors (Hailey 2001; Hulme & Edwards 1997; Malhotra 2000). The focus thus moves away from empowering others for independent action and building up people's organisations towards building up the NGO itself and empowering NGO leadership (Hulme & Edwards 1997).

Where NGOs are increasingly providing services, for example, health or education, a citizen "may gain more *entitlements* to these things ... but lose them as *rights*, especially if the NGOs are only weakly accountable to a weak state" (Edwards 1999b:85, emphasis in the original). In this way NGOs could be "complicit or unwitting instruments of northern globalisation policy" (Fowler 2000a:591). The closeness of NGOs to the state influences their ability to decide the role that they will play in society and reduces their autonomy. A related concern is the weakening of NGOs' relations with their partners and local communities (Edwards 1999a; Fowler 2000a; Hailey 2001).

A further concern with NGOs move into the mainstream is the measurement of performance in service-related activities according to managerial or market values of efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability (Edwards 1999a; Hailey 2001:165-6).<sup>73</sup> The emphasis on money, accountability, cost-efficiency and tangible, quantifiable measures of development are at odds with NGO values of flexibility and innovation, and induce a shift of activities away from risky projects with poor people. Ife (1995) argues that an economic rationalist framework does not relate well to values such as empowerment, social justice, a commitment to the disadvantaged, the inherent worth of the person, the right to develop to one's full human potential and so on. Mechanistic planning, as evidenced in the use of tools such as logframes, assumes a controllable environment for the delivery of measurable output, impact and capacity (Riddell 1999; Uphoff 1996b).<sup>74</sup> Similarly, donor approaches to beneficiary participation tend to be instrumentalist in terms of achieving short-term goals. This is incompatible with NGOs' espoused vision which views participation as a means to empower the poor and as a learning process (Edwards & Hulme 1996).

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<sup>73</sup> Fowler (2000b:5) argues that NGO discourse is now framed in the language of the market and does not have the concepts or language to "articulate alternatives or to criticise the prevailing orthodoxy in terms of its fundamentals as opposed to its operations". He suggests that the market values of "individualism, competition, extraction, accumulation, exploitation and rivalry as the normative mode for relations between people and between people and nature" are destructive of social capital and undermine values such as "trust, reciprocity, mutuality, co-operation and tolerance of difference" which NGOs espouse as their goal (p.6).

<sup>74</sup> Uphoff (1996:34) argues that the closed system view of the universe perpetrated by project thinking, with its advanced specification of objectives, means and pre-determined ends (primarily to assess accountability in these terms) and the aim of achieving "efficiency", is in direct opposition to learning process theory which states what is needed is "an adaptive, creative, flexible process of matching available and expanding means to emerging and evolving ends".

### 3.3.7 Legitimacy and accountability

The increased attention to issues of legitimacy and accountability in the development studies literature is partly the result of NGOs' increased prominence and funding from official development aid sources. For legitimacy claims to be sustained NGOs have to be accountable for what they achieve (Crewe & Harrison 1998; Edwards 1999a). But the question is, accountable to whom? In the literature, NGO legitimacy is frequently correlated to genuine or authentic partnership with their constituency and the values they espouse (Chambers 1997b; Crewe & Harrison 1998; Eade 1997a; Edwards 1999a; Hailey 2001). Many authors contend that the language of partnership is corrupted through its use to cover the whole spectrum of relationships without clarity of meaning or purpose. While the global discourse of partnership implies "collegial equality and mutual reciprocity", this means little in practice when the underlying systems remain unchanged, particularly with regard to relations of power and control (Chambers & Pettit 2004:145).

NGOs growing dependency on official development aid corresponds to the shift of NGO moral legitimacy from the civic to the public domain (Fowler 2000b). Edwards states that it is "the role of values in claiming legitimacy" — that lies at the heart of the dilemma that faces NGOs. "Being, becoming and remaining a truly values-based organisation presents all NGOs and voluntary agencies with an extremely complex and demanding agenda" (Edwards 1999a:266).

NGOs have multiple and sometimes competing accountability demands due to the involvement of different stakeholders (Paton 1999).<sup>75</sup> NGO upward accountability to donors and governments generally takes precedence (Chambers & Pettit 2004; Ebrahim 2003; Edwards & Hulme 1996; Uphoff 1996b).<sup>76</sup> Downwards accountability to "recipients" or "beneficiaries", and to NGOs themselves in terms of complying with their organisational mission and values, is generally low (Ebrahim 2003; Edwards & Hulme 1996). Accountability through self-regulation takes the form of codes of conduct or standards.<sup>77</sup> NGO codes of conduct are in their infancy, most having been

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<sup>75</sup> Craig and Porter (1997:234) describe how a typical NGO project involves a funding body, a NNGO, a SNGO and at least one community based organisation. They argue that, instead of the project objectives and goals travelling down the chain and being implemented intact with the target population, in fact, at each level, the project is re-framed and reconstituted in terms of each organisation's concerns, priorities and capacity.

<sup>76</sup> Functional accountability is usually high. It refers to what is happening at the individual project level in terms of reporting on short-term activities and achievement of immediate outputs. Strategic accountability, which considers the achievement of wider programmatic goals, impact on the wider environment and long-term change, is typically low (Ebrahim 2003; Edwards & Hulme 1996).

<sup>77</sup> Codes of ethics/practice/conduct appear to be used interchangeably, for example, by Shardlow (2002) and Banks (2001). Gasper defines codes of ethics as more formalised statements of general principles that can help provide identity and morals to a

adopted within the last ten years (Edwards 1999a). They are mostly voluntary, have weak enforcement mechanisms and lack independent verification by users or beneficiaries (Edwards 1999a).

### 3.3.8 NGDOs in Cambodia

Only after the signing of the Paris Peace Accords in October 1991 and the opening up of the political environment during the UNTAC period were NGOs present in Cambodia in significant numbers.<sup>78</sup> The numbers of international NGOs increased rapidly (in mid-1996 there were an estimated 200 international NGOs (Curtis 1998:137)), some moving into Cambodia from the Thai border camps while others came as large amounts of funding was available from multilateral and bilateral donors who were distrustful of the State of Cambodia's "existing administrative structure" (p.132). In the mid-nineties a small number of international NGOs saw their role as providing funding and non-funding support to assist the establishment or growth of newly emerging Cambodian organisations.

The first Cambodian NGOs were established in 1991 and numbers increased exponentially to 12 in 1992 then to over 867 local organisations and associations being registered with the Ministry of Interior's NGO department in 2001 (Mansfield & MacLeod 2002; O'Leary & Meas 2001). (This figure does not represent the number of actual functioning Cambodian NGOs with program activities and funding which was estimated to be between 200 to 400 in 2002 (Mansfield & MacLeod 2002).) Cambodian NGOs are heterogeneous in terms of their purpose, size and level of support and activity. Motives to establish local NGOs were mixed, comprising the desire to help their country, along with, in some cases, a desire to help themselves by providing employment with donor funds (O'Leary & Meas 2001). While some Cambodian NGOs were self-initiated, others were established in response to donors looking for potential "partners" to support. Yet others emerged from the localisation of international NGOs themselves or based around the staff of an international NGO project (Mansfield & MacLeod 2002; Richardson 2001). Very few Cambodian NGOs emerged from people's organisations.

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profession and a framework for more detailed codes of practice which provide more detailed guidance and regulations about many aspects of procedure, and are often specific to a sector or agency (Gasper 1999).

<sup>78</sup> International NGOs were present in Cambodia before 1975 but left or were forced out by the Khmer Rouge. Following its overthrow in 1979 NGOs provided humanitarian and emergency assistance as part of the international relief operation. Due to the international political and economic embargo during the 1980s and early 1990s only a small core of international NGOs were present and they provided the only channel for Western support to Cambodia, apart from limited World Food Programme and UNICEF programs (1998). The NGOs were often involved in non-traditional activities such as major infrastructure rehabilitation and direct assistance to Cambodian government programs and services. Larger numbers of international NGOs provided services to Cambodian refugees in the Thai border camps.

The establishment of the majority of local development NGOs was not based on a philosophy of carrying out the development demands of the people they served, rather local NGOs were created to implement programs that were directed by an original (often foreign) founder or donor agency. (Mansfield & MacLeod 2002:7)

Cambodian NGOs can be categorised by the nature of their main activities as advocacy/issue-oriented organisations, community development organisations and training/support organisations (Richardson 2001). The role of NGOs in Cambodia includes: provision of services including health, education, water and sanitation, agricultural extension; community organising; technical and educational assistance; grant-making; training and technical assistance; research and information exchange; networking for sharing experience and program coordination; development education; advocacy; disaster relief; promotion of human rights, advancement of democracy, nation-building, peace-building (Downie & Kingsbury 2001:60-1). The importance of NGOs' contribution in Cambodia's reconstruction and rehabilitation, and in promoting human rights and democratic values has been widely acknowledged (Curtis 1998; Downie & Kingsbury 2001).

In 2001 along with Meas Nee I undertook a study to investigate why evaluations consistently found that development practice in Cambodia was not as participatory, empowering, gender equitable or pro-poor as espoused. The features of Cambodian NGOs' rural community development practice at that time were: a project-oriented approach to development; development conceptualised as the provision of resources and skills; an espoused intention for close relationships with their target group which was variable in practice; a mixed understanding of social dynamics and power relations and a tendency to primarily work through project committees (often comprised of better-off members of communities); the absence of a clear vision or goal for development; limited understanding of gender relations, poverty and the wider system within which NGOs were operating; and their difficulty to change practices even when they had learnt from previous experience and had the intention to correct identified problems. To a large extent, training and capacity building efforts focused on strengthening technical skills and knowledge to manage and implement projects and did not take Cambodian cultural beliefs into account.

Cambodian NGOs, similar to emerging Southern NGOs elsewhere, have largely adopted the form and practices of international NGOs (Fowler 2000b; O'Leary & Meas 2001). As described in chapter 2 intermediary organisations between the family and the state (apart from religious groups) did not traditionally exist, so there were no indigenous organisational models for Cambodian NGOs. "Concepts of voluntary organisations (apart from religious groups), development, participation, accountability, democracy and grassroots driven popular movements are all very new



in Cambodia” (Sasse 1998:5). In the early 1990s, Cambodian development practitioners had little knowledge of the value base of NGOs. Research in 2001 indicated that the concept of values *per se* was not well understood by Cambodian participants (O’Leary & Meas 2001). While some NGOs have attempted to name their core values, others were unable to articulate clearly what motivates their work. This was interpreted as a level of consciousness rather than implying an absence of values. Richardson also reported that vision, mission and goals are difficult topics for Cambodian NGOs (2001). While many NGOs have developed “value” statements, they are generally not well understood nor used to guide practice. Funding availability can alter an NGO’s program. She suggests that Cambodian NGOs “may not consider ‘values’ as an important theme in their work” (2001:6).

It has been frequently noted by evaluators that Cambodian NGOs, especially those run by founder-directors, have a hierarchical structure with “patron-client relationships a dominant feature” (Richardson 2001:11). This patronage structure is consistent with Cambodia’s culture where there are few models of democratic or participatory management styles. In reality, hierarchy is also a common feature among international NGOs. “Partnerships” between Northern NGOs and Cambodian NGOs reflect the fundamental power inequalities in the relationship discussed in the previous section. Research indicates many Cambodian NGOs feel powerless in relation to the donor whose control over funds conditions the relationship (O’Leary & Meas 2001; Richardson 2001), as do indigenous NGOs elsewhere (Brunnstrom 2003; Marcuello & Marcuello 1999; Pasteur & Scott-Villiers 2004).

A Code of Ethics for Associations, NGOs and People’s Organisations in Cambodia was developed in the mid-nineties but this has not been widely promoted (Cooperation Committee for Cambodia 2004a).<sup>79</sup> The Cooperation Committee for Cambodia (CCC)<sup>80</sup> in 2004-5 is developing NGO Good Practice Principles with the aim to improve accountability and transparency and enhance performance (2004). In 1996 a draft NGO Law was produced by the Ministry of Interior, with extensive consultations with NGOs, but was not promulgated and has since been in abeyance (Richardson 2001), leaving the country without an NGO legal framework. Tension exists in the

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<sup>79</sup> A review of this Code was initiated by Star Kampuchea (a Cambodian NGO support organisation) in 2003. It was first drafted in English in 1995 by board members of CCC. It was translated into Khmer by a Cambodian NGO umbrella organisation and distributed to Cambodian NGOs at the 1996 Second NGO Fair. Amendments were made by Star Kampuchea, in conjunction with CCC, and this was ratified by 200 NGOs attending the Third NGO Fair. The Code is voluntary and has no compliance mechanism (CCC 2004b:315). Ebrahim (2003:820) points out that a code’s creation process influences its legitimacy and is crucial to its adoption.

<sup>80</sup> Cooperation Committee for Cambodia is a membership organisation representing 98 NGOs — 78 international NGOs and 20 Cambodian NGOs (2004).

relationship between the Cambodian government and NGOs (Downie & Kingsbury 2001; Khus 2000), although at a local level this has changed with the election of commune councils in 2002. This can be attributed to government officials perceiving NGOs as anti-government (Downie & Kingsbury 2001). On the other hand, NGO staff may perceive government staff to be politicised, inefficient and, in some cases, corrupt. The concept of neutrality and non-partisanship is not well understood by either group.

Largely as a response to the change in donor priorities and the increased emphasis on governance and democracy Cambodian NGDOs previously involved in the delivery of projects through a community development model are moving to advocacy and rights based approaches (Mansfield & MacLeod 2002). Prior to 1995 very few advocacy activities were conducted, apart from human rights work, and not until the late nineties did the majority of NGDOs link advocacy, human rights and development (O'Leary & Meas 2001). In the current political environment where corruption, impunity and patron-clientism are rife (Downie & Kingsbury 2001) the shift of NGOs to a rights based approach is problematic as government officials are not necessarily receptive to the notion of citizens' rights. The context chapter presents the historical, cultural and political context in Cambodia which outlines some of the obstacles to participatory and representative processes.

### 3.3.9 Summary

Empirical research into the dimensions of values demonstrates the relation between variations in individual- and culture-level value priorities, with differences in individual and cultural behaviour respectively. While not the only influence on behaviour, values influence people's choices and what they consider desirable for a good life. What an individual values is influenced by her or his culture. As a person holds a number of values these are hierarchically ordered depending on the particular situation as all cannot be given equal priority at the same time.

Theorising about the meaning of development and the causes of poverty has evolved over the past forty years. The values and assumptions underpinning recent theories espouse more inclusive and equitable understandings of and approaches to development. However, the literature demonstrates a widespread failure of the development sector to embody these values in practice at the global, national and local levels. This is attributed to a number of factors, central to which are the issues of power and inequality.

NGOs espouse a range of value-based approaches to and goals for development. Despite their good intentions their actual practices often fail to enact the values they profess. Among other things, this is influenced by the competing demands of various stakeholders including the organisation's own sustainability demands.

This study draws on each aspect of the literature review in investigating the influence of values on Cambodian practitioners' development practice in NGOs in Cambodia.

## CHAPTER 4 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

### 4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I describe the conceptual framework which is based on Argyris and Schön's (1974, 1978) "theories of action" and their concept of espoused (what a person says) and in-use (what a person actually does) theories. I address the aspect of incongruence and people's unawareness of inconsistency between what they espouse and what they do. I include the concept of the good life in the conceptual framework in order to investigate practitioners' personal beliefs regarding the constitutive elements for their well-being as compared to their espoused values regarding desirable development.

The core of this study is an exploration of the contrast between what Cambodian development practitioners believe and say is their intention in development practice, and what they actually do; and how values influence the nature of, and reasons for, the disparity. This incongruity is not particular to Cambodia as it has also been widely documented in development studies literature (Argyris & Schön 1974; Brunnstrom 2003; Crewe & Harrison 1998; Hinton 2004; Porter et al. 1991; Roche 1999). The translation of NGO policy and professed practices into reality occurs at the interface between the development practitioner and the villagers<sup>81</sup>, as shown in Figure 1. A range of factors influence the actions of the practitioner, one of which is values, just as numerous variables impact on villagers, one of which is their interaction with development practitioners. It is important to recognise that development is not a linear, one-way process or transfer but a complex web of interactions between many stakeholders and the external environment.

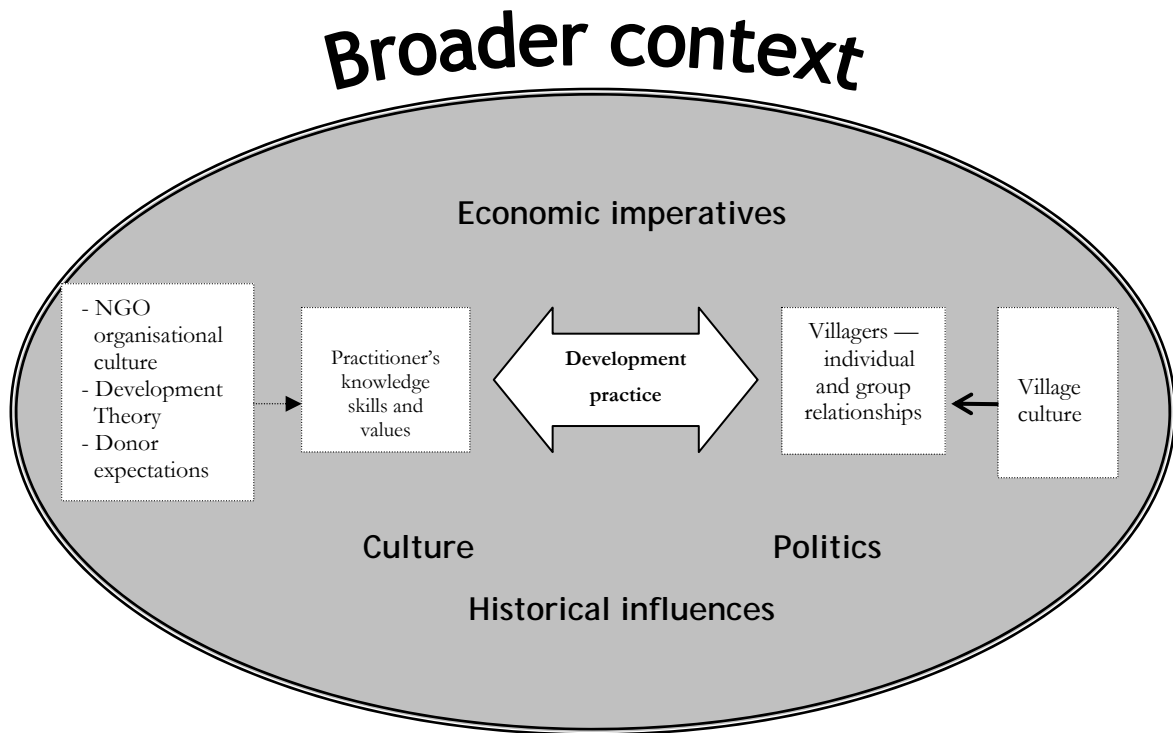
Previous literature which has explored the incongruity between theory and practice has typically focused on organisational issues (Argyris & Schön 1974, 1978, 1996; Dick & Dalmau 1999). The practice of fieldworkers has, however, been a neglected area of research (Crewe & Harrison 1998; Goetz 1996; Jackson 1997). My rationale for focusing on individuals rather than organisations is because it is the individual at the interface between policy and practice who decides what she or he will do in the actual situation. Knowledge of policy does not mean an individual's actions automatically translate that policy into practice. The individual must interpret the policy and apply

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<sup>81</sup> I use the term 'villager' for want of a better word to describe the primary stakeholders in rural community development. 'Beneficiaries', 'recipients', 'clients' and 'users' all have connotations of passivity in the development process rather than being central actors as must be the case if development is to happen. 'Participant' is used in this document only in reference to the research informants to avoid confusion.

it accordingly. A factor in this equation is the interplay between the organisation's vision, mission and culture and the individual's practice.

*Figure 1. The intermediary role of the development practitioner, between their NGO and the target group*

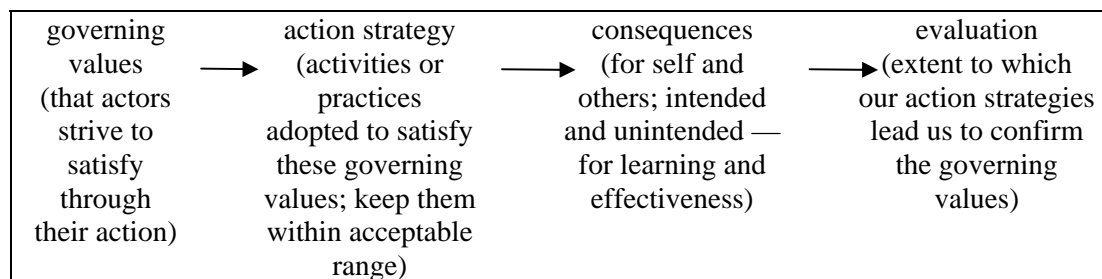


## 4.2 Theories of action

Argyris and Schön's "theories of action" (Argyris & Schön 1974, 1978, 1996) provide the conceptual framework to investigate the research problem. Their research has concentrated on interactions between individuals and the learning process in North American organisations. Through observation of practitioners' behaviour they have constructed models to explain interpersonal behaviour. Argyris and Schön assert that what human beings do is not accidental: People design their actions and implement them. They refer to these designs as "theories of action" and differentiate between the theories of action which individuals "espouse" and the ones they actually use, which are called "theories-in-use" (1996). Argyris and Schön suggest the theories of action are not simply the distinction between what people say and do, or between theory and action. People have a theory consistent with what they say and a theory consistent with what they do.

Espoused theory is used to justify or explain a given pattern of activity. It is a conscious reasoning process and refers to the “worldview and values a person believes she follows in her behaviour” (Dick & Dalmau 1999:2). Argyris and Schön argue that a person’s self-esteem depends on her or his espoused theory as this fits with her or his self-image as a competent person (1974, 1978). On the other hand, practitioners’ theories-in-use are usually tacit. Theories-in-use “guide our interpersonal behaviour, create the behavioural worlds in which we live, and influence both our long-term effectiveness and our capacity for learning” (1978:iii). These are constructed or inferred from direct observation of actual behaviour (1996) and reveal the worldview and values implied by an individual’s actual behaviour (Dick & Dalmau 1999).<sup>82</sup>

*Figure 2. Elements of Argyris and and Schön’s theories of action linking people’s thoughts and actions*



Adapted from Argyris and Schön 1996:93

The elements which constitute theories of action include: governing values<sup>83</sup> (values that govern the choice of strategies of action and values attributed to the intended consequence that makes it seem desirable); action strategies; assumptions (on which the strategies are based and which link the values and strategies together); and the consequences, both intended and unintended, for the behavioural world and for learning (Argyris & Schön 1996). This is depicted in Figure 2.

Tacitly or unconsciously, the person makes assumptions about self, others and the connections between the action, consequences and situation. That is, there are underlying assumptions that a particular action will produce a particular consequence in a particular situation (Argyris & Schön 1974, 1978). The theory is premised on a causal relationship between values and behaviour.

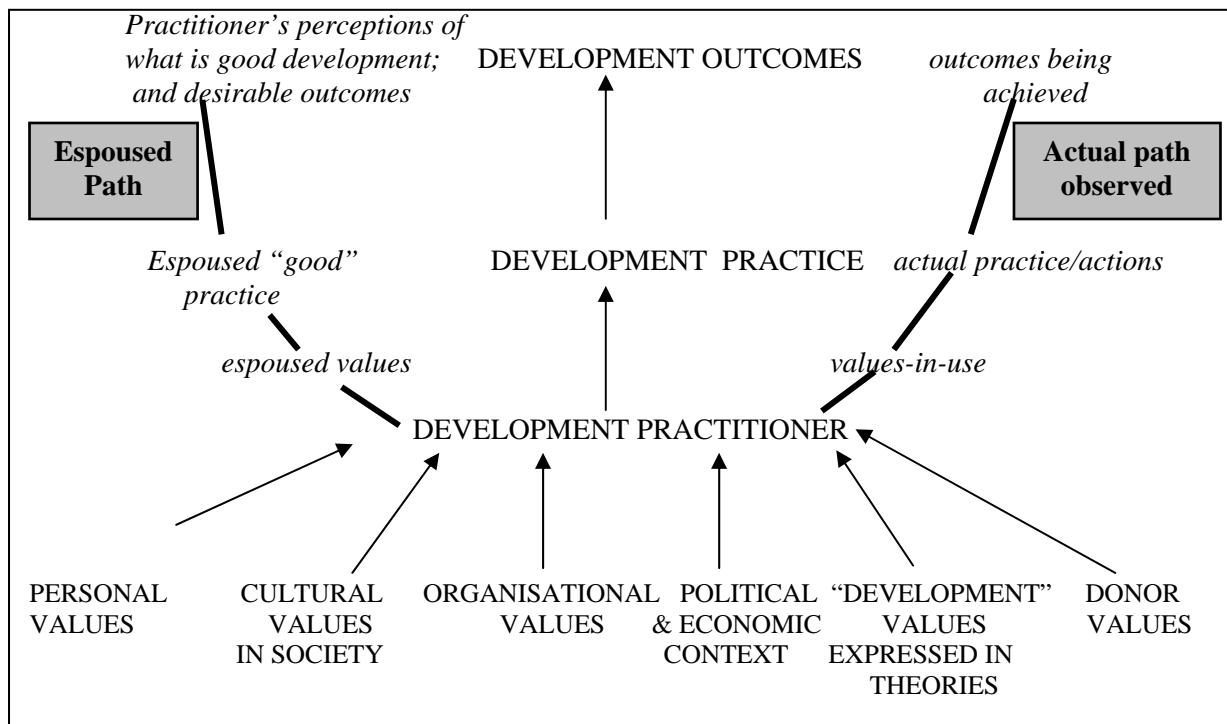
<sup>82</sup> “In the case of organizations, a theory-in-use must be constructed from observation of the patterns of interactive behaviour produced by individual members of the organization, insofar as their behavior is governed by formal or informal rules for collective decision, delegation, and membership” (Argyris & Schön 1996:13-14).

<sup>83</sup> Throughout their writing Argyris and Schön use “governing variables”, “norms”, and “values” interchangeably. For coherence with the focus of my thesis I use “governing values”. Dick and Dalmau suggest the governing values are best conceived as “a mix of motives, values, beliefs and feelings, the specific mix depending on the person, the situation and the context” (1999:12).

These theories of action provide me with the framework to explore the espoused theories and theories-in-use of development practitioners in relation to their field practice, as Figure 3 illustrates. The diagram does not however, capture the fluid or spiral nature of practice as it interacts with variables in the external environment.

Based on this framework I asked Cambodian practitioners about their “self-perceived” path or their espoused ways-of-working and the desirable outcomes of their practice. I then observed practitioners’ work in the field and discussed my observations with them in order to verify their in-use or “actual” path. Deductive data analysis was framed with these theories in mind, as described in the methodology chapter.

*Figure 3. Espoused and in-use paths of development practice*



### 4.3 Contextual factors

Acknowledgement of contextual factors and how they impinge on decision-making processes in the development process is important to the framework. Much development theory and project cycle management theory assumes that interventions can be conducted in a straightforward linear, mechanical manner. This mechanistic thinking is regarded by an increasing number of authors as unrealistic and unhelpful (Craig & Porter 1997; Crewe & Harrison 1998; Hinton & Groves 2004a; Kaplan 2002; Porter et al. 1991; Uphoff 1996a). Schön (1983) describes how practitioners working in situations of uncertainty, instability, uniqueness and value conflict construct the problem.

Contrary to the idea of professional practice being the application of scientific and technical knowledge to problem solving, he suggests that the problem has to be framed. In constructing the problem practitioners tacitly name the things they will attend to and frame the context in which they will attend to them. This resonates with the Theory of Reasoned Action (Ajzen & Fishbein 1980) as discussed in chapter 3.1.5 which links behaviour, among other factors, to the person's perceptions of social pressures and to the judgement of whether significant others would approve of the action. To understand actual practice it is essential to conceptualise the social world of human interaction as "inherently and inescapably uncertain" (Uphoff 1996a:399).

This involves a shift from understanding social relations in terms of mechanistic models to one of an open and evolving system of relationships. Uphoff cautions against reductionist analyses which disaggregate complex phenomena or relationships into their constituent parts without balancing this with synthesis or seeing the parts as a meaningful whole and envisaging the connections between them (1996a). The metaphor of living systems encourages the conceptualisation of a non-linear, non-materialistic, non-mechanical view of the development process. In this conceptualisation, the qualities of the whole "which are unpredictable, uncontrolled and to a large extent invisible" (Kaplan 2002:21) cannot be explained by reducing the system to its component parts. Kaplan argues that "it is not explanation we are after, but understanding, and here context, connection, relationship and invisible fields are all-important" (p.21).

#### **4.4 Congruence and dissonance**

The term "internal consistency" is used by Argyris and Schön to refer to the consistency among the governing values of the theory. In their theory-in-use a person may hold a number of values, which may not be compatible, but each of which has an acceptable range. A given situation may precipitate a trade-off among these governing values. Internal inconsistency is where one variable falls out of its acceptable range if the other is brought into its acceptable range (1974). This is compatible with the notion of a variable hierarchy of values.

Argyris and Schön define congruence as the match between one's espoused theory and one's theory-in-use. However, professed or espoused values are often not reflected in a person's actual behaviour (1974). It is posited that few people think about their (tacit) theory-in-use in professional practice so people are often unaware; one, of the existence of their theory-in-use or their unconscious motivation, and two, of incompatibility which exists between what they think they believe and the values implied by their behaviour (Dick & Dalmau 1999). For example:



The espoused theories hold that the blind are potentially independent, that agencies for the blind function to help the blind realize that potential. The theories-in-use, however, assume that the blind are basically dependent on the agencies, that it is a function of the agencies to sustain the dependence through continuing service, and that the function of a blind person is to adapt to life in an agency setting. (Argyris & Schön 1974:8)

Chapter 3.1.6 discussed the concept of cognitive dissonance and the idea that a person's awareness of inconsistency creates discomfort which she or he is motivated to reduce by adjusting one or other theory since people "tend to value both espoused theory (image of self) and congruence (integration of doing and believing)" (Argyris & Schön 1974:23). Effectiveness is considered to be enhanced when behaviour is more consistent with one's espoused values, that is, by developing congruence. Dissonance is viewed as a means of stimulating change, thereby increasing effectiveness (Dick & Dalmau 1999).<sup>84</sup>

Dick and Dalmau extend the work of Argyris and Schön and elaborate the actual processes involved in using the models in interpersonal interactions. They suggest that beliefs and feelings form a large part of a governing value of the theory-in-use and that "most commonly, the beliefs are assumptions about the other person's motives" (1999:20). Further to this, a person makes evaluations and attributions based on the way she or he experiences the other. However, people seldom reveal their ascriptions of other people's motives. Dick and Dalmau argue that, due to the prevailing culture, taboos exist against telling people our beliefs about them and our feelings toward them — which is reinforced by a taboo against revealing a taboo. Argyris and Schön (1996:106) refer to this as the "undiscussability of the undiscussable", and argue it is impossible to deal effectively with any issue if it is not discussible, and if its undiscussibility also cannot be broached.

At the same time, we ourselves are often blind to the gap between what we think we value and the values implied by our behaviour, and it is assumed that this is why we are less effective in many of our behaviours. If others perceive this gap they are reluctant to admit this (undiscussability), let alone bring it to our attention, but if they do, we are likely to react defensively. Dick and Dalmau suggest that people are not effective observers of their own behaviour, and have poor access to their own beliefs and feelings (1999:17). They also assert that people tend to judge their own behaviour by their intentions whereas they judge the behaviour of other people by its outcomes. This has implications for the research methodology. It is risky to rely on my own interpretation of

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<sup>84</sup> Awareness of discrepancy may result in denial, compartmentalisation, reinterpretation, behaviour change or attitude change (Dick & Dalmau 1999:3).

the observed behaviour and ascribe governing values to the behaviour of others (Dick & Dalmau 1999). It highlights the fundamental importance of understanding the practitioners' intentions, and the beliefs and feelings underlying their action from their perspective.

A limitation of Argyris and Schön's theories of action is the lack of consideration of cultural factors. Some of the literature reviewed in chapter 3.1.6 posits that people in some non-Western cultures display cognitive tolerance as opposed to dissonance. This challenges the assumption that people are uncomfortable with internal inconsistency and are motivated to seek congruence (Carr et al. 1995; MacLachlan & Carr 1994), and raises questions about the link made between congruity and effectiveness.

Cultural differences in ability to tolerate inconsistency have been related to differences in how self-image is derived. As mentioned earlier, Argyris and Schön link a person's self-esteem to her or his espoused theory. The discussion of individualism in the literature review suggests this understanding applies to the Westerner whose independent view of self is defined primarily by the individual's internal attributes such as one's attitudes and opinions. In view of this, seeing one's attitudes as inconsistent with one's behaviours is likely to challenge the person's self-image so the person is motivated to reduce the dissonance. On the other hand, for individuals living in cultures where there is an interdependent view of self, one's identity is based on one's roles, positions and relationships. As a result, inconsistencies between one's attitudes and behaviour are likely to be less important to one's self-identity. Behaviour is more likely to be attributed to situational demands than one's disposition (Heine & Lehman 1997). The issue of cognitive dissonance and if or how it is experienced by Cambodian practitioners is beyond the scope of my study; however, it is instructive to note that the application of this aspect of the theory cannot be assumed across cultures.

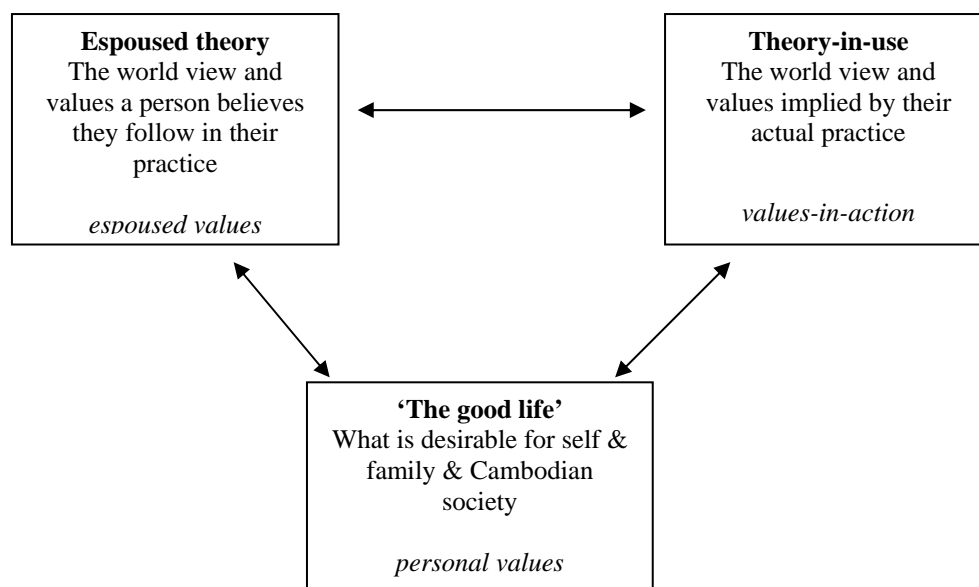
#### **4.5 The good life**

The final element of the conceptual framework is incorporation of the concept of the "good life". I expected the practitioners' responses to questions about the desirable processes and outcomes of development practice to reflect what practitioners believed they "ought" to do and want as might be expected of them from a development theory perspective, and by their NGO. Practitioners may espouse values for a variety of pragmatic reasons including securing their job, eligibility for promotions and obtaining funding. To more fully understand the influence of values, and what development practitioners considered to be valuable functionings independent from rhetoric about development, I investigated what they valued for themselves, their family and their community in

terms of what they considered necessary for a good life in Cambodian society. I assumed practitioners' vision of the good life would be more reflective of their "personal" values than of the values associated with development theory.

My approach to this component is based on Clark's "Visions of development: A study of human values" (2002). Clark devised a questionnaire based on theoretical conceptions of the good life to test whether items listed in theories of the good or functional capabilities (such as Nussbaum's set of universal human capabilities outlined in chapter 3.2.12) were things which people who are poor identified as being important for their lives. My purpose was not to see if the Cambodians' responses embraced the list of capabilities but to explore what Cambodian practitioners value. I modified the content to suit this purpose and the Cambodian context. This is discussed in the methodology chapter. From Flowers' (2002) study on values and civic action I used the notion of linking personal aspirations to social change. The links between the theories of action and the good life are represented diagrammatically in Figure 4.

*Figure 4. The conceptual framework incorporating theories of action and the good life*



This chapter outlines the framework of espoused theories and theories-in-use which explain the conscious and unconscious valuing processes that guide people's behaviour. I employ this framework to explore what practitioners say, and what they actually do in their development practice, and why (in)congruence exists. The framework also compares practitioners' espoused and

in-use development values with what they value for their own lives and the well-being of their families. This framework establishes the basis of the study. The methodology for the research is described in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER 5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **5.1 Introduction**

In this chapter I present the research methodology and design. The first section explains the rationale for using a qualitative, ethnographic methodology guided by feminist research principles. This is directly related to the exploratory nature of the research and the overall research question, which investigates how values influence the development practice of Cambodian development practitioners. The next section discusses the research methods used in data collection. Data were collected from a range of sources using in-depth and semi-structured interviews, significant incident technique, focus group discussions, rating and ranking exercises, participant observation and document analysis. Following this is a description of the multi-phase research design, beginning with the research questions and followed by the specific data collection methods and data sources utilised to investigate each question at each phase of the study, and the sampling techniques used. The implementation process and data analysis methods are presented. Lastly is an assessment of the credibility of the research, researcher bias and relevant ethical issues.

### **5.2 Qualitative research**

As little empirical research has examined the relationship between values and development practice, an exploratory study was appropriate (Alston & Bowles 1998; Gribch 1999). I attempted to gain an understanding of the field of study, not to test a hypothesis. The dearth of value-specific material in the development studies literature confirms the marginal status of values in development practice. Hammersley and Atkinson argue that, to understand human behaviour, a research approach is needed that gives access to the meanings which guide that behaviour. This is premised on the understanding that “human actions are based upon, and infused by, social meanings: that is, by intentions, motives, beliefs, rules and values”, rather than governed by laws of behaviour that can be discovered through causal analysis and the manipulation of variables (1995:7-8).

Values, the focus of this study, are difficult to research methodologically because of their abstract and contested nature as discussed in the literature review (see section 3.1). My previous experience in Cambodia attested to this, as I found practitioners, similar to people elsewhere (Braithwaite & Law 1985; Flowers 2002), had difficulty articulating their beliefs and values. The literature review indicated that much research on the content of values has concentrated on the use of value survey instruments, such as those designed by Rokeach (1973) and Schwartz (1992), where the researchers

define the values to be investigated (Braithwaite 1994). In this study I wanted to understand Cambodian practitioners' values based on *their* perceptions of what guided their work.

Measurement of responses to a pre-determined list of values may have precluded values that were relevant or important to them. Hence, written questionnaires or value measurement scales were inappropriate for my purpose.

This research grew out of and is grounded in practice experience. I wanted to understand the practice issues within the “natural” setting of everyday life (Brewer 2000; Hammersley & Atkinson 1995). The context of development practice is complex, uncertain and “messy” and the world of practitioners is one of “multiple variables and multiple meanings” (Gilgun 1994:115). A range of variables impact on development practitioners and their practice as they intervene into peoples' lives with the intention of making them better. Research in such a complex context of multiple socially-constructed realities is problematic (Creswell 1998; Glesne & Peshkin 1992; Rice & Ezzy 1999). However, this is the everyday context in which practitioners operate and make practice decisions.

Qualitative research assumes a world which is complex and ever-changing, where variables are interwoven and difficult to measure, and where simplification of social phenomena or of the complexity of every-day life must be avoided if understanding of behaviour in a practice setting is to develop (Glesne & Peshkin 1992). Qualitative inquiry permits research under conditions where variables cannot be controlled. This study entailed exploration of the influence of values on practice, at the same time acknowledging there is a range of variables impacting practice, some of which are addressed to varying degrees in this research, and others not at all.

### 5.2.1 Ethnographic methodology

The beliefs and values of Cambodian development practitioners working in Cambodian NGOs in rural community development work is a social or cultural niche about which very little is known. Given the nature of the research problem I considered ethnographically-oriented research to be appropriate for this study (Glesne & Peshkin 1992; Rice & Ezzy 1999; Wolcott 1995). One of the defining characteristics of ethnographic research is its intention to understand the beliefs, attitudes, values, roles, social structures and norms of behaviour of a particular, culture-sharing group from its own point of view, in a given setting that is different from the researcher's own (Bryman 2001; Creswell 1998; Gribch 1999; Rice & Ezzy 1999; Spradley 1979; Wolcott 1995; Yegidis & Weinbach 2001).

In contrast to conventional approaches to development research and practice, which typically value the technical knowledge of the “outside expert” over the indigenous knowledge of the people being “studied” (Edwards 1993:78), ethnographic research seeks to understand the meaning of actions, events and physical objects for the people, rather than what they mean to us, the outsiders, directly (Goodson-Lawes 1994). In using this research methodology I attempt to present what has been called a “holistic cultural portrait” which incorporates both the perspectives of the actors or insiders (the emic perspective) and those of myself, the researcher or outsider studying a culture that is not my own (the etic perspective) (Yegidis 2001:138; see also Creswell 1998).

A key assumption of ethnography is that prolonged time in the field enables ethnographers to “reach a better understanding of the beliefs, motivations, and behaviours of their subjects than they can by using any other method” (Tedlock 2000:470).<sup>85</sup> Participant observation and other methods permit the shift from “outsider” to “insider” and allow for the minimisation of distance between the researcher and the researched, thus enabling insights into how insiders view their world (Creswell 1998; Tedlock 2000; Yegidis & Weinbach 2001). Familiarity with the culture allows the researcher “to interact with the physical (e.g. literature, arts, architecture) and subjective (e.g. values, attitudes) aspects of a culture from the same perspective as individuals who were raised in the culture” (Marin & Marin 1991:72). I dispute the claim, however, that the outsider’s perspective can ever be the same as that of insiders (a topic addressed later in this chapter).

The research topic had its genesis in my practice experience with international and Cambodian NGOs in Cambodia. Without this experience I do not think I could confidently undertake the research in the way I have chosen. My knowledge of Cambodia, where I lived and worked from February 1993 to October 2001, provided me with a firm grounding from which to explore the questions arising from my reflection on development practice there. For almost seven years I lived and worked in the provinces, predominantly in Battambang, in almost continuous contact with the staff of community development NGOs and rural communities. I gained a working knowledge of the Khmer language, visited and stayed overnight in many villages, observed social and political processes and experienced being a (peripheral) part of Cambodian society. I participated in the everyday events of Cambodian colleagues and friends, sharing meals and relaxing together and attending events such as weddings, parties, funerals and religious ceremonies. Ethnographic

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<sup>85</sup> Rice and Ezzy (1999:159) cite Bernard (1995) in stating that ethnographers typically spend at least one year in the field, but this may be shorter when the language is known and the researcher is well prepared.

methodology allowed me to draw legitimately on my etic perspective of development practice in Cambodia in relation to Cambodian practitioners' own points of view.

"Thick" description, typically obtained through immersion, is at the heart of ethnography (Rice & Ezzy 1999). By this means particularly, ethnographies claim to provide a privileged and special access to reality which enables the author/ethnographer to speak "unequivocally of and for the people" who were the participants (Brewer 2000:38). In realist accounts, ethnographers are absent from the text and act as impersonal conduits who pass on more-or-less objective data (Brewer 2000; Van Maanen 1988). Increasingly scholars argue, and I agree, that ethnography "produces historically, politically, and personally situated accounts, descriptions, interpretations and representations of human lives" (Tedlock 2000:455). The research account is a construction of the social world. The account depends on how we write it because fieldwork is an interpretive act, not an observational or descriptive one (Van Maanen 1988). This is further complicated by my attempting to interpret and represent perspectives of another culture.

Cross-cultural research is intrinsically problematic, due to cultural disparities and possibly racial, gender, class and economic differences (Goodson-Lawes 1994). Various methodological challenges arise, such as the definition of theoretical constructs and their meaningfulness in different cultural contexts. Assuming the universality of a concept or construct is a danger in cross-cultural research (Braithwaite & Scott 1991; Hofstede 2001; Marin & Marin 1991). (Difficulty involved in researching values is covered in the literature review.) Other issues in cross-cultural research include the accuracy of interpretation and translation, literacy barriers, cultural mistakes on the part of the researcher and participants' answering according to what they perceive is wanted (Goodson-Lawes 1994; Yegidis & Weinbach 2001). Marin and Marin suggest the risk of seeing things only from one's own cultural frame of reference can be reduced by cultural immersion and collaboration with key informants, thereby increasing one's "ability to understand behaviour, attitudes and values within the context of the culture within which it occurs" (1991:138).

Historically, ethnography has been associated with anthropology and the study of the "other" in "primitive" societies (Creswell 1998; Goodson-Lawes 1994; Van Maanen 1988). The association of ethnography with colonisation and ethnocentric, imperialist ideas (Tedlock 2000) rendered it a problematic and contested methodology, particularly in cross-cultural research. This thinking has a particular resonance for this study as I attempt to understand and "re-present" Cambodian practitioners' perspectives. However, as examined later in this chapter, a respectful, reflexive approach can address some of the concerns regarding ethnography. Ethnography is both the



process and the product of the research (Bryman 2001; Creswell 1998; Tedlock 2000; Wolcott 1995).

### 5.2.2 Subtle realism

The postmodern understanding of the social construction of reality raises fundamental questions about representation and legitimacy in ethnography (Brewer 2000; Denzin & Lincoln 2000; Hammersley & Atkinson 1995). Claims or assumptions by ethnographers that their accounts accurately represent social reality — which can be objectively known — have been vigorously disputed, not least by ethnographers themselves (Brewer 2000; Hammersley & Atkinson 1995). Postmodernist and poststructuralist thought argues that there is no independent and external reality, and that, among the multiple versions, the ethnographer's representation is not privileged but is a partial, selective and subjective version of reality “filtered through the lens of language, gender, social class, race and ethnicity” (Denzin & Lincoln 2000:18-19). Denzin and Lincoln argue that the researcher does not directly capture lived experience but “creates” it in the social text, precipitating a crisis of representation in ethnographic accounts.<sup>86</sup>

The position I take regarding the relationship between the observer and the observed “reality” (Rice & Ezzy 1999:31) is crucial as it underpins my approach to the study, the claims I make regarding the findings and the way I represent these. My position is similar to that referred to by Hammersley (2002) as “subtle realism”, which argues that there are grounds for reliable, rigorous and systematic ethnographic practice (Brewer 2000). It embraces the anti-realist critique and is aware of the constructed nature of research, but does not accept the postmodern position of utter relativism which abandons any attempt to represent an “independent” reality (Brewer 2000; Rice & Ezzy 1999). Hammersley (2002) argues that relativism is not the only alternative to naïve realism and advocates adopting a “more subtle form of realism”.

This subtle realism retains from naïve realism the idea that research investigates independent, knowable phenomena. But it breaks with it in denying that we have direct access to those phenomena, in accepting that we must always rely on cultural assumptions, and in denying that our aim is to reproduce social phenomena in some way that is uniquely appropriate to them. Obversely, subtle realism shares

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<sup>86</sup> Creswell (1998), Van Maanen (1988) and Wolcott (1995) state that culture is not “there” waiting to be discovered but is something researchers attribute to a group as they look for patterns of daily living. Culture is inferred from the language and behaviour of group members, from the tension between what they actually do and what they ought to do, as well as what they make and use (Creswell 1998). Culture members live inside the culture and tend to see it as simply a reflection of “how the world is” without being conscious of the fundamental presuppositions that shape their vision, many of which are distinctive to their culture (Hammersley & Atkinson 1995:9). Denzin and Lincoln (2000) discussing critical race theory, argue that ways of knowing and being are shaped by the individual's standpoint or position in the world.

with scepticism and relativism a recognition that all knowledge is based on assumptions and purposes and is a human construction, but it rejects these positions' abandonment of the regulative idea of independent and knowable phenomena. Perhaps most important of all, subtle realism is distinct from both naïve realism and relativism in its rejection of the notion that knowledge must be defined as beliefs whose validity is known with certainty. (Hammersley 2002:74)

I am concerned with understanding Cambodian development practitioners' points of view and what influences the conduct of their practice. Every day, in numerous countries, development interventions occur across cultural divides. The practitioners involved either struggle to understand the other's perceptions of reality — what is important and what is of value to the other — or they ignore the differences as unimportant. Seale contends that:

The old positivist approach assumed the uncontroversial existence of shared meanings, but ended up imposing meanings that were resisted by many individuals. The alternative qualitative paradigm, investigating how shared meanings are constructed and celebrating their diversity, can lead to a condition of profound uncertainty and distrust. (1999:29)

The middle path between positivism and relativism allows for the possibility of shared meanings, even if these are limited and incomplete. Seale (1999:24) argues that the problem with the notion that truth is only a creation of the human mind is that it offers no basis for human communication and can therefore give us no grounds on which to construct a common language for scientific statement, let alone judge its quality. If we are all living in individual "mind-worlds" there is no possibility of knowing each other or of jointly producing anything.

My interest in this issue is not just related to the validity of this research but, more essentially, to the possibility of shared meanings between Cambodian development practitioners and myself. If I claim to understand and re-present the perspective of a Cambodian development practitioner, there must be some confidence that we have shared conceptions about what was being discussed, for example, in the exploration of values and notions of what is desirable and what ought to be. The concept of subtle realism posits that we can know, even though our understandings of each other's reality is partial and imperfect. My experience of living and working with Cambodians affirmed the possibility of shared meanings.

### **5.2.3 Feminist research principles**

The research is also guided by feminist research principles. These principles, grounded in feminist theory, are also espoused in critical theory, action research and emancipatory research (Glesne & Peshkin 1992). While a core feminist research concern is the oppression of women and the social

constructedness of gender (Cook & Fonow 1990; Gribch 1999) the value-based feminist principles have a broader application. Gender is regarded as a basic organising principle that shapes the conditions of people's lives, and feminist research aims to "correct both the invisibility and distortion of female experience in ways relevant to ending women's unequal social position" (Creswell 1998:83 citing Lather 1991). While gender relations are not the primary focus of this research I do explore how participating practitioners take gender into consideration in their development work.

Feminist research is concerned with issues of power and control and aims to establish non-exploitative relationships between researcher and researched within the research process (Bryman 2001; Glesne & Peshkin 1992; Gribch 1999; Paghura & Madge 1998; Swigonski 1994). Although I controlled the research agenda, I set out to learn from and be taught by the participants, not just to "study" them (Rice & Ezzy 1999:157). I sought and valued the participants' knowledge in gaining a better understanding of the values and priorities of indigenous practitioners, so that these enhanced insights.

The principles involved in carrying out feminist research, such as equalising relationships and the sharing of power and knowledge in the research process, are not easily achieved but are ideals to aim for (Gribch 1999:56). In undertaking research in another culture my values, assumptions and prejudices were continually challenged and, in the process of learning about Cambodian development practitioners, I learnt more about my own values.

Another feminist principle is that the relationship between the researcher and the participants be of mutual benefit rather than a one-way extraction of information (Bryman 2001; Swigonski 1994). Other feminist research concerns of objectivity (Paghura & Madge 1998; Swigonski 1994) and intersubjectivity between researcher and researched (Bryman 2001; Glesne & Peshkin 1992) are dealt with in sections covering subtle realism and reflexivity respectively. Both the methods and process chosen for this research reflect my desire to provide an opportunity for individual practitioners and their organisations to engage in a meaningful way with the practice issues through reflection on their practice experience.

The literature review reveals the common assumption of the universality of western values and priorities. Technological progress and evolutionary change are promoted as though these are value-free (Crewe & Harrison 1998; Tyndale 2000). Emancipatory goals (Cook & Fonow 1990; Gribch 1999; Paghura & Madge 1998) are proposed by feminists, where the goal is emancipation of

women (and men) from patriarchy, but are also found in the writings of critical ethnographers and advocates of emancipatory research. Ultimately the research should lead to the emancipation of disadvantaged village people and development workers, both international and indigenous.

#### **5.2.4 Values and the research process**

As discussed in the literature review there is widespread acknowledgement that values are inescapable (Connor 1993:31). In examining the influence of values on development practice I am subscribing to the belief that values also influence research work. The value-laden nature of research is a central feminist concern (Gribch 1999; Paghurar & Madge 1998; Swigonski 1994). It is said that we are drawn to and formulate research problems in ways that correspond with our construction of the world and our values (Glesne & Peshkin 1992). Lincoln and Guba (2000) contend that values are foundational to the inquiry paradigm. Such thinking about the centrality of values resonates with my central thesis that values affect the way practitioners conduct their practice. Lincoln and Guba argue that values feed into the inquiry process through:

[The] choice of the problem, choice of paradigm to guide the problem, choice of theoretical framework, choice of major data-gathering and data-analytic methods, choice of context, treatment of values already resident within the context, and choice of format(s) for presenting findings. (2000:169)

My choice of research topic reflects my belief that personal values are important in my own life: in influencing what I strive for, my choice of work and the way that I approach it. Values influence my rationale for choosing a qualitative, ethnographic methodology, guided by feminist principles. Research is always affected by values and always has political consequences. It is fundamental to the integrity of this research that my values and biases are made explicit and that I take responsibility for the effects of my work (Creswell 1998; Hammersley & Atkinson 1995). As discussed later in relation to reflexivity, I tried to be honest and open about my values so that both research participants and the reader could appraise how these influenced the process and conclusions of the research.

### **5.3 Research methods**

The research methods chosen were influenced by the nature of values and the philosophical approach already described. The overall research question is: How do values influence Cambodian development practitioners' development practice? The topic required descriptive methods which could capture the richness and complexity of each individual's experience, and explore the meaning she or he gave to her or his experience. In cross-cultural research, methods are needed

that increase the possibility of asking the correct questions correctly. That is, each question should generate a response which is directly related to what I want to know, and should be one that the respondent feels able to answer honestly and fully (Goodson-Lawes 1994). I achieved this by using methods that were unstructured, flexible, open-ended and dialogic. My awareness of and sensitivity to Cambodian culture was important in framing the inquiry.

Values cannot be discovered or ascertained simply by directly asking practitioners about their values. People are usually unaware of the values they hold or unaccustomed to discussing them (Argyris & Schön 1974; Dick & Dalmau 1999; Flowers 2002). In addition, what people say and believe they are doing is not necessarily what they actually do. Values cannot be directly observed but must be inferred from people's more general viewpoints on society and from their behaviour (Hofstede 2001; Wilson 1993). The evidence for the existence of values comes from the observation of action, not from the assertion that values influence action.

I approached the overall research problem by using a number of methods including in-depth and semi-structured interviews, participant observation, significant incident technique, focus group discussions and document analysis. Multiple data collection methods allow triangulation of the findings and overcome some of the limitations of each method (Rice & Ezzy 1999). I triangulated data from multiple sources including Cambodian development practitioners from a range of NGOs, expatriate practitioners and documents. My use of different methods permits findings to be compared and double-checked, thereby contributing to the trustworthiness of the data (Miles & Huberman 1994).

In-depth interviews are appropriate as this method enables access to the subjective meanings and interpretations practitioners give to their experiences (Minichiello et al. 1990; Rice & Ezzy 1999). The in-depth interviews aimed to be more like "deep conversations" where participants discussed their perceptions and beliefs through repeated face-to-face encounters (Minichiello et al. 1990). I emphasised that there were no correct answers. The in-depth interviews were semi-structured around a list of general issues and themes but, as ideas emerged or my understanding grew in interviews, questions were reformulated and new strands of information were subsequently integrated into the theme list (Rice & Ezzy 1999). Phenomena such as desired outcomes, the motivations and strategies underlying actions and conceptions of the good life are complex. The unstructured method allowed a more circular approach to addressing a topic and was more culturally appropriate than the Western communication style of going directly to the point (Scollon

& Wong Scollon 2001). It allowed for dialogue and permitted questions to be re-phrased to ensure that language did not prevent understanding.

My rationale for using in-depth interviews also applied to the use of semi-structured interviews to understand the personal experiences of key informants. These consisted of one-off encounters focused on specific issues generated from the analysis of data obtained by other methods (Minichiello et al. 1990). However, I acknowledge that the direction of these interviews was defined by the ideas and questions that I, the researcher, wanted to pursue.

I chose significant (critical) incident technique because this method, grounded in the practice context, permits insights into practitioners' behaviour and decision-making processes as it involves analysis by the practitioner of the events leading up to the incident and the factors which, in her or his view, are critical to the outcome (Sadique 1994:41). Although extensively used in disciplines such as social work (Fook et al. 2000), this method is rarely employed in international development research. It is described as a way to collect "direct observations of human behaviour" (Raymond-McKay & MacLachlan 2003:170). Incidents are chosen by participants as significant to their learning, such as when things go unusually well or not as planned, are typical, were demanding, and raised conflicts or doubts (Fook et al. 2000). (The participant's guide to using the significant incident technique is included in Appendix A.)

I chose focus groups because it is not easy for individuals to contemplate alone and respond to questions on values. The unique value of focus groups is they encourage interaction between the group members, whereby experiences and ideas expressed by one member in the group can stimulate others to explore and clarify their points of view. This method overcame a limitation of interviews in that members of the group were able to pursue issues raised by other members which interested or concerned them, with minimum interference from the researcher. This gave me the opportunity to discover what practitioners considered important or relevant to the topic. Focus groups, which addressed themes emerging from the interviews, were treated both as a means of validating findings from other sources/methods and as a way of bringing out new/different perspectives. Focus groups are particularly useful when the research is exploring the perspective and experience of people who have different social and cultural backgrounds from that of the researcher (Hammersley & Atkinson 1995; Rice & Ezzy 1999).

I utilised focus groups with NGOs as I believed they enabled the research to be mutually beneficial by providing an opportunity for individual key informants and their organisation as a whole to

discuss the research questions, thereby contributing to the development of their practice as well as strengthening their shared understandings. This rationale also applies to the focus group discussions with practitioners drawn from a range of NGOs.

Participant observation is the immersion of the researcher in the social context of the participants as they undertake their usual activities. Through observing what people say and do, and by asking practitioners about their actions, the researcher is able to learn about their view of reality and understand their behaviour (Hammersley & Atkinson 1995; Rice & Ezzy 1999; Ryan et al. 2005). By this method I was able to generate an understanding of the practitioner's values-in-use. My lengthy experience of working with Cambodian practitioners in the field informed my interpretation of these observations.

I do not agree with claims that participant observation enables the researcher to experience events or interpret the world in the same way as local people do (Hammersley & Atkinson 1995; Rice & Ezzy 1999). Other scholars fundamentally question the premise of cross-cultural interpretation and whether or not behaviour can be meaningfully interpreted outside its cultural context (Reinharz 1992). My experience is that I do not interpret and react to situations and events in the same way as local people, as this is influenced by our differing previous experiences and cultural norms. However, I believe that I was able to observe behaviours and, through discussion, learn from colleagues/participants the meaning and significance of the behaviour for them. It was evident that there were times when my interpretations were different from the participants but these were opportunities for learning.

Tedlock (2000:471) reports "a movement away from participant observation toward the observation of participation", signifying the importance of the researcher being self-observant as an integral part of the research. In support of this view, Brewer (2000) writes that the researcher personally experiences and shares the same everyday life under study which results in changes in the researcher's own attitudes. Thus, as an active participant in the research, my reactions, learnings and emotional responses formed part of the data. Accounting for this is an important factor in establishing the credibility of the research.

I used a range of rating and ranking exercises to explore practitioners' priorities for a good life (research question 4). In conjunction with open-ended questions which elicited participants' subjective opinions of the elements of a good life, the purpose of the rating and ranking exercises was to investigate why they valued these through rating and ranking a number of pre-defined

possible reasons (Clark 2002). The specific aspects of the good life investigated through the exercises were the reasons for valuing: education, employment, family and friends (relationships), income and wealth, food and shelter, personal safety and security, environment, recreation and leisure, community and political life.

NGO values and the outcomes they were aiming to achieve through their interventions were inferred from analysis of official documents such as the organisation's mission and vision statements, relevant project/program proposals and project progress reports. These also revealed how the organisation presented itself to the outside. External reviews and evaluations indicated how independent parties had assessed the progress and achievements of the organisations in relation to their stated aims. However, official documents are social products and not literal, neutral accounts (Hammersley & Atkinson 1995). In reading them I was mindful of the context and purpose for which documents are produced. The competitive funding environment encourages NGOs to be overly optimistic in what they claim they can do (in proposals) or have done (in reports) in order to attract or maintain funding (Porter et al. 1991).

## **5.4 Research design**

### **5.4.1 The research questions**

The research questions and design derived from the conceptual framework. An iterative process of developing and refining the questions took place as clarity grew. The overarching research question is: How do values influence development practice? This was investigated through the following questions:

1. What are the values underpinning development goals and good practice as espoused by Cambodian development practitioners?
2. What are their guiding values as inferred from their actual practice?
3. How and why are the espoused values of Cambodian development practitioners (in)congruent with their values in-use?
4. Are Cambodian development practitioners' visions of the good life reflected in their espoused values regarding development, and congruent with the values underpinning their actual practice?
5. What are the implications of these findings for development practice in Cambodia?



Aspects of the question guides for the in-depth interviews and the NGO focus groups were based on previous research. The interview guides for phases 1 to 3 were based on Argyris and Schön's theories of action as they relate to espoused and in-use theories and their (in)congruence (1978). The primary source for design of questions concerning the good life and the rating and ranking exercises (question 4) was Clark's (2002) research conducted in rural South Africa. I devised a shorter version of Clark's questionnaire, modifying the questions to fit the Cambodian situation and the fact that I was asking the questions of development workers rather than "ordinary people". Flowers' (2002) study on values and civic action provided ideas for the development of questions concerned with the link between personal and social aspirations. Research I conducted in Cambodia in 2001 with Meas Nee explored value orientations and aspects of Cambodian culture. NGO focus group questions designed to further investigate traditional and development values originated in that research. (See Appendix B for the discussion guide (O'Leary & Meas p.191).)

#### **5.4.2 Research phases and sample size**

The research consisted of four phases. The first phase involved eight key informants and comprised two components: three in-depth interviews and observations of their practice. The second phase involved three focus groups with 19 staff of three Cambodian NGOs from which the key informants in phase 1 had been drawn. These are referred to as "NGO focus groups". Phase 3 consisted of seven focus group discussions involving 40 practitioners (one Cambodian participated in two groups) which I refer to simply as "focus groups". The fourth phase (mostly conducted concurrently with phase 3) comprised eight semi-structured interviews with individual key informants. This is summarised in Table 2. Each phase addressed a number of research questions, not necessarily in sequential order, and was informed by the previous phase.

Although the phases are presented as sequential, the actual process was more fluid. Themes evolved and were refined during the course of the research and were not specified in advance (Bryman 2001; Creswell 1998; Glesne & Peshkin 1992; Hammersley & Atkinson 1995). The approach was deductive in as much as it used Argyris and Schön's theories of action as the framework for the research process and for content analysis of the responses (Fook et al. 2000).

**Table 2. Outline of the multi-phase research design**

<b>Phase</b>	<b>Data source</b>	<b>Collection method</b>	<b>Research questions addressed</b>
1	8 Cambodian development practitioners	24 In-depth interviews 8 Significant incidents Observation of field practice of 7 practitioners Document analysis	1. Espoused goals & processes 2. Actual practice 3. Congruity between 1 & 2 4. The good life and congruity between 1 & 2
2	19 staff comprising 3 Cambodian NGOs (Includes phase 1 participants)	3 NGO focus groups Document analysis	1. Espoused goals & processes 3. Congruity between 1 & 2 4. The good life and congruity between 1 & 2 5. Implications
3	4 Cambodian groups totalling 25 participants 2 Expatriate groups totalling 13 participants 1 Cambodian/expatriate group of 3 participants	7 Focus groups Document analysis	3. Congruity between 1 & 2 4. The good life and congruity between 1 & 2 5. Implications
4	8 Cambodian & expatriate key informants	8 Semi-structured interviews	3. Congruity between 1 & 2 4. The good life and congruity between 1 & 2 5. Implications

Phase 1 focused on identifying the espoused and in-use theories of development practice of selected Cambodian participants (for details see Appendix A). My purpose of working intensively with a small sample of eight practitioners through a series of three in-depth interviews and field visits was to explore the relevant research questions in depth. This sample size was sufficiently large enough to generate rich data but small enough to allow detailed analysis of the data.<sup>87</sup>

The first interview explored practitioners' visions of the good life — what they aspire to — for themselves, their family and Cambodian society. The second interview sought their beliefs and perceptions regarding development practice, including those they attributed to their actions in the field. The third interview followed observation of field practice and enabled me to understand practitioners' theory-in-use through exploration of the motives underlying the observed actions and behaviour. Field observations focused on with whom, and how the participant related to and interacted with in the field, as well as the type of activities being implemented and their membership and the role of villagers in the development process. Inclusion of the significant incident further elucidated in-use theory and values. It asked participants to describe in detail a practice incident that they considered important and why it was significant for them. The

<sup>87</sup> Sandelowski (1995) argues that sample size in qualitative research is ultimately a matter of judgment in evaluating the quality of data against how it will be used, the specific research method and sampling strategy used, and the research product intended.

interviews also investigated the influence of development values, wider socio-cultural values and organisational values on the individual's practice.

The NGO focus groups comprising the second phase of the study were conducted with the staff from each of three NGOs and explored pre-defined questions and themes arising from, or designed to complement phase 1. The focus group discussion guide including the ranking and rating exercises is in Appendix B. The NGO focus groups enabled me to compare the perceptions of the key informants with those of other members of their organisations, albeit in less depth, and compare dominant views between the NGOs. The sample was limited to three NGOs, all operational in the same province, for pragmatic reasons. The NGO focus group discussions involved four, five and ten participants. (In addition to the focus group members, less experienced staff members and volunteers in the NGOs who did not meet the research criteria participated in the focus groups for learning purposes. Their responses are not included in the data.). These numbers of participants proved adequate in that there were enough people to interact and produce a diversity of opinion and rich information, and members had sufficient opportunity to express their views (Rice & Ezzy 1999). Analysis of phases 1 and 2 yielded the topics for the focus groups and semi-structured interviews of the following two phases.

Phase 3 consisted of seven focus group discussions with a total of 40 experienced practitioners and sought to verify the findings from the first two phases and see how these resonated with a range of practitioners not associated with the three NGOs. The focus group discussion guide is included in Appendix C. The discussions also considered the implications of the findings to date for development practice. The number of participants was limited to 40 due to the sampling criteria and the availability of eligible participants within a limited time period. The four Cambodian focus groups comprised one group with eight women, one with five men and two mixed groups of men and women, each with six participants. The two expatriate groups, with six and seven participants, included both men and women. One group comprised two expatriate and one Cambodian member. The two Cambodian single-sex groups were set up to check if there were any obvious differences in women's and men's responses. Expatriate and Cambodian groups were separate primarily because, in my experience, expatriates tend to dominate the discussion in mixed groups when English is spoken.

The fourth phase comprised eight semi-structured interviews (see Appendix D). Specific aspects of the research questions or findings were discussed with experienced practitioners whom I considered to have relevant knowledge and expertise. In some cases I explored an idea before the

focus groups in order to tease out its potential significance which I then pursued in other research phases if pertinent. In other interviews I pursued issues arising which seemed important but could not be explored in the focus groups due to time constraints.

#### **5.4.3 Research questions and associated data collection methods and data sources**

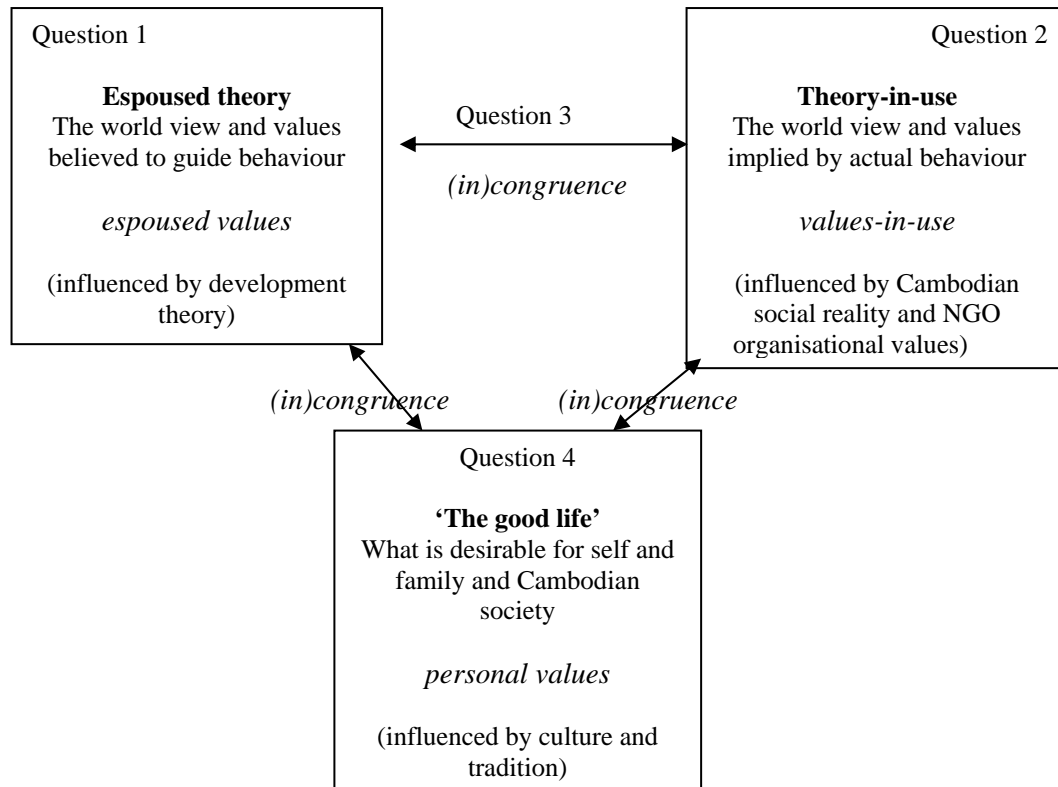
Each research question was addressed using a variety of data collection methods and data sources, as shown in Table 2. The first research question sought participants' perceptions of both the desirable processes and the desirable outcomes of development practice. This question explored what practitioners thought they "ought" to be doing and, in most cases, what they believed they were doing in their work.

The second question concerning the actual practice of Cambodian practitioners assumes that a person's actions reveal more about her or his values than what she or he says. Data were collected through observation of key informants' practice in the field, in particular, their ways of relating with villagers, the villagers with whom they showed closer relationships, the types of activities being conducted and the profile of the participating villagers. These observations were followed up in the third in-depth interview which sought the motives and rationale the practitioner gave to her or his actions, strategies and behaviour, as observed and reflected back to the practitioner for comment. The significant incident technique elicited further information about how the practitioners perceive and value their practice. Data were also collected from NGO focus group discussions and document analysis. An additional area for exploration, from which emerging themes were identified, related to my interpretation of a practitioner's actions and what this implied to me about her or his beliefs and perceptions of development and her or his role in the development process, as compared with the practitioner's own interpretations of the action.

The third question compared the data from questions 1 and 2 to determine the (in)congruity in the values between what practitioners said and did. The conceptual framework showing the links between the research questions is represented diagrammatically in Figure 5. It proved difficult for practitioners to identify their implicit values and, likewise, to articulate the values underpinning their practice. Exploration of the espoused and in-use values of the practitioners was carried out in the NGO focus group discussions, rather than with individual practitioners. I asked practitioners to consider the influence of three factors: whether, or how, practitioners take the villagers' expectations, beliefs and values into account in their practice; the fit between the practitioners'

espoused values and that of their employing NGO; and, thirdly, how development practitioners reconcile the values and beliefs of development theory with their own personal values.

*Figure 5. Conceptual framework and the links between the research questions*



The fourth question explored Cambodian practitioners’ perceptions of the good life. It also looked at whether their vision was reflected in their espoused beliefs and values regarding development, and whether this vision was congruent with the values underlying their practice. Comparison of these values with those inferred from their desired development outcomes (their espoused values) was assumed to be indicative, to some extent, of the degree to which development values have been embraced or are congruent with practitioners’ personally-held values. Again, it was not possible to directly elicit practitioners’ perspectives concerning the (in)congruity between their vision of the good life and their notions of desirable development. Question 4 also compared the in-use values inferred from observation of actual practice with the values embodied in practitioners’ vision of the good life.

Question 5 investigated the implications of these findings for development practice in Cambodia. This was discussed in focus group discussions with experienced practitioners, most with

experience in capacity-building in Cambodia. Specific aspects of the findings were also put to particular key informants whom I considered highly qualified to comment on the issue.

#### 5.4.4 Sample method and sample description

My research question, its genesis and the methodology of the study influenced the selection of the place, programs and people for this study. Purposive sampling, an accepted practice in qualitative research, was used to select information-rich cases (Rice & Ezzy 1999). The primary sampling frame was experienced Cambodian development practitioners working with Cambodian NGOs engaged in rural community development programs. All practitioners involved had direct personal experience in development practice in Cambodia. The pool of practitioners engaged with rural community development NGOs in Cambodia is quite limited. In the years I worked in Cambodia I developed an extensive network of contacts within the NGO sector and long-standing relationships indicated that my credibility in the sector was established. Because of this, access was not a significant issue and I was able to be explicit and open about the research purpose (Brewer 2000; Creswell 1998; Hammersley & Atkinson 1995).

##### *Participating NGOs*

I selected three Cambodian NGOs to participate in the research. (The number of functioning Cambodian NGOs is put between 200 to 400 (Mansfield & MacLeod 2002); however, community development NGOs form a subset of this as explained in the literature review.) I assumed that organisations managed and staffed by Cambodians would reflect Cambodian perspectives and priorities more than international NGOs managed by head offices based in the North. The criteria for the selection of the participating organisations were: community development program focus; operational for at least several years (that is, they had funds and were implementing development activities); with experienced staff (from whom key informants for the in-depth interviews could be selected); all staff would be available to participate in the NGO focus group; and a minimum of six experienced staff. The NGOs were homogenous in that their members had shared experiences of community development practice in rural Cambodia. All three agencies espoused similar concerns about, for example, community participation in decision-making, empowerment and gender equity.

Prior to this research I had an established relationship of trust and confidence with each of the three selected agencies. With two of these NGOs I had been involved in a variety of roles: as trainer, advisory panel/board member, researcher, facilitator and friend. I was thus able to draw on my years of discussions with and observation of these organisations. As I was no longer living and

working in Cambodia I believed the participants were able to talk honestly about their beliefs and experiences. However, it would be naïve to think that significant constraints did not exist precisely because of my previous involvement with them.

The selected NGO rural community development agencies have all been operational since 1993. The organisations have mixed origins. One was purely a Cambodian initiative, another started with intensive international support to a Cambodian initiative, while the third developed out of an international NGO's operational program. Each of the agencies had defined social development goals. Further details of the NGOs are not given because of confidentiality.

#### *Key informants (phase 1)*

The criterion for the key informants for the in-depth interviews was at least five years' experience in community development. They were chosen from within the participating NGOs, selected by purposive sampling on the basis of their knowledge, competence and willingness to talk, as the main concern was to elicit information and gain a deep understanding (Hammersley & Atkinson 1995).

The participants were all Khmer and averaged nine years' community development experience. Most had worked for more than one NGO. The sample comprised four women and four men, aged between 36 and 49 years. The average age was 44 years. Their education level ranged from grade four to first year university (in 1975). All had had their education disrupted or terminated by the Khmer Rouge as they were around 15 years old when the education system was dismantled in 1975. Their previous work experiences were diverse. Two men had been soldiers before joining NGOs. The other two men had been in Thai refugee camps in the 1980s and had continued their education and worked with NGOs prior to their repatriation. All four women had worked in a range of government departments (health, women's affairs, industry) throughout the 1980s and early 1990s.

A number had grown up in villages while others had spent their early years in towns. All had lived in rural areas under the Khmer Rouge and now worked in rural villages implementing a range of development activities such as economic and infrastructure projects, as well as training and capacity-building activities with villagers and project committees and key people in communities.

### *Focus group participants*

The seven focus groups included Cambodian and expatriate development practitioners drawn from a range of international and Cambodian NGOs. The criteria for participant selection was at least five years' experience in Cambodia in managing (with a capacity-building component), advising or providing training to NGO community development staff in Cambodia. In most cases the practitioners were known to me personally or were recommended to me on the basis of these criteria. To some extent convenience sampling was used, as the group was formed from practitioners who were present in the particular location at the given time. Participants' details are summarised in Table 3.

Among the Cambodian participants, five worked with Cambodian NGOs while the other 20 were employed by international agencies, but most of these had had previous experience in Cambodian NGOs. The expatriate practitioners come from a range of countries including Thailand, the Philippines, India, Japan, Australia, Britain and the United States of America.

**Table 3. Details of focus group participants**

<b>Focus group</b>	<b>Number of participants</b>	<b>Development practice experience</b>	<b>Positions held</b>
Cambodian groups	14 women 11 men  Total 25	Average of more than 9 years	Trainer (3) Program/Project Officer (5) Project Team Leader (1) Project/Program manager (8) Project Coordinator (1) Director (3) Cambodian NGO Support Coordinator (1) Community Development Coordinator (1) Advisor/Consultant (2)
Expatriate groups	12 women 3 men  Total 15	Average of more than 9 years practice in Cambodia	Director/ Deputy Director (5) Coordinator (1) Program/Project Manager (3) Advisor (2) Consultant (4)

### *Key informants (phase 4)*

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight key informants chosen on the basis of their particular experience, which seemed most likely to develop and test the ideas that had arisen out of the data analysis (Bryman 2001; Hammersley & Atkinson 1995). The eight participants (seven expatriate and one Cambodian) were chosen for their knowledge and experience on one of the following topics in the Cambodian context: Buddhism (2); social work (1); NGO overview (2); values and development practice (1); Khmer language (1); adult learning (1).



## 5.5 Implementation

I obtained approval from La Trobe University's ethics committee prior to commencement of the field research which was conducted in Cambodia over an 18-month period. Phases 1 and 2 took place during 11 weeks from September to November 2003. Following analysis of this data, the third and fourth phases were conducted in May and June 2004 over a four-week period. The remaining phase 4 interviews were conducted during a third visit in March 2005. Prior to and during the research period I consulted three Cambodians and one fluent expatriate Khmer speaker. All are experienced development practitioners with research experience and postgraduate degrees. As cultural consultants they provided me with insights and guidance on the culture-specific aspects of the study, and advised on the choice of Khmer words to convey the equivalent meaning of certain concepts. I developed tentative interview and focus group discussion guides for the first two phases prior to going to Cambodia. The focus group discussion guides and questions for key informants were developed later, based on the analysis of phases 1 and 2.

Prior to my arrival I had already identified two Cambodian NGOs that fitted my criteria. Once in Battambang I compiled a list of Cambodian NGOs in the province but found only an additional two who met the criteria, of which I selected the one which was more accessible and based in Battambang town. Initially I met individually with the leader(s) of each of the three NGOs and introduced the research. A letter in both English and Khmer outlined the process and commitment requested from a participating NGO. Allowing time for the leadership to consult with staff, I returned on the agreed date and, if the NGO was willing to participate, a consent form was signed. The three NGOs were keen to participate. A copy of the NGO information statement and the consent form is in Appendix E.

I next met with the staff of each NGO, introduced the study and described what was required of the key informants. A participant information statement in Khmer was given out. Identification of key informants was based on the criteria set out above, and their availability. If, after further discussion, the practitioner agreed to participate, she or he was asked to sign a consent form. The participant information statement and consent form are in Appendix F. In each NGO, selected practitioners were all very willing to be involved. Interview schedules were then arranged.

For phases 1 and 2 two interpreter/research assistants were employed (almost full-time) to assist with interpretation and translation during the research process and to transcribe the interview and NGO focus group tapes. Due to difficulties in keeping up with the transcriptions of interviews, I recruited another two part-time interpreter/research assistants. Whilst I am reasonably fluent in

spoken Khmer, I cannot read or write in that language. The assistants, three women and one man were selected on the basis of their language abilities. Only one woman (part-time, a teacher educator) had previous interpreting experience. The other three assistants were current or past university students. It was difficult to identify Cambodians with adequate language skills who were based in Battambang, not already employed and whom I could afford to employ.

I provided basic training in interpreting skills, including issues of confidentiality, and the requirements for transcription (a record of the training has been retained.) Prior to each interview and the NGO focus groups, I worked with the two full-time assistants to interpret and translate the interview guides. Explanation of complex concepts required considerable discussion, so that the research assistants clearly understood the concepts and were able to present the meaning in Khmer and rephrase questions if interviewees had difficulty understanding the original.

### *Phase 1*

Implementation was not a rigid, sequential process as there was overlap between and within the various phases. As the analysis progressed it was necessary on occasion to go back to an informant to clarify or expand a particular issue. The first of three in-depth interviews was quite structured, and data from that session were used in the subsequent interviews. The first interview focused on research question 4, the good life, as I deemed this to be less confronting to begin with. I believed this would give interviewees confidence as there were obviously no right answers.

Each in-depth interview was of approximately two hours' duration. All interviews were conducted in Khmer, except with one participant who was fluent in English. A research assistant was present. The three interviews were spaced at least two days apart and were conducted in quiet locations suggested by the participants. Most interviews of a particular round were conducted before the next round started. This allowed me time to reflect on the interviews and identify emerging patterns and issues for clarification, as well as giving the participants some time to reflect on the issues being discussed. All field visits were conducted before the third interview.

In all cases permission was granted for the in-depth interviews to be taped. These were then transcribed directly into English. As the interpreters/assistants were unable to keep up with the transcription of tapes this posed difficulties in that I was not able to read through the transcription before the next interview and I needed to take extensive notes during the interview. Each completed transcript was checked by another assistant, and later rechecked by me prior to conducting the analysis. An international NGO provided computer access for the assistants and an

interview room when required. Due to time and cost constraints it was not possible to translate the transcriptions into Khmer. Only one participant took up the offer of receiving the English transcript although a number of the interviewees were able to read English. I made summaries of any issues arising from an interview and reviewed these at the beginning of the next interview. This enabled me to clarify issues and check the veracity of the most significant themes (as I perceived them). During each interview I made quick notes of my observations and thoughts and wrote these up more fully after the interview.

I accompanied six of the eight practitioners to the villages and observed their practice. All field visits were conducted without research assistants as my Khmer is adequate at this level and I felt the presence of another outsider would be more disruptive. In each case we had agreed that I would observe the practitioner's 'normal' activities, thereby not interfering with their plans. There were to be no special meetings or arrangements made for my visit, other than what was necessary for politeness. In each case I was able to observe both formal and informal interactions with project activity committee members, commune council members, village leaders, village development committee members and other key people in the village, as well as with ordinary villagers.

I spent two days and stayed overnight in villages with each of three participants. I accompanied one participant to the field on two separate days. I spent one day in the field with each of three other participants, and I observed one participant facilitate a workshop with villagers in the NGO office in Battambang. It was very difficult to organise field visits with the participants, as most had heavy work commitments in the office or were busy with meetings or training. Despite having outlined the purpose of their field visits, I found that two participants had no real aim for their field visits other than to show me around the village. This included some ad hoc meetings with villagers. It was difficult to determine whether this lack of purpose was the result of my presence or was their normal practice under the rubric of following-up. While one practitioner was extremely conscious of my presence and overly attentive to my well-being, others seemed to go about their work without being unduly concerned by my company.

## *Phase 2*

Although I apply the term "focus group" to the discussions conducted with each of the participating NGOs, the process undertaken could be more correctly termed a "facilitated reflection workshop", based on a model I used in an action research project in 2001 (O'Leary & Meas 2001). The process entailed my putting questions to the group who then, either in pairs or

small groups, reflected on each question. Responses were fed back and discussed in a plenary session. I encouraged discussion among the participants, rather than with me. Utilising the reflective workshop process and incorporating such techniques as role plays, the workshops were conducted over a seven-to-eight hour period. The groups were conducted in Khmer, with myself as the primary facilitator. At times interpretation assistance was provided by English-speaking members of the group, as well as the interpreter. I recorded key issues and other observations. With the agreement of the group members, only and all the plenary discussion sessions were taped.

### *Phase 3*

I personally approached the participants in the focus group discussions and outlined the purpose and process of the research and distributed information statements. I adopted this personal approach based on my experience of the frequent difficulties encountered in the translation of Khmer, which almost invariably leads to comprehension difficulties when unfamiliar concepts are expressed in written form. I believed that face-to-face discussion would more easily enable practitioners to grasp the topic, as well convey the open and informal nature of the focus group format. It was made very clear that participation was voluntary, and that being too busy to participate would be an accepted reason to refuse. Four people declined to participate. Others expressed their interest and most were quite keen to join the discussions. Information statements and consent forms for both expatriate and Cambodian participants are included in Appendix G.

The focus groups, each of approximately two and a half hours' duration, were all conducted in English. The main findings from phases 1 and 2 were presented and this was followed by discussion of the emerging key themes. A major limitation was time. Each focus group addressed only three or four of the eight topics listed. Initially the topics raised depended on the group's interests and the direction of the discussion, whereas with the last groups I addressed the topics which had not already been adequately covered. The discussions were taped with the participants' permission, transcribed by me and transcriptions sent to the participants as promised.

### *Phase 4*

I followed a similar process to that described above to contact the key informants for the semi-structured interviews, except that a specific topic was stipulated for discussion. The interviews were conducted in English and ranged from half to two hours' duration. All of those approached were willing to be interviewed. All gave permission for the interviews to be taped. Most were transcribed by me and sent to the informants. Information statements and consent forms are in Appendix H.

## **5.6 Recording, managing and analysing the data**

Analysis throughout the research process informed every stage of the research design and data collection. It was an iterative process which built on ideas developed throughout the study (Bryman & Burgess 1994; Hammersley & Atkinson 1995). The initial questions were modified and added to as the research progressed. Field notes were written up as soon as possible after the observed activity or interview, detailing both the process and the content, as well as my own perceptions and interpretations of what I saw, heard and experienced (Rice & Ezzy 1999:164). As analytic ideas arose during the research process these were recorded separately, regularly reviewed and developed into analytical memos that constituted the preliminary analysis. Reflection was ongoing about what I knew, how I acquired that knowledge, the degree of certainty of such knowledge and what further lines of inquiry were indicated. I kept a fieldwork journal in which I recorded the details of the conduct of the research, my responses to the social setting and analytical ideas.

The first level of analysis involved generating categories. This involved breaking down the data and re-conceptualising it. The unstructured data, initially from the in-depth interviews, participant observations, field notes and documents, were studied to identify themes or concepts. Analysis was both deductive, in relating data content to espoused and in-use theories and values described in the conceptual framework (Fook et al. 2000) and inductive in allowing the themes and issues to be raised by the practitioners or to arise from the data collected, and were not predetermined (Bryman & Burgess 1994; Ezzy 2002; Fook et al. 2000).

My analysis of the data was partially based on the method of grounded theory analysis, as it provides a systematic and detailed process for analysing qualitative data (Glaser & Strauss 1967; Strauss & Corbin 1990). The first stage was that of open coding, described by Glaser (1978) as a way “to generate an emergent set of categories and their properties” (cited by Ezzy 2002:88). Codes were devised which were relevant to emerging themes (related to meanings, feelings and actions) and the data was sorted into categories, according to the coding system. Analysis of the rating and ranking of preferences basically followed the methods utilised by Clark (2002) on whose study the questions were based. In exercises where NGO focus group participants ranked alternatives (a score of 1 always referred to the most important with an ascending order to the least important option) the rankings were aggregated to find the average (mean) rank given to each alternative. Rating exercises (usually from most or very important through to least or not important) were analysed by calculating the percentage of participants selecting each rating option.

A question which asked interviewees to rank ten predefined desirable development outcomes was analysed by finding the median rank participants gave each outcome.

While analysis took place at every step of the process and led to adjustments in how the methods were conducted, extensive analysis of data from phases 1 and 2 was conducted after the completion of these phases due to time constraints in Cambodia. In working through the analysis of each component, the process of coding data was recurrent. Previously coded data was recoded in light of the new categories (Rice & Ezzy 1999). Memos which theorised about the codes and their relationships to each other were recorded and this helped to shift my analysis from the empirical data to a conceptual level (Miles & Huberman 1994). Categories from phase 1 analysis were then compared with one another and with data from phase 2.

Based on this analysis, the emergent themes and issues were presented and explored in phase 3. Specific issues were pursued in phase 4. New data from phases 3 and 4 were analysed as described above, which led to the generation of some new codes and categories. I then scrutinised the data in existing codes to see if these needed to be re-ordered. In addition, existing codes were sometimes broken down into separate codes or amalgamated with other codes. After the initial categories and relationships were developed, I made connections between the categories, referred to as axial coding (Ezzy 2002). The categories that emerged and seemed central to the analysis were clarified and their relationship to other categories was explored. This led to the formation of major categories or themes (Hammersley & Atkinson 1995).

## **5.7 Legitimation**

The crisis of legitimation in qualitative research refers to the identification of criteria by which to evaluate its claims. Seale (1999) explains the dilemma of naturalistic inquiry, which assumes on the one hand multiple realities in the social context, whilst on the other it attempts to judge the trustworthiness of a single account. Lincoln and Guba (2000) established four criteria, namely credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability, to establish trustworthiness.

Credibility in the truth of the findings was established firstly through my prolonged engagement and observation in the field. Secondly, triangulation was extensive: both of data sources and data collection methods. For example, the in-depth interviews and field observations were triangulated with NGO focus groups and document analysis. These findings were then verified through their presentation to 40 focus group participants, and specific aspects with qualified key informants in phase 4. Due to time and logistical (translation) constraints “member checks” were undertaken in

their “weak” form (Seale 1999:61) by asking participants of phases 1 and 2 to comment on my summary and interpretation of the key content from interviews. All phase 3 and most phase 4 participants were sent full transcripts of the discussions for checking. Fourthly, research credibility was strengthened by consultations with cultural advisors before and during the research process.

The essence of qualitative research is deep case-oriented analysis that results in a rich understanding of experience. The approach of purposive sampling that targets information-rich cases is not concerned with generalisability to larger populations. With regard to transferability I provide a detailed account of the “sending” context so readers have sufficient information to judge the applicability of findings to other settings with which they are familiar (Seale 1999). I documented the methodological and analytic decisions taken to assess how these affected the findings, to demonstrate that the findings are not a result of my biases and motivations (Hammersley 2002; Lincoln & Guba 1985).

In the findings and discussion chapters I quote the Cambodian participants extensively. I believe this is crucial to capturing their worldview and values. I would argue it is essential to the trustworthiness of the research for readers to access the words of the participants directly, which speak for themselves. My concern is not to override the participants’ voices with my values and interpretations. Educated and wealthy Northerners speaking on behalf of the other is precisely what I argue is so often done in development practice. This principle is, however, constrained by the word limit of the thesis.

I acknowledge that quoting is itself a process that involves selection and editing, and creates particular views of reality. Deciding whether to quote, what to quote, and where a quote begins and ends depended on my particular purpose. Sandelowski suggests researchers “should select an approach to quoting that is both faithful to what the person speaking wanted to convey and to their own ideas concerning what the quote represents or means” (1994:481). Quotes from the interviews and NGO focus groups are mostly translations from Khmer. The translations are as written by Khmer translators and so reflect a more literal translation rather than “proper” English. The extracts are edited only to the extent that poor English expression does not detract from the importance of what the speaker wished to convey.

Reflexivity or “the process of reflecting critically on the self as researcher” (Denzin & Lincoln 2000:185) is a partial solution to the crisis of representation. Monitoring one’s own subjectivity cannot overcome distortion in all situations (Wasserfall 1997). I attempted to detail the processes

and contexts, and to identify my own interpretations and perspectives in relation to those of the participants. During the years I worked in Cambodia there were frequent occasions when I thought that I had finally understood something, only to be proved wrong at a later date. I continually questioned my perceptions and understandings, and the evidence which supported my findings. By making my values, biases and interpretations explicit, and allowing people's own words to speak for themselves, I enable the reader to make their own evaluation of the account. Through these strategies, the dependability of the account is enhanced (Rice & Ezzy 1999).<sup>88</sup> Peer debriefing by the research supervisors at every stage in the study's design, implementation and analysis of the data contributes to the confirmability of the results.

Subtle realism acknowledges that we rely on cultural assumptions and Hammersley (2002) urges researchers to monitor their assumptions and the inferences made on the basis of them. The danger in my attempting to describe and interpret the values and perceptions of Cambodian development practitioners is that my biases from my education and training and culturally-different experience influence how and what I perceive, and distort what I observe people say and do. As development practice concerns moral questions and notions of what is good and what ought to be, it was important that I was aware of my reactions to ideas and behaviour that were contrary to my own values.

Research processes include the interactions between the researcher, the topic, the context, the actors, the methods and the sense-making process. As I was part of the study, I needed to recognise that my gender, age, race and ethnic identification may have shaped my relationships with research participants.<sup>89</sup> Where participants held values known to be different from my own, for example, values based on Buddhist or animist beliefs, I was conscious that my own responses might influence the participants or constrain discussion.

## **5.8 Researcher bias**

My conviction that values and beliefs are important in determining our attitudes and behaviour affected the construction of this study. My focus on personal, cultural, organisational and development values rather than, for example, the impact of the economic and political factors on development practice, reflects this. My personal perspective on what constitutes development and

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<sup>88</sup> Dependability as suggested by Lincoln and Guba (2000) involves the "auditing" of the research process by a peer to establish how far proper procedures were followed and if the theoretical inferences can be justified. This approach to establishing merit is rarely used due to what is demanded of the auditor (Bryman, 2001:274).

<sup>89</sup> For example, I was treated differently because of my status as educated foreigner, my age, reputation, credibility, the kind of relationship established beforehand, the power I was perceived to possess and my personal style (Hammersley & Atkinson 1995:95).



developmental practice, and the values I believe are important in the holistic development of individuals and communities, is not necessarily that of the mainstream development establishment. Nor is it the perspective of many Cambodian practitioners.

The questions I asked and the leads I followed in interviews and discussions pursued my own interests and train of thought and were not necessarily those of Cambodian practitioners. This filtered how I understood, and what Cambodian practitioners were able to say about their values and priorities. At times I found it difficult to remain impartial, when, for example, violence against women, or men taking several wives and not taking responsibility for subsequent children, were spoken of as “normal”. I found myself wanting to understand the participant’s perspective and, at the same time, wanting to present an alternative way of looking at such situations.

Despite my explicit intention to understand and present Cambodians’ beliefs and perspectives impartially, I found this difficult, as my inherent tendency was to consider Western and development values normative and to compare Cambodian positions to these. I found it difficult to present Cambodian perspectives on their own terms, without evaluating them in relation to my own. Hammersley (2002:68) states that ethnography is committed to attempting to “*understand* the perspectives of others, rather than simply judging them as true or false” (my emphasis). He states that we must ignore our judgements about the validity or rationality of different perspectives, as this is not relevant to the task of understanding them and can lead to misunderstanding. This is particularly difficult when value judgements are involved.

Given my return to the familiar environment of Cambodia, I needed to be wary of preconceptions that might have led me to assume I already knew, or prevented me from seeing what was really happening. Hammersley and Atkinson (1995:115) say that one must avoid feeling “at home”, as a critical perspective is needed. My theoretical preference for subtle realism led me to a style in the research account which reads more like a text than a narrative tale. I attempted to balance this by presenting participants’ voices and my own reflections throughout the thesis.

## **5.9 Ethical issues**

Participants were informed about the research using uncomplicated language, in English or Khmer as appropriate. I obtained ethics approval and commenced the field research when I was enrolled to do a Master’s of Social Work by research. Enrolment was upgraded to PhD status in November 2003. Participation was voluntary and participants gave their consent willingly. I undertook to

ensure the confidentiality of participants throughout the research process. Informed consent was not obtained from villagers who were indirectly involved during field visits.

During the in-depth interviews, which involved my probing into what was important to the particular individual, I was conscious of the risk that this could revive traumatic memories from the past. I had access to Cambodian mental health professionals but they were not needed. I was conscious of the need to safeguard relationships between practitioners within their organisations, and also their relationships and reputations with villagers and the donors with whom they worked.

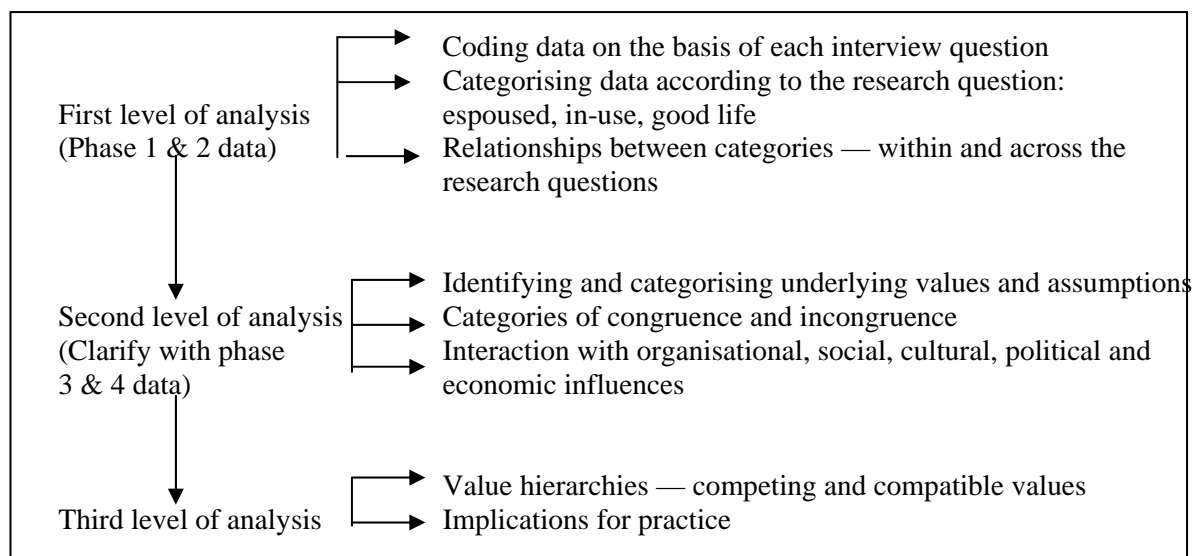
I was careful not to exploit participants by extracting information from them without giving something in return. My approach to and facilitation of the focus groups enabled participants to benefit both from what I had learnt up to that stage of the research process, and from their discussion of these issues. Throughout the research process I treated participants and their ideas with respect. The process of generating the research account involved ethical issues, such as how I represented what participants said and what authority I claimed to have, as previously discussed (Hammersley & Atkinson 1995; Tedlock 2000). Edwards (1993:90) contends the value of research must be judged “according to its relevance in improving the lives of the people concerned”. The underlying rationale for this study was to improve development practice and, though this, the outcomes for both the practitioners and the villagers.

## CHAPTER 6 ESPOUSED AND IN-USE THEORIES AND VALUES, AND INCONGRUITY

Chapters 6, 7 and 8 present the research findings, analysis and discussion. The conceptual framework presents how the research problem is to be investigated. Why is NGO development practice not as participatory, empowering and gender equitable as espoused? How do values influence what a practitioner actually does? The research was designed to explore what practitioners espouse and their perceptions of development and development practice, what they actually do and why, where there is congruence and incongruence between these and why this might be so. Based on the understanding that development goals and practice are shaped by what we think is desirable and ought to be, the study also investigated participants' personal aspirations for a good life. The purpose of this aspect was to try to identify participants' socially desirable responses regarding development, that is, what they might consider the expected responses concerning the development ideal, as compared to what participants do in their own lives.

The data were analysed deductively, based on the conceptual framework, and inductively, according to the emerging themes. Figure 6 shows a simplified outline of the analysis which links to the research questions and the research phases.

*Figure 6. Process of qualitative analysis*



Chapter 6 comprises four sections and presents the findings and discussion relating to the first three research questions respectively. These are presented together as all are concerned with values relating to aided development. The first section highlights some of the difficulties in talking about values. The second section presents the data concerned with practitioners' espoused theories and

the values underpinning these. In-use theories and values comprise the third section, and the fourth investigates the consistencies and incongruities between these espoused and in-use theories and values. Chapter 7 presents and discusses the data focusing on the fourth research question concerning participants' priorities for the good life. The second section of this chapter looks at the tension between development and processes of change, and concerns to maintain Khmer identity through the maintenance of Cambodian traditions and culture. Chapter 8 discusses the application of development knowledge, skills and values in view of the value questions emerging in chapters 6 and 7.

## 6.1 Talking about values

Many participants said that values (*goundomlie*) is a “development” word which is not well understood. It is frequently confused with price (*domlie*) and is said to have little resonance in everyday life. A detailed explanation is required to clarify the meaning given in the development context. Cambodians give value to (*ony domlie*), or assess the value of, a person according to her or his status. The reality that people are unaware of their values, regardless of whether they are expatriates or Cambodians, is highlighted in the following quote from an expatriate focus group participant.

Who explores values, and in what context do they explore them? And if I think back to my own experience.... I went and did my social work training when I was 30. The first term, one of the major modules was just sitting us all down and making us think about what our values were and challenging us about how we made value judgements every time we looked at something, every time ... It was a complete revelation to me you know! And I had never thought that way until I went into that professional development process. And had I not gone into that process I might never have started to develop an understanding of these complex issues around values. So, you know, we say well people don't think about things. Well I wouldn't have thought about them, even in my society with all my education and opportunities and experience. So, you know, I think there are issues about ... really understanding the context of where people are and why some of these things aren't happening, apparently not happening, and asking ourselves would it be any different anywhere else in the same circumstances. (FFG1:P7:455)<sup>90</sup>

Cambodian participants agreed that there are a number of Khmer words used interchangeably for attitude and behaviour: *abhtuttjabret* or *abkupasakirreah* or *area abbot*<sup>91</sup> but that there are no common-

<sup>90</sup> Abbreviations of field research sources are shown in Appendix I.

<sup>91</sup> One Cambodian participant uses the following definitions. Attitude describes what is in a person's heart and the way they think which others cannot see. Behaviour is what a person does, that others can see and know (KI:6).

use definitions which distinguish between them.<sup>92</sup> One Khmer-speaking expatriate participant concluded that a distinction between attitude and behaviour was a false dichotomy as clearly defined categories do not exist in Khmer (KI:1:47).

Participants' ideas as to whether there is a conscious correlation between values and attitudes or behaviour varied. Some focus group participants understood that if a person held a particular value then s/he would have certain corresponding attitudes and behaviours. The link between consciousness and action in Buddhist philosophy was raised in one focus group. While conformity is prevalent, Buddhism exhorts mindfulness. One participant referred to "Step by Step", the meditations of the Cambodian monk, Maha Ghosananda, on "right thinking" and the importance of paying attention to one's thoughts (FCFG:P1:58).

The thought manifests as the word.  
The word manifests as the deed.  
The deed develops into the habit.  
The habit hardens into the character.  
The character gives birth to the destiny.  
So, watch your thoughts with care. (Ghosananda 1992:53)<sup>93</sup>

Becoming more mindful of the conscious and unconscious motivations of one's actions is seen as necessary if a person is to change their attitude (Hinton 2005).

In Buddhism, mindfulness enables one to see the true nature of things and act in a proper and aware manner, while ignorance leads to cravings and attachment, and ultimately suffering. Moral purity is linked to mindful evaluation and action.  
(Hinton 2005:197)

Participants in the interviews and NGO focus groups used morality (*selathor*) to refer to good behaviour in society. "If you really want to tell someone off for behaving badly — say that they are immoral — *ot mein selathor sob* ([you] don't have morality at all!)" (KI:1:64). The absence of certain cultural/traditional behaviour in society was said to reflect a lack of morality, attributed in part to children no longer being taught morality in schools. It was ambiguous as to whether morality is perceived as a set of pre-defined rules for behaviour which are regarded as good and desirable in Cambodian culture (grounded in Buddhism and the five precepts) or are personal, internally motivated beliefs about what is good and right that guide the individual's behaviour.

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<sup>92</sup> An expatriate key informant suggested that language embodies culture whereby language reflects cultural priorities. It complexifies — or there are numerous words available — on topics which are important to people. She proposed that Khmer values are difficult to discuss because language has not complexified around the concept (K3:1:76). By contrast "face" is an immensely important dynamic in social interactions and Hinton (2005) argues this is evidenced by the large number of compound phrases involving face.

<sup>93</sup> The remaining two lines in "Think before you speak" are: "And let them spring from love, Born out of respect for all beings".

Similarly, the words used for a particular value can have different connotations, both between and within cultures. For example, one expatriate explained her realisation that to say “respect the poor” is an anathema in Cambodia as respect (*korup*) is given to those above and is not applicable to people who are poor.

I kept trying to translate the sentence “respect the poor”. It was a value I wanted to work on and I was using the word *korup neah cray craw* [respect poor person]. Someone actually said to me that is linguistically meaningless because you only *korup* someone who is higher in value than you. You don’t use respect for someone lower in status. ... And I was like — you’ve got to find a neutral word for respect that is disconnected from status. (FFG2:P4:630)

Hinton states that in Khmer *korup* (respect) connotes:

deferential behaviours such as “bowing before someone, behaving in a humble and polite manner, bowing to show respect, a bearing that shows respect in accordance with one’s awe of someone else, a bearing that trusts”. *Korup* thus implies a prostrating reverence, often tinged with awe and fear, that leads a subordinate to respect, honour and obey an imposing person or institution. (Hinton 2005:184)

This understanding was reinforced by a participant from India who stressed that a similar word for respect is never used to address poor people in India. She argued that this was “very typical for Asian cultures” where equality is an alien concept (FFG2:P2:639).

Throughout the research participants often said that they “pitied the poor”. *Annint* is commonly translated as pity in English although this translation is regarded as being inadequate in capturing its full meaning (French 1994a; O’Leary & Meas 2001). Participants’ understandings of pity and compassion and how these might influence a practitioner’s attitudes and behaviour towards poor people were contradictory. Some practitioners equated compassion with stimulating inappropriate responses such as giving hand-outs and argued there was no place for compassion in development practice. Other Cambodian practitioners argued that compassion is fundamental.

But compassion is something the worker should have. Without compassion in their heart how can the worker respect the poor? ... respect the villager? respect the idea? Without compassion how can someone care for another? So compassion is something that should play a role in development work. (CFG3:P3:500)

The development practice implications of actualising espoused specific development understandings and values are explored in the following sections and chapters.

## 6.2 Espoused values

### 6.2.1 Introduction

In this section I present the desirable development outcomes, roles and ways of working espoused by the participants. I categorise the inferred espoused values into three broad types. Firstly, caring values which include the establishment of close relationships between villagers and practitioners, and concern for Cambodians who are poor. Secondly, craft or effective practice values such as the desire for their work to be successful. Thirdly are compensation values such as feelings of competency and social recognition. A key issue which emerges is tension between the value categories. For example, practitioners give priority to successful achievement of the project (that is, achievement of outputs), over, for example, villagers' self-determination.<sup>94</sup> They emphasised the need to change the villagers' attitudes and beliefs over valuing the villagers' ways of seeing and doing things.

Although my intention is not to evaluate the perspectives of Cambodian development practitioners regarding development and development practice I find it difficult to avoid this. I found that the discourse of "human" development acts as a normative framework and I had to constantly guard against comparing Cambodian perspectives to this rather than accepting them in their own right. My analysis also tends to look for what is not there rather than what is, and for inconsistency rather than consistency. I think value judgements are to some extent unavoidable.

### 6.2.2 Espoused development outcomes

Thematic content analysis of the interviewees' espoused desirable development outcomes produced the following main categories: people know about their rights and the law, and know how to advocate; villagers are able to manage by themselves; living conditions are improved or villagers have the resources to escape poverty. Other outcomes included justice, cooperation, equality of men and women, good leadership, people's participation, protection of community resources; solidarity; and change of attitudes and behaviours.

"I believe that the word development is what we want to change, and change to the good" (WS1:1471:P1). A common feature of most interviewees' personal definitions of development was that development is about positive change — from a situation of "not having" to "having" in people's standard of living. Empowerment of villagers also came through strongly. Responses

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<sup>94</sup> Practitioners did not use the term "self-determination". They expressed this as "following what the villagers want" or "starting where the villagers are". Nor did they directly state that their aim was to be successful.

indicated that practitioners have difficulty articulating their own definition of development and often repeat what they have been taught. The following excerpt encapsulates what the practitioners said.

Because for development workers today, the important thing we do is to develop people. We want them to have knowledge, we want them to understand about their rights and power, to make them have skill and knowledge. These are the things that we want. If they get these things they will get the benefit in the society, if they still lack skills and knowledge, they still cannot have power and rights.  
(P2:479)

Several assumptions are implicit in this statement; that knowledge will lead to action and empowerment, and that practitioners develop people and communities through the provision of things. These assumptions are not particular to Cambodia as the literature review shows.

Interviewees ranked empowerment as the most desirable from a pre-defined set of development outcomes derived from NGO project documents and the literature. This was followed by improving people's skills and knowledge, and rebuilding trust and strengthening relationships in the communities (see Table 4). The outcome clearly ranked as least important by the participants was "modernisation" — in the form of economic development and improved technology. Based on my experience Cambodian practitioners in the early to mid-nineties placed a strong emphasis on modernisation, and visions of development focused on things such as electrification, improved roads and mechanisation of agriculture (O'Leary & Simmons 1995). This ranking indicates a shift in practitioners' thinking. During the course of the research a number of the practitioners described significant changes in their understanding of development.

Before I thought that development work is only providing gifts to people ... But later I am clear it is not like that. It is ... related to many things, especially the human resource.... If we give only material but the people did not have the knowledge and skills, I think that they will not develop. ... Before, we did not consider this very much. If someone needed something we wanted to give it to them right away without thinking so much. (P2:21)

At the same time, research has shown that changes in belief at an intellectual level about how practice can be improved do not necessarily translate into changes in actual practice (O'Leary & Meas 2001).



**Table 4. Cambodian development practitioners' ranking of 10 predefined desirable development outcomes**

Development outcomes (as ranked by interviewees)	Individual interviewees' rankings								Median rank
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
1. People empowered to solve their own problems	3	5	3	3	1	2	1	2	2.5
2. People's skills and knowledge improved	2	2	4	5	6	1	3	5	3.5
3. Trust rebuilt and relationships in the communities strengthened	1	4	8	1	9	3	5	1	3.5
4. Food production increased and health improved	5	7	1	7	4	4	2	6	4.5
5. People's attitudes and behaviours changed	4	1	10	4	7	7	8	3	5.5
6. People's living standards improved	9	6	2	8	5	5	4	7	5.5
7. Position and status of women improved	6	3	7	2	8	8	9	4	6.5
8. Reduction in poverty	7	8	6	10	3	6	7	8	7
9. Sustainable development	8	10	5	6	2	10	6	9	7
10. Modernisation — economic development and improved technology	10	9	9	9	10	9	10	10	9.5

Ranked from 1 (most important) to 10 (least important)

In recent years there has been a noticeable move away from providing material inputs aimed at improving the material standard of living of villagers such as loans, agricultural inputs, village roads, ponds and wells to providing information and knowledge so that villagers can advocate and claim their rights (K7, K8). The interviewees rationalised this shift in terms of sustainability. Their experience, and that of their NGOs, was that small-scale economic projects have largely not been successful in bringing material improvements to villagers who are poor. The change also reflects a shift in the priorities of donors whose funding guidelines require NGOs to maximise the impact of their work through advocacy by linking village level issues to provincial and national policies and practices.

### 6.2.3 Development practitioners' role/development approaches

This section focuses on *what* practitioners say they do rather than *how* they do it (see section 6.2.5). To achieve their desirable outcomes practitioners emphasised their role was in providing what the villagers lacked, in terms of information/knowledge, or to educate the people, particularly about human rights and the law. Generally participants believed that with knowledge the villagers can understand their rights, thus enabling them to participate in the political process so they are able to claim their rights and leaders cannot do as they please.

We are Khmer and [if] we do not care — so it cannot push our country to progress.... Sometimes the leader does anything, and we just follow them, so our country can't progress. We also have the role to do what ever to push our leader to fulfil his role well, to make the country be good. (P2:453)

A related focus is on developing leadership or working with and through village committees so that in the future people can manage by themselves and stand alone. Another role is to motivate people into action. These approaches are understood to be empowering, and by this poverty alleviation will (somehow) be achieved.

In the following excerpt three commonly espoused principles arise. First is that the practitioners provide information to enable the people to make their own informed decisions (self-determination). Second, without this information the villagers will not act. As already mentioned, the third principle is that knowledge will change behaviour and motivate action.

Nowadays we have a role to spread out the information to people to know — we are just a guide to show the road to them so they themselves can make the decision according to what they want. But we only educate, explain, talk to them. If they listen to us they will practice, but if they don't listen to us, they won't practice. For our feelings we want to talk and disseminate information to make them understand — we make Cambodians understand about the future that we have to think deeply into the long-term future, we shouldn't think for the short term. (P6:253)

The underlying assumptions are that the transfer of knowledge is a one-way process from practitioner to villager, and that villagers do not think or plan for the long-term.

Most interviewees stated their role is to provide information, to guide and to encourage. Although participants often spoke of their role as facilitators this did not appear to be prevalent — in terms of working with villagers to facilitate their understanding through analysis and conscientisation. What participants described was more related to the provision of “facts”. Several values are evident in the above quotes: individual and human rights, agency, participation, responsibility, knowledge, self-determination and democracy.

#### 6.2.4 Factors influencing decision-making

NGO focus group participants rated and ranked the importance of six pre-defined factors on their decision-making as shown in Table 5. These factors were based on my research in 2001 (O'Leary & Meas 2001). The majority of participants ranked what they had learnt about development highest and rated this option as either important or very important. (There is the possible bias towards practitioners giving what might be perceived to be the socially desirable response.) This

factor was understood by participants to encompass what they had learnt about development from formal training, and to a lesser extent from experience. It highlights a significant perception. “I think if someone has not learnt, hasn’t studied, they will not understand, so they do everything by the custom and tradition” (WS3:95:P2).

**Table 5. Cambodian development practitioners’ ranking and rating of 6 predefined possible aspects which influence their decision-making in development practice**

<b>I do what I believe I ought to do according to:</b>	Very important	Important	Quite important	Little important	Not important	MEAN RANK
what I have learnt about development	13	5	-	-	-	(1.7) <b>1</b>
what my NGDO thinks I ought to do	8	6	4	-	-	(2.9) <b>2</b>
what I believe the villagers expect me to do according to Cambodian culture and traditions	10	5	3	-	-	(3.1) <b>3</b>
what the donors think my NGDO ought to be doing	6	8	3	1	-	(3.2) <b>4</b>
my upbringing and religion	2	7	5	3	1	(4.4) <b>5</b>
what the government authorities expect	-	2	9	3	4	(5.7) <b>6</b>

Participants drawn from 3 NGOs (n=17). Rating n=18 Ranking from 1 (most important) to 6 (least important)

Participants stated they know what to do because they have studied, and that without this learning they would not have understood and there would be no development. The assumption is that development occurs only with outside interventions that change the villagers’ ideas.

So this culture and tradition we need to throw it away, we develop it new. When we develop it to new where could we have it from? We have it from study. Even me before ... I didn’t like it when someone comes to change culture and tradition — but when I study and I reflect and see that Khmer tradition seems to harm — to Khmer women and does harm to Khmer society — so these are the things that we need to develop. If we haven’t studied, we don’t have the experience, we can’t change it. (WS3:95:P2)

It appeared that many participants regard development theories and practice as something new and separate, not integrated with Cambodian values. The above excerpt implies that development ideas replace traditions or aspects of Cambodian culture and tradition which are regarded as harmful or obstacles to development. However this requires a critical review of practices and beliefs that were formerly perceived as “normal” or the “way things are”. A person’s understanding of their world and relationships has to re-evaluated and decisions made as to what constitutes good and bad tradition and what would comprise good change. This issue is explored in chapter 7.

Some participants stated that they work according to their understanding of the villagers' situation and their real needs. However, the reality is more complex as the next quote indicates. What is done depends on the interaction between the needs of the situation (as the practitioner sees it) and the various values, beliefs and ideas of the villagers, the NGO and the donor. The excerpt also reveals a belief in development knowledge and skills as distinctive, and essential to the work.

I think that what we decide to do is according to the situation but in this case we also need knowledge about development too.... If the situation is like this, we do like this, if the situation is like that we do like that. We cannot do without development knowledge because when we study there are different skills.... Another thing we must do is according to our NGO's principles. If we follow our NGO's principles it seems we will follow the donor's idea too because before the donor gives us money. They read our proposal and our goal already — so they relate to each other. (WS3:215:P1)

There was a high level of congruence between each practitioner's espoused development objectives and ways of working with their NGO's objectives, as set out in project documents. Overall 'what my NGO thinks I ought to do' ranked second in influencing practitioners' decision-making and several participants rated this as the most important factor. This alignment between espoused personal and organisational desirable outcomes was consistently demonstrated throughout the research. This may indicate that practitioners do not develop or define their own meaning and vision of development but rely on that of their NGO or comply with their NGO's definition. Research with Irish development practitioners also found a high correlation between personal and organisational values and missions (Corcoran-Tindill 2002). This acceptance of their organisation's goals and objectives strongly influences practitioners' decision-making in practice. This issue is discussed further in section 6.3.

The influence of villagers' expectations on practitioners' decision-making was ranked third.

I think that development work depends on participation and we [need to] understand about the situation of their beliefs and tradition before we put our development work into that village. Right? To make a success of our development work for the first step we need to study the needs assessment of the villagers and at that time we also study about their culture and beliefs. Whether they still have the tradition not to allow their daughters to study much, or their tradition still discriminates and abuses women ... So after we know about those problems we will take that problem to change ... If we don't study about their beliefs we are difficult to change their perception. (WS3:107:P4)

In common with many other participants, this participant's purpose in understanding the villagers' position on various culture and traditions is instrumental as it provides an insight into the

“problem” and how to change it (and them) — rather than being influenced by the villagers’ expectations. Generally it appeared that the needs and aspirations of villagers are not valued for their importance to the villagers and how they make sense of their lives.

Most participants rated the donors as being very important or important in making decisions about what they do, but overall its influence on practitioners’ decision-making ranked fourth.

Practitioners’ most common understanding was that their NGO wrote a proposal that responded to the “real” situation in the village. They then asked the donor for funds to do this work and consequently had the mandate and responsibility to do what they said they would do. This implies a bottom-up process. There is little doubt, however, that practitioners perceive village situations within parameters largely set by donor priorities. As a result, the project activities are chosen to accord with those priorities. One participant acknowledged that donors only gave in accordance to their policy and priorities and only if the NGO’s program is appropriate would they provide funds. He thus saw that it was necessary to do things according to the donor’s “heart” (WS3:279:P10).

Many participants regarded the influence of “upbringing and religion” on decision-making of lesser importance. Although, as one focus group participant remarked and I agree, it would be difficult for practitioners to identify the influence of upbringing and religion on their decision-making process if this is largely unconscious. However, the practitioners do not perceive these as important influences. “The point which is not so important is religion — we don’t use this to make decisions or to educate” (WS2:988:P5). Later it will be seen that practitioners separate development interventions from religion. Those practitioners who considered Buddhism to be an important influence argued that it was fundamental in educating and guiding people to “walk in the right way” and suggested its significance is established by its inclusion in the nation’s motto “Nation, Religion, King”. One practitioner claimed that: “religion did development since before we ever knew the word development ... since Buddha’s generation” (WS3:60:P9).

The following extract of an exchange between two Cambodian woman participants illustrates a clash in opinions and values regarding the impact of upbringing and the appropriate behaviour and role for women in Cambodia. One participant stated her parents’ (traditional) advice on how she should behave was restrictive and actually taught her to fear society. The other argues such advice is important as it teaches girls how to live appropriately and so be socially accepted in society. This excerpt highlights the dilemma of fitting in and being respected by conforming to social and cultural expectations which perpetuate behaviours which are not “developmental”.

P3: For me I think that ... [upbringing and religion] is most important

P1: But for me I think different. Parents' advice is good but sometimes their advice becomes a problem ... Sometimes parents advise their daughters not to go here and there, be calm and polite, advise her to be gentle, know how to respect her husband. So this advice, they want her to be good and happy in the family.... They did not advise her to be a strong person but on the contrary they advise her to be afraid of the other, anything that she did she is always afraid ... sometimes their advice made their children become discouraged ... For me I rejected a lot of my parent's advice.

P3: One advice from our parents is: "go along the river follow the bends". It means that when we go somewhere we know how to be flexible and [in] living also.<sup>95</sup> So I said that parent's advice is very important.

P1: Yes I agree but sometimes their advice seems to cut off our arms and legs — daughters should not study too much or no one will come to ask to marry her. (WS1:1485)

The influence of government authorities on decision-making was regarded as least important. There is little genuine respect for government among many NGO workers, following years of poor performance. The relationship between many, but by no means all, NGOs and government staff is cautious, with each viewing the other with suspicion. During the village visits I observed practitioners interacting with local authorities differently. Some were obviously comfortable, particularly those who had previously been government employees themselves, whereas others appeared uneasy and had less frequent contact. The impact of government policy on NGO work and the constraints on the actions of NGO staff according to what they believe, rightly or wrongly, local authorities will support or tolerate was largely unspoken. Based on my observations and discussions these perceived parameters have enormous influence on NGO and practitioner actions. Narayan and Petesch (2000c:487) state: "governments set the essential policy environment that affects the speed and quality of development. Government policy shapes the actions of poor people, the private sector, NGOs, and donors".

In addition to these pre-defined factors participants identified "relationship" or "communication" as another influence on their decision-making.<sup>96</sup> That is, the importance of having personal relationships with people and institutions. From my experience this factor determines which people, organisations and institutions practitioners are comfortable with. Cooperation and

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<sup>95</sup> "If you want to go along the river, you have to follow the bends of the river. If you want to enter the country you have to follow [the customs of] the country." The meaning of this Khmer proverb is that wherever you go you must behave appropriately to that situation (O'Leary & Meas 2001:50).

<sup>96</sup> The Khmer word used "*domnek domnong*" can be translated as either communication or relationship.

interaction with staff of other NGOs and government departments are more likely when there are pre-existing personal relationships and connections.

Participants disagreed about the compatibility of these different factors on influencing decision-making. Some participants assumed that all have the same objective and so are congruent. Others saw that they were incompatible as different factors have different values and so would result in development happening in a different way. There was an understanding that practitioners' response to the real situation and needs in the villages depends on what they see and what they personally believe to be good and their vision of what a better situation looks like. This raises the issue of practitioner discretion. It was said that practitioners have the same goal but may work in different ways to achieve that goal. The implied assumption is that a common intent will achieve the common end, even if the means of reaching it are different. Finally, what practitioners do also relates to their confidence in the villagers. When practitioners lack confidence in the villagers' capacity they retain control of what happens.

So each one's [practitioner's] perception in the village ... sometimes we depend on what we saw. For example I have a vision that I have to make a decision with the villagers according to what we have already learnt and the experience that what we did is not good, we will make it better. For example, they borrow money but they never pay back and they still come to borrow so I will say "*Bong*<sup>97</sup>, you should learn." So if I have the vision that this is good I will lead them to do it. This is my understanding. ... But another always believes that the villagers cannot do it ... they [the practitioner] will do it by themselves. ... It means the thinking that if we let them do it we are afraid that they go in a different direction and we don't have any belief [in them]. But another one thinks let them do it, if they do it wrong, next time we will correct them. This is the thinking and understanding of the practitioner personally. In truth it is the same goal, they push them to reach the same goal. (WS3:257:P3)

#### 6.2.5 Ways of working in development practice — themes and process/procedures

This section covers the ways in which practitioners intervene and the type of development activities they do. Two main themes emerged in interviewees' responses regarding what was considered necessary for practitioners to be effective, both closely related to personal characteristics. First is the importance of having the right attitudes and behaviours to establish close relationships, particularly with poor people. The second is having the required knowledge and skills to be able to solve problems. Two themes which appeared to be less importance to the

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<sup>97</sup> *Bong* is respectful term for someone who is older or around the same age, translated as older brother or older sister.

participants are those of understanding what villagers want and starting from there, and working to achieve sustainability so that people will be able to manage when the NGO finally withdraws. All four are considered instrumental in achieving successful project outcomes.

#### *Establishing close relationships/ relationship skills*

Almost all the practitioners interviewed stressed the importance of being close to villagers. This is regarded as prerequisite to establishing relationships of trust and confidence: the necessary prerequisites to attaining participation. Being similar to the village people was most frequently mentioned as the way to achieve close relationships. This was described in terms of using appropriate speech and dress, behaving simply (for example, people do not think the practitioner is proud or looks down on them), being flexible, friendly, gentle, honest and respectful.

“Development work requires us to live a simple life with people. Not to make ourself a big potato — like high rank people. We have to share comfort and sadness with people” (P3:390). The following excerpt emphasises the importance of being committed to working with people who are poor and implicitly urges congruency between one’s head and one’s heart.

I thought that the first one is the heart to work with the rural people and to respect the village people, and be familiar with them, and help them to do it by themselves, to be a bridge of the villager.... And they [the practitioners] are clear about the goal and objective and activity and they are very friendly with the village people, and yeah.... We say about heart — it means that when we go to work, so we work, we do not cheat the time. Because I have seen sometimes that some people [practitioners] go to stay in one place, ohh and take a rest for a while and then go to one or two houses or sometimes to work with only the VDC or the village leader — key people only — without seeing the living conditions of the poor.  
(P1:347)

The value of a close relationship is instrumental. It is regarded as valuable in as much as it encourages villagers to cooperate and join with the practitioner in achieving the desired results. “So when we talk freely with them, they feel confident that they want to help our work.... if we don’t make close relationship, it means that they don’t know our mind so they don’t dare to cooperate with us and want to join with us” (P7:519). This practitioner believes that the villagers and practitioners should be like family and be equal, despite the fact that: “They are always afraid. When they look at us they think that we are different people from them and we have a higher status like that” (P7:519). The asymmetry of power in this development relationship is examined in section 6.4. Integrity is expressed in terms of following through on promises and commitments.



One important belief is that what we have planned, we must do it in order to get success ... This is one belief that is most important to me. Some people just go to the village and promise to do something and later they don't do it, so the villagers don't believe in the future. (P7:519)

The essential differences between a purposive “professional” relationship and being like family are often masked. There is little concept of the relationship itself being the medium through which development occurs, and of the self as a tool in this process. This is explored in chapter 8.

#### *Practice knowledge and skills to solve problems*

Participants stressed the need to have the capacity and skills to help people solve their problems. They stated that practitioners have to be confident in themselves and their ability, and villagers have to have confidence that they can help.

When deciding about a problem that comes up — we believe in ourself that we can decide — we don't listen to the bad ideas of others. Keep straight to the goal. Don't be biased, don't get angry, know how to analyse and facilitate according to the villagers. (P6:401)

Participants emphasised the need for knowledge and understanding of the situation, and their responses indicate they assume responsibility for solving the problems presented to them by villagers.

I think that those staff who have a clear plan.... and creative ideas ... can solve all the problems the community has. If they [the villagers] have problems and [the practitioner] could not find the way to solve the problem so they are not effective. For example, they [the villagers] bring the problem and we are quiet and don't know how to answer or what to do. It is not good. (P7:375)

The establishment of mutual trust and confidence depends on each (the practitioner and the villagers) perceiving the other as an agent who is credible and trustworthy, and able to effect change. “If we want them to believe in us, we need to believe in them too” (P2:568). This theme resonates with the findings of Ryan et al (2004) who identified belief as an essential feature in social workers' practice.<sup>98</sup> Participants generally regarded mutual understanding between the development practitioner and the villagers as very important. Practitioners frequently said that it is not possible to force the villagers to do what the NGO or the practitioner thinks is good as the villagers do not follow. This conviction seems to contradict the view put forward by these and

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<sup>98</sup> Two other core features were optimism (belief that clients have the potential to change) and caring (which respects the dignity of the person and inspires belief and optimism) (Ryan et al. 2004).

other interviewees who stressed the necessity of having a clear plan, and disseminating information about development work so that people can understand what to do.

Half the interviewees described their way of working in terms of a defined process or series of linear steps, as typically outlined in the project cycle. The process starts with discovering what the village people want to do, focusing on the target group members, moving onto the organisation of groups and the election and training of leaders to implement the particular activity. Practitioners expect villagers to conform to the activity plan and their role is to monitor this compliance.

While the above refer to set procedures, practitioners also described an array of informal methods they used such as making home visits, conversing socially with people and participating in ceremonies. “So according to the culture of the Cambodian people, the Cambodian people in the rural areas don’t like the formal way, so we work in informal ways” (P1:322). Formal meetings were said to be reminiscent of the Khmer Rouge regime. Participating in village ceremonies was put forward by some practitioners as an indicator of respect, and useful in establishing good relationships.

One interviewee described how she has adjusted her approach to raising issues of gender in the field as follows:

Because I think that this problem is new and if women act angrily then men don’t understand. Khmer people like to hear sweet words or consolation or Khmer say that “one drop of water can destroy a big stone”. I used to experience this problem. When I really get angry I can’t defeat my husband’s mind, Moira. When I use a specific reason to tell him he will fall easily. It is the same in community. We take a true example to show the people and when they see and understand it is right, then they will recognise. That’s why we say that not all traditions are not really correct: Some are right but some are completely wrong. (P8:165)

Some participants stated that their ways of empowering others included asking questions rather than telling people, and training (both in the village and through exposure visits). Some respondents were vague, for example, “have a plan and give power to them” (P3) or, “show them the way and guide them”. Others were more explicit: “Encourage them to try things that they are afraid to do — just to try and next time they will be able to do it better” (P4:394). For the most part however the espoused “ways of working” are consistent with the development outcomes practitioners want to achieve, and participants implicitly assumed these ways of working would be efficacious.

### 6.2.6 Espoused values

What follows is a compilation of the espoused values I inferred from the practitioners' responses. Certain personal qualities and modes of behaviour were perceived by the participants to be core to effective practice. The values identified included: helping, commitment (to the poor and to the task), hard working, integrity, humility, honesty, respect, equality (to be of equal status with the villagers), neutrality, caring, trust, belief in self, reciprocity (belief in each other), justice, authenticity, and success ("professional" competence).

The following extract highlights a range of the values that participants' expressed as underpinning their practice: dedication, being close to the villagers, altruism (caring); success, compliance to the NGO directives (craft); and confidence (compensation).

The values inside me are ... commitment to struggle so I can reach the goal, to reach the villagers ... to be close, to live with village people.... It is related to confidence in myself and to think that we have the ability to do this job. We have received training about development work and we have the ability, feel commitment, responsible ... Another belief is that we lose our own benefit and work for the benefit of the group, it comes from our heart. We have to abandon [ourselves].... My belief about my work — I follow the appropriate method of the organisation, according to the plan of the [NGO] ... I cannot walk by myself.  
(P3:507)

In "Meaningful Work" Martin (2000) argues that personal ideals (used interchangeably with commitment and values) guide and motivate professionals in their work and are essential considerations in professional ethics. He identifies three categories or sources of meaning or satisfaction for professionals in their work. These are compensation/reward motives, craft or effective practice motives, and moral concerns (caring and personal integrity motives). I suggest that practitioners' inferred and expressed espoused values broadly correspond with Martin's categories as discussed below.

#### *Compensation/reward*

Compensation refers to the things one gains for oneself through work, such as income, social recognition, power, authority and job security. This came through weakly in the practitioners' responses to direct questioning. This possibly reflects a desire to downplay "selfish" motives because, as presented in chapter 7, participants identified the most important reason for valuing a job as obtaining an income to support their family. Several practitioners expressed personal satisfaction with their achievements, as well as satisfaction derived from social recognition of, and from villagers' gratitude for, their good work.

The activity in the proposal — I have commitment to do this. I have to do this and I want to do this in a very good way.... Because if I can do like this in a very good way everybody can see that ... ohh ... this is a good thing so I feel very happy.  
(P1:605)

### *Craft/effective practice*

The prominent desire to be successful in their work corresponds with Martin's category of craft which he describes as professionals' desires to "achieve expertise, to manifest technical skill, theoretical understanding and creativity" (Martin 2000:22). For Martin this is about advanced expertise and the combination of theory-based understanding, practical know-how and an openness to learning. For the Cambodian practitioners this is expressed in the form of believing in themselves and in their ability to help. If they have confidence in themselves they can succeed, according to their criteria of achieving the outputs in their NGO's plan. There is a strong sense of practitioners' believing that what they are doing is right, as expressed in the following quote.

First our heart feels pity for that kind of problem. Second we used to be trained about that thing too, it makes us believe in our work ... we believe in ourselves ... we have studied about that, we really like it and we don't worry, even we speak strong or low word to villagers, but we still think that we have done a lot of good things with them, so isn't a problem. ... we believe that we do that, we can help people ... I believe it is right.... If we have that belief alone we cannot make the villagers believe, it is not effective, so we do whatever to make them understand as we do, so we can walk together. (P8)

In this excerpt the practitioner expresses pity and somewhat unquestioning self-confidence in her capacity to help and to do the work as a result of her training. There is also an implicit belief that the villagers should be grateful, regardless of the practitioner's attitude toward them. Another factor participants frequently articulated is that the practitioner and the villagers must have the same belief or objective if the work is to be successful, which may involve making the villagers believe what the practitioner believes. As expressed by one practitioner: "Our desire must be the same as ... the desire of the village people. If you make a commitment alone but the villagers don't follow we cannot be successful. It must come from both sides" (P3:403).

### *Caring*

Caring values refer to the practitioners' desire to help in the alleviation of poverty and suffering.<sup>99</sup> The values articulated by the interviewees clearly related to moral concerns for doing development

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<sup>99</sup> Martin identifies two aspects to moral concerns: caring motives and integrity motives. The former includes desires to promote the well-being of the people who are being served, for their own sake. Integrity motives embrace the desire to meet professional responsibilities and to maintain professional integrity. Martin describes integrity virtues as "promoting coherence among one's attitudes, commitments, and conduct based on a code of moral concern" (2000:148).

work and the importance of caring came through strongly in the responses. Moral commitments guiding and motivating development practitioners were illustrated in comments such as “want to help the poor”, and “want the poor to escape from poverty”. Practitioners used words such as “love” and “pity” to express their feelings. For many practitioners their motives and attitudes go beyond merely providing a service (as expressed by Ryan et al 2004). Participants also expressed altruistic motives: “Another feeling is that I do whatever for the villagers, I don’t take anything with me”.<sup>100</sup> Caring or altruism is combined with self-interested motives and with technically oriented motives in getting the job done successfully.

Some participants talked about authenticity in terms of a practitioner really caring and having a heart for the poor, being committed to the work and not just pretending.

We don’t look down on the poor people. If we have an idea to discriminate then it is hard for us to work. We think we love the poor people ... we want the poor people to escape from poverty.... But if we just do it and don’t pay attention to that work and don’t know the poor people’s feelings and don’t humble ourselves we will have a problem. (P6:358)

Some people when they meet poor people, they say that they have a headache and don’t know what to say because there are many problems. Another likes working in the community. The good staff they don’t complain that they get a headache when they meet the poor people. (P4:442)

The following excerpt also stresses authenticity, suggesting that purely self-interested motivation would diminish effectiveness.

No matter how highly educated we are, if we are not honest with our work, it becomes useless. Suppose a person is much educated but if that person only thinks of his/her own interest and how to earn a lot of money, that person is not honest with the work and not a honest person. (P5:189)

### 6.2.7 Value hierarchies and implicit assumptions in participants’ espoused theories

There are inherent tensions among the values espoused by Cambodian practitioners. For example, the value of villagers’ self-determination is in tension with practitioners’ statements that, when necessary and more conducive to success, they would tell the villagers what to do, or make them understand. At the same time they argue that if they do not listen to villagers they will not succeed.

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<sup>100</sup> For Martin, altruism is not self-sacrifice but the practitioner’s desire for the well-being of other people, and wanting to help them for their sake. He asserts that this “implies valuing clients as ‘ends in themselves’, as persons who have inherent worth rather than as ‘mere means’ to personal gain” (2000:70). Vaux argues that altruism is a value to aspire to which exists alongside, not as an alternative to, selfishness, hence the need to be self-aware and vigilant about one’s motivations in each situation (2001).

The claim by practitioners/NGOs to be “doing what the people want” is suspect, particularly when they are implementing pre-defined plans which did not involve the genuine participation of villagers in their design.

The following quote illustrates the gulf between the priorities of the practitioner and the villager. It depicts a situation where the participant perceives that villagers are concerned with ensuring their daily needs while practitioners believe that the villagers should be thinking strategically about the future.

We want the villagers to know how to think, have the idea to think ... because nowadays the villagers think only about tomorrow — what to do to have enough food to eat. They don't think about the future. But we want them to know. Firstly to understand about their role, know how to use their skills and their knowledge, and they know about their power. Then they know how to develop their village. (P6:325).

What appears to me to be a recurring inconsistency in practitioners' responses is perhaps better understood as a consistent perception of practitioners which reflects a hierarchy in value priorities. This is explored further in chapter 6.4. On the one hand, participants argued it is essential they have the same belief as the villagers so they can “walk together” — they cannot force people. On the other hand, participants stated they have to change the villagers' understanding so that they understand as the practitioners' do.

We support their ideas and ask them how they should do. But if we lead them to do this or that it is not good. For example — [we] see problem of the sanitation but they don't think about this. We can show them the real problem in the village and help them to be interested in the problem. If they look but they don't see — we lead them to think and then they will see. (P2:453)

The emphasis on a shared understanding between the practitioner and the villagers has an instrumental purpose in that the practitioner's knowing is to enable her or him to change the villagers' beliefs and attitudes. Practitioners see themselves as being both the same as, and different to villagers, which is largely related to their education and training and “having ideas”.

Participants viewed the development relationship as important, but primarily as an instrument to success. It is necessary in order to establish trust and confidence, and thereby attain participation. The relationship is not an end in itself in the sense of being the space in which development processes occur. It is assumed that the end (achievement of the task) is more important than the

process. This polarisation between task related values (achieving outputs) and people related values (valuing process) is a ubiquitous feature of development practice (Padaki 2001:204).

Throughout the research practitioners exhibited little questioning or self-doubt about or awareness of any inconsistencies in their interventions. This appeared to be at least partially derived from their commitment to comply with what they learned through training. It is the role of the practitioner to facilitate positive change. What is at issue is the process of how this is facilitated. As already mentioned, participants generally assumed that the provision of information/knowledge leads to action and/or empowerment and change. The circumstances of people's lived experience of hierarchy, inequality and powerlessness or an understanding of the processes of personal change did not appear to be incorporated into this assumption. A second assumption is that development is delivered and that without the NGO or the practitioner there is no development. A one-way transfer of knowledge is assumed because villagers do not know or cannot think.

To summarise, in their espoused theory Cambodian practitioners defined development in terms of positive change in people's lives, from less to more, and they emphasised empowerment through providing people with information and knowledge so they can advocate and manage by themselves. Participants implicitly believed this would lead to improved living conditions. The development practitioner's role was primarily viewed as the dissemination of information and educating the villagers. Participants stress the importance of listening and understanding the situation and basing their activities on what the villagers want and need. They state that to be effective, it is essential workers have the personal qualities to establish good relationships and have the knowledge and skills to solve villagers' problems. Practitioners believe they know what to do because their development training has given them distinctive knowledge and skills. There is an assumption that this is good, that what they do is right, and that it will lead to success. Success is achievement of the planned project outputs. There is a belief that what is done in development is inherently good, and this is based on their development knowledge.

Individual practitioners are influenced and guided by various factors to differing extents.

Practitioners stated that development theory, and their NGO's goal and policies were the most influential factors in their decision-making. Some practitioners placed greatest importance on complying with what they perceive their organisation wants them to do and their responses were defined by the project proposal and organisational policies and practices. Practitioners' values or motives for practice can be categorised according to: moral concerns (caring and integrity motives), achievement of success and expertise in their practice, and compensatory motives such

as income and social recognition. There are inherent tensions in the simultaneous pursuit of these values, implying a hierarchy of values where some values are given a higher priority than others, depending on the particular practitioner and the situation.

### **6.3 Theory-in-use**

This section addresses research question 2 and covers Cambodian development practitioners' theory and values-in-use. Content analysis of the data yielded the following themes: practice knowledge (of their NGO, development theory and the context); practice skills (including the development practitioner-villager relationship, facilitation of the development process and operationalisation of practice approaches — advocacy, gender, working with the poor, sustainability); and the physical, emotional and financial demands of practice. Following a discussion of these themes I examine the values inferred in actual practice and the issues which arise.

Overall, practitioners believed that what they are doing in the village is inherently good because their intention is good, that is, to improve the lives of people who are poor. Practitioners believe that before they were trained they thought like the villagers. If the villagers now knew what they know, then they would think the same. They are therefore doing what the villagers would want them to do. Although some participants spoke of villagers' resistance or lack of participation, this was often attributed to villagers' not understanding the potential benefits rather than being a positive choice based on their assessment of the activity.

NGO policies set the parameters for the practitioners' intervention. Participants' responses indicated that only changes instigated and managed by the practitioners are considered valid measures of development. There is a gap between the notions of development being the transfer of resources and development being the processes by which people develop themselves. What a practitioner actually does in a particular context depends on her or his knowledge, skills and capabilities, and value priorities. These are inter-connected.

#### **6.3.1 Practice knowledge**

Practice knowledge includes both substantive knowledge (that is, knowledge about facts, concepts and relationships) and procedural knowledge (that is “knowing how” to use substantive knowledge) (Fook et al. 2000). How knowledge is used may be rules-based whereby rules are used to make decisions regardless of the context, or contextual whereby knowledge is used appropriately according to the particular situation. My observations suggest participants relied



more on “context free” than “situational” knowledge. Development interventions in different villages tend to be very similar, as set out in the NGO’s project plan. There was little evidence to suggest that contextual knowledge of a particular village influenced the approach.

*Knowledge of workplace — NGO policy and plan, and compliance*

As previously discussed all interviewees were aware of the parameters set by their NGO in terms of objectives, policies and plans, and exhibited a strong commitment to achieving the NGO’s designated outputs. “So that’s why I try to work with the poor — because our program has a goal to work with the poor” (P1:91). Another practitioner said: “I know clearly about the project proposal of my organisation. I know clearly what I can do and what I can’t do” (P8:59). Practitioners appeared to be motivated by a personal desire to improve the people’s situation, to be seen as successful and keep their job, and by pressure from their NGO and donor to achieve the outputs.

At times these parameters seemed to constrain practitioners’ thinking and actions. Compliance with the plans and various regulations of the NGO was most often given as the reason for a particular project activity or course of action. This was associated with the feeling that it is better, and/or safer, as recourse to the rules took away the possibility of blame for a negative result.

The activities that we did in [village] we did according to the plan. We follow the plan of [NGO] to put in each of the villages. When we have a plan we do according to that. We have to follow the limit of the plan. (P3:366)

A development output is recognised as such only if it is directly attributable to a practitioner’s interventions, in keeping with the plan. A villager’s initiative is often not recognised as an expression of the capabilities practitioners are trying to nurture in the villagers through their activities. This again suggests a conception of the development process as a transfer of resources. For example, one practitioner reported that her NGO colleagues did not recognise that the villagers’ decision to act alone, without first seeking NGO assistance, was an indication of development and the villagers’ capacity to solve their own problems, which was one of their stated objectives. “But the idea that they [the villagers] start to help each other ... We [NGO staff] are not sure what we are aiming for — the fish goes into the trap and we do not know that it is there”

(P8:179).<sup>101</sup> This suggests a lack of agreement or confusion over how to evaluate or measure “success”.

Office demands seemed to take precedence over field practice (although this may have been influenced by my presence). Most practitioners cut short our village visits to attend to office work. Most had heavy obligations for reporting, preparation of plans, meetings (internal and external) and attending training. It was difficult to make appointments to accompany workers to the village for field visits. Half of the practitioners interviewed had not been to the village for more than three or four days over the previous month. Some workers expressed concern that things were slipping in the village as a result. The prioritisation of office work over village work reflects the workers’ allegiance to their NGO and its survival. It was also the case that office work was generally less physically (and emotionally?) demanding and it appeared to me (for a number of reasons including physical health) that some practitioners preferred this. Office work is also considered to be of higher status than fieldwork (O’Leary & Meas 2001).

#### *Knowledge and use of theory*

Concepts such as participation, empowerment, sustainability, gender, civil society, advocacy, rights-based, decentralisation and democratisation inform the practice of the practitioners interviewed and informed the activities and tasks I observed on field visits. I will use participation and sustainability to illustrate how concepts are understood and operationalised.

People’s participation is unquestionably perceived by all practitioners to be good and right, and yet the extent to which people are actually involved in the decisions regarding the NGO’s interventions into their lives varies considerably. The following “standard” process of NGO intervention applies to each of the NGOs I observed, and each practitioner was engaged at varying points in this process. Initially the NGO staff see and discuss with the villagers the problems they experience. Then, typically in a process which does not involve the villagers, the NGO decides a plan of the (often familiar) activities they believe will solve the problem. They prepare a proposal with objectives, activities, outputs and timeframe, couched appropriately to the requirements of a particular donor. Once funded, the practitioner then has the task of implementing the pre-ordained activities — which may or may not correspond with the villagers’ ideas of an appropriate solution. In effect, participation means “joining-in” the activities. The value of participation, both

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<sup>101</sup> This is a reference to a well-known Khmer metaphor of catching fish in a bamboo trap that is thrust onto the floor of a pond or stream but, because the waters are muddy, the fisher cannot directly see that there are fish inside, so unless they use their other senses they will not know they have been successful. Development is happening but it is not seen or recognised by the practitioner (O’Leary & Meas 2001).

as a process and as an end in itself, is, I believe, compromised by this process. The ideal of facilitating and encouraging villagers' initiatives becomes a situation where the practitioner is responsible for introducing predetermined solutions and convincing the villagers to think as the practitioner/NGO does. At the same time, the practitioner may defend the activity and insist this is what the villagers want. This process accords with Mosse's thesis that policy does not drive practice but serves to justify it (2004).

Practitioners' understanding of and the impetus for sustainability is largely concerned with villagers being able to manage when the NGO withdraws. "If we don't have a strategy to make them understand by themselves, and we just go to do that work, when we stop working with them, they won't be able to do that because they depend on the [NGO]" (P4:352). In some villages where the NGOs have been operational for ten years practitioners still consider the villagers as unable to manage by themselves. However, NGOs vary in their own ability to conceptualise and implement exit plans. This is discussed later in this chapter.

### *Contextual knowledge*

International development discourse assumes that practitioners are operating in a context of law and order where governments are responsive to citizens' demands. However, the reality is often otherwise, as in Cambodia. This discrepancy is rarely addressed in training or discussions about operationalising theory. This in turn leads to a disconnection between theory and practice, as the practitioner struggles within a very different working environment. Contextual knowledge relating to natural resource management and the lack of the rule of law and impunity exemplifies the difficulties in taking a rights based approach.

So what we are concerned about is the fisheries law and that the fisheries experts don't respect the law. So when they don't respect the law, the offenders still commit illegal things. For example the offenders give money to experts, and the experts still allow them to use illegal gear. (P2:111)

From my observation of practice and from discussions, Cambodian development practitioners in the early to mid-nineties were extremely reluctant to confront powerful people directly or through supporting the villagers to do so. Human rights violations, particularly in the area of civil and political rights, were seen to be the role of human rights workers.<sup>102</sup> With a change of focus from

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<sup>102</sup> Human rights workers have been involved in human rights education since the first days of UNTAC in the early nineties (Lao 1998). This focused primarily on civil and political rights, particularly in relation to the elections, and was quite distinct from development practice. Practitioners' understanding of human rights in terms of access to services and the achievement of a decent life is more recent.

service delivery to advocacy, development practitioners have become more familiar with human rights and understanding of the link between rights and development. Practitioners appear more willing to engage with human rights issues “because now there are rights, it is not like before”. Many explained their role as getting behind the villagers. As one practitioner said, if she takes the lead she can be running ahead only to find that there is no one behind her.

At times NGOs use powerful people, particularly local authorities, to solve problems related to their interventions in the village. I observed a meeting of a commune association regarding the failure of many members to participate in a planned activity as they had promised, where the commune leader played a prominent role. The practitioner later explained this, stating: “the commune leader should solve this problem because the commune leaders are the people who manage the village” (P7:93). This legitimates a role and engenders respect for hierarchy. It could be argued that resorting to the power of the authorities results in community organisations not developing the capacity to address their issues through more democratic and participatory ways.

Often the practitioners displayed a thorough knowledge of the relationships and connections between villagers, and how these influenced decisions. Two of the three participating NGOs explicitly recognise the heterogeneity of any village population and have a specific focus on the very poor. This contrasts with past practice of non-targeted activities which were justified because “everyone is poor” (O’Leary & Meas 2001). In another example, the parents’ association in one village needed to adopt a strategy of diplomacy as the school principal, who was illegally using school rice land for his personal benefit, was the brother-in-law of the village leader. However, there were obvious issues regarding the integration of understanding of power dynamics between rich and poor, and women and men, and the use of practices that could address these power imbalances. These are dealt with later in this section.

Practitioners tend to analyse the village context through the lens of their NGOs’ imperatives (O’Leary & Meas 2001). As examined in the literature review this produces a reductionist view, comprised of distinct components, and neglects the interplay of economic, political, social and cultural factors at the micro, meso and macro levels, as expressed in the following quote from an expatriate focus group participant.

We were facilitating these discussions in the villages with NGOs that have been working in those villages for three or four years or longer. And the NGOs were hearing these things at the same time but invalidating. The workers would say, oh they [villagers] don't know what they're talking about. And so we would say — well, why do you think you're poor or powerless now? And they [the villagers] would say very simply — well before we could go to the forest and we could get x, y and z — now we can't do that. Why can't you do that? Either there's guards or there's no forest.... Or they would say we can't water our rice fields.... But the NGO worker will whisper oh they need irrigation. And we'd say — why uncle, why can't you water your rice field? Oh because some rich man bought all the land and that's where the ponds are and now it's privately owned. So you need to actually pay for water and they can't afford to pay.... But they [practitioners] completely invalidate it because they know. They know it's the floods because [their donor] gives them \$30,000 to do flood relief — so it has to be the floods. Or it has to be education or HIV or whatever ... more of listening ... is the key. (FFG1:P5:671)

This participant contends that if villagers are listened to with open minds they do have an analysis of their situation, and she laments the arrogance and/or ignorance of the practitioners. Responding to this, another participant suggested that it was not only these attitudes which prevent practitioners from listening, but also fear. Practitioners are constrained by their project and feel unable to respond because they are locked into a plan with their donor. This is also a survival strategy so that one does not get overwhelmed. Participants also commented on the lack of respect for people's resourcefulness, endurance and the richness of their lives which is overwhelmed by capturing people as "the poor".

[From the villager's perspective] I've survived all these years without you coming and telling me that "you have to wash your hands" — why should I listen to you? Do we [practitioners] even listen to them? ... To me it's almost verging on the arrogant the way we go in and do this. (FFG2:P2:129)

Participants also argued that before aided development came to Cambodia, rural people were surviving and responding to situations as they arose without being taught what they should do by outsiders.

In my generation we never heard the word "development". And especially in the village where my grandmother, where my mother ... During the flood season they just prepare themselves how to be careful for flood or drought, something like this. But they never have the NGO or someone to teach them — oh you have to do the training on emergency preparedness or something.... But they live with the issue and they never face with the starvation. (CFG1:P3:442)

A systemic view is not encouraged by a project-led approach to development as the problem tends to be framed in terms of the plan. As one expatriate participant suggested, and others agreed, in NGO rhetoric the complexity is recognised, but in actuality a lot of NGO work is simple in that the donor has a logframe, the NGO provides the service to the community, the development practitioner knows the boxes to tick, and appears in the community as the patron and delivers the required outputs.

### 6.3.2 Practice skills

Practitioners identified a range of skills they needed for their practice, including relationship and communication skills, facilitation, formulating questions, listening, problem solving, research/survey and analytical skills, working with groups, prioritisation, strengthening capacity or educating and training. The application of skills depends on a practitioner's knowledge. I observed a number of occasions where groups of villagers raised problems but the practitioners were stuck for ideas to stimulate further thought and discussion.

Practice skills are underpinned by different values and relate to certain development concepts, for example, listening rather than giving advice and facilitating rather than leading reflect a valuing of the ideas and knowledge of others. These skills, which were espoused by many participants, were in tension with the skills relating to practitioners' self-defined role in changing the villagers' attitudes and beliefs. In this case, less value is given to villagers' knowledge and perspectives. The enactment of a particular practice skill depends on whether the skill is valued.

There is also the ever-present tension between process and product: concern with how things are done versus achieving the required outputs. I will concentrate on relationship and facilitation skills as these incorporate a number of the other skills and I consider them fundamental to the development process.

#### *Relationships*

It is important to state here my conviction that development values such as empowerment, participation and gender equity must be embodied in the interaction between the practitioner and the village if they are to be effectively operationalised. I consider the practitioner-villager relationship as the medium through which certain aspects of development occur. By contrast, Cambodian practitioners appeared to primarily consider the relationship instrumental to getting the job done, rather than as developmental (the relationship dynamic being important in itself).

My observations indicated that practitioners' interpersonal and communication skills and their individual interactions with villagers were generally positive. Community recognition and greetings/awareness of workers who have been coming into their village for several years varied. Some workers made efforts to greet everyone while others just met the people they needed to meet. Practitioners spent considerable time "chatting" with people, reflecting their expressed belief in the importance of "being close to the villagers". I also observed that practitioners often seemed unaware of, or unconcerned by, the power differential between themselves and the villagers and how this might impact on their work. For example, practitioners seemed comfortable being addressed by villagers as "teacher", a term of respect but also indicative of where the knowledge (and power) is perceived to lie. This in turn, I believe, must influence the nature of the relationship.

Nevertheless, villagers, and especially women, who had been relating to the practitioners over time, displayed self-assurance and confidence. Several practitioners were willing to admit their frailties and draw on their own experience in establishing relationships and encouraging others to have confidence in themselves.

We encourage them by explaining that before I was afraid like you. When I talked in the meeting, I held the microphone and I was shaking. Even the governor ... he is good at speaking here but when he joined the national meeting even the governor is shaking. And we are simple people, so we will be shaking but you should try because later you can do it well. (P2:205)

I observed that informal discussions and conversations seemed to drift from one topic to another and practitioners often seemed unaware of the "windows of opportunity" arising during them. The problems of individuals or associations were often left hanging, and concerns incidental to the purpose of the visit were skimmed over. Interactions appeared to be smoothing rather than challenging. The purposiveness of discussions often appeared to be framed by the practitioner's pre-determined intention or task. At times villagers raised issues they were clearly interested in that the practitioners did not pursue, or did not pursue at that particular time. The purpose of chatting was to engage but most often appeared not to be concerned with setting goals. However, it must be said that practitioners do listen and new issues have been taken up at a later date; for example, concern over the recent advent of youth violence and drug use in rural areas.

In a role play during the NGO focus groups, practitioners depicted the villagers as hoping and expecting the practitioner to have the necessary resources and ability to provide the help they need

to solve their problem. As one villager role play participant said: “To me when I see them [practitioners] I think they are the other, I think they are rich and can help me as I am poor. So the *anka* [organisation] can lend me some money, so I ask for money from them” (WS2:58).

The practitioners acting as villagers in the role play believed (and I think this reflects their belief as practitioners in reality) that development practitioners perceive the villagers as poor and afraid, not daring to do things, having a limited understanding and lacking connections (WS2:100). One participant (in his role as a villager) described villagers in the following terms:

We [villagers] lack ideas — we are born people — but we don’t have ideas for the future to progress. We don’t have. We are poor — feel complicated. We don’t understand and ideas don’t come to develop ourselves and we can’t think of a way out to resolve our problems. The poorer we are the more complicated we feel. (WS2:106:P2)

The participant in the practitioner role stated: “Villagers think like this and we, community organisers, think in a way different from them. It is opposite and that causes difficulty” (WS2:607:P5). Generally practitioners are trained to look for what is missing, and their role, identity and purpose is linked to filling the gaps. This focus is not conducive to appreciating the strengths and resourcefulness of villagers (O’Leary & Meas 2001).

One Cambodian practitioner suggested that there are two types of development relationships.

First is the form of relationship which creates more dependency, to be nice and to be friendly. But another form of relationship is relationship for empowerment and this is quite different. And commonly, most commonly we see that most relationships are based on to be nice and be friendly with villagers. (CFG4:P1:12).

The first type of relationship is essentially for the purpose of achieving villagers’ participation in the NGO’s projects. Power dynamics in the relationship are not of concern. That villagers may also be dependent is not necessarily regarded as problematic as people may be more inclined to cooperate and join in as requested.

Some research participants described their observation that the development relationship replicated the patron-client model. For example:

We had a Buddhism and community development skills training program.... They [Cambodian staff] saw that it was really in the role of being, you know, a privileged patron ... embracing very little of ... that egalitarian spirit — that of brothers and sisters in the Buddha framework. And I found that when I went to villages and saw them working, most of them, not all of them, there were a couple of exceptions



who treated the villagers as equals. But they tended to talk down to them because they were NGO workers and that set themselves apart. They were really sort of urban middle class on the make. (KI:5:22)

The second type of relationship is inherently concerned with power issues and shifting the relationship from one of dependency to independence or interdependence. Some Cambodian participants recognised the issue of dependency and villagers' high expectations that the NGO/practitioners will provide material and financial resources.

Dependency is ... very unhappy ... word in development.... But we cannot avoid dependency of people on the practitioner. Because at the beginning the people expect a lot and depend on the practitioner. So the role of the practitioner [is to] help people — how to reduce this dependency this is very important. (G3:P1:294)

This practitioner recognises that provision of material resources is a part of the process to reduce poverty but that this must go along with facilitation of capacity to ensure the movement from dependency to being independent.

A complicating dilemma for practitioners is that their status is derived from their authority and role in development, and their employment depends upon the existence of people who are poor. Thus in the first instance, while their aim is to empower people, some practitioners are wary of achieving the desirable impact as when villagers are empowered they are no longer totally receptive to or dependent on the practitioner. The practitioner may have negative feelings as the following quotes indicate.

At the beginning they don't know much, it's more easy to follow us. But when they have more idea sometimes they have different ideas than CD worker.... And then at that time the practitioner think that maybe it's more difficult. (CFG2:P5:640)

I try to educate them, but it seems there is more development but it is not forward development, it seem backward development. It seems that they are too much progress, and when we say something to them they always against us. (P4:348)<sup>103</sup>

### *Facilitation*

All the interviewees described their role as that of a “facilitator” although this covered a range of behaviours, and was often used interchangeably with “helping”. Facilitation is linked closely to ideas about participation and empowerment and how these are actualised. Facilitation can be seen as a continuum from doing for and deciding on behalf of villagers at one pole, through to guiding

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<sup>103</sup>Similarly one foreigner described her experience with practitioners and sex workers: if the client is submissive, dependent, grateful and wants to reform then the practitioner's response is positive; if the sex worker is empowered and her actions do not conform to the practitioner's values and expectations the sex worker is dismissed as “bad”.

and directing specific change which the practitioner perceives to be good, to facilitation which implies neutrality in the outcomes of discussions at the opposite pole. What practitioners described as facilitation could at times be described as manipulation. Leading people to a pre-determined outcome is a practice for which Porter et al (1991) coined the term “facipulation”.

We only help in facilitating and show the way to them about what they should do next in order to reach the goal and achieve their work. This problem also relates to when we go to follow up every day, in order to push them. Sometimes if we don't go, it seems that they forget or they have one feeling that they don't want. We have to remind and push them. (P7:103)

Many Cambodian participants in the NGO focus groups considered the villagers to be poorly educated and therefore to have little “useful” knowledge to contribute to the process. This influences the manner in which practitioners facilitate discussions and other exercises. Participants did see a role in “educating” the villagers. Education is part of capacity building and integral to people gaining increasing control over their lives; however, the literature indicates that the process used is crucial (Eade 1997a; Kaplan 1999). When the emphasis is on providing information, this appears to shift efforts away from the facilitation of empowerment through consciousness-raising. When discussing capacity building many practitioners talked about “strengthening” groups or leaders. The practitioners’ skills and knowledge about how to “strengthen them” varied, and their strategies for operationalising concepts were often vague. Often this was encompassed in the practitioners’ stated purpose for their field visit under the rubric of “following up” which I observed involved monitoring and informal discussion about what was happening in the project.

During field visits several practitioners described their use of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) in assessing the needs and preferences of villagers. Their descriptions of the process indicated that PRA tools were primarily used to extract “better” information which was then taken away for analysis. The participatory philosophy of PRA of handing over power to the villagers and facilitating them to undertake the analysis and decision-making was ignored, or not known.

One crucial value for facilitation is self-determination, which requires a belief in the client.

What we've been discovering [is] ... that the value base is one of the biggest impediments to people learning social work skills and working with clients in truly effective ways. Because they don't actually believe clients have the capacity to speak for themselves, decide for themselves, have ideas ... so therefore we must tell them, give them ideas. And what we are trying to get people [practitioners] to do — their job is to facilitate ... helping a person with a problem to discover and develop their own capacity to solve appropriately the problem. And people just

don't know how to do that and that's very frustrating because it is such a different mentality and model. (KI:2:8)

Workers focus on what is in the proposal and what they need to do for their NGO. Focus group participants generally felt that, while there is a lot of talk about listening to and respecting the villagers, the main thrust is to get village people to participate. "I very seldom actually saw people [practitioners] doing the thing where they made a plan based on what the villagers wanted or actually asked them and then made their plan on that" (FFG:2:P4:163).

NGOs/practitioners frequently state that their objective is to enable people to analyse their situation; however, focus group participants often raised the general failure of practitioners to facilitate a deeper level of analysis. This was linked to a recurrent question as to whether practitioners believe they can learn from villagers. Another Cambodian manager said it is due to practitioners' fear to change what they have done previously as this tends to provide a blueprint and if followed the practitioner cannot be blamed for the results. In this participant's analysis practitioners "follow the villagers" only at the first stage of the Project Cycle Framework, when conducting a PRA or a household survey. Practitioners do the analysis themselves.

Supposing they [the community] have no land, they [the practitioners] facilitate the problem tree why there is no land and whatever but it comes to that point they do not go further. Why? How the community would solve no land. Because they would introduce the solution to them. Like if you have no cow, OK we'll have cow bank, rice bank or whatever.... So it is in their plan already. So they try to facilitate in a way that meets with whatever plan they did.... They are afraid to change also because they want to follow the previous plan. I really need a process that would change them [practitioners] to listen to the community. (CFG1:P4:342)

One aspect of facilitation is the skill to bring together the ideas of different stakeholders: the villagers, practitioners/NGO, and donors. In his significant incident one interviewee (P5) related how he had raised his voice in a village workshop because, while his agenda was to provide training, the villagers were "complaining" that they could not participate in some NGO activities because no benefits were provided (food or money). In raising his voice he felt that he had lost face. He was ashamed because it happened in front of new staff and many villagers. He felt frustrated because what the villagers wanted was not compatible with what the NGO wanted and they would not listen and follow him (the "teacher"). He felt that this indicated a lack of respect for his position and authority. He was frustrated with himself because he was unable to facilitate the meeting and find a strategy to bring together the two points of view. Although the incident had

occurred several months previously the practitioner had not taken any steps which would enable him to deal better with future confrontations.

This challenge confronting practitioners when villagers have different priorities and want from the practitioners something different to what they assume they are providing is recognised elsewhere (see Gilbert 2005:66) “The community members are not happy because they normally expect NGO or the staff to provide them everything, physical thing and also mental thing. So when we ask them questions sometimes they are not happy but we try and try. We take time” (CFG2:P5:130).

Practitioners also spoke about the importance of creating an environment where villagers could feel confident to speak out, given the socio-cultural factors which could inhibit this (see chapter 7.2). People’s tendency may be to immediately respond to a question that they don’t know, they don’t dare [*ot hien*] to speak. Participants said that sometimes villagers, especially women, do not have confidence in themselves. “They think that — oh, I am lower than the others so I could not speak. When I talk a lot they will look down to me or something because of my low education or something. So they unselfconfidence.” (CFG1:P7:626). One participant said that Cambodians needed to heal (from being silenced in the Khmer Rouge regime and by cultural norms) and this involved giving people time to talk and to start with appreciative inquiry rather than asking them about the problems they have (CFG1:P4:642).

The following excerpt reveals the importance of the practitioner being conscious of their actual attitude so that their behaviour is not ruled unconsciously by the influence of other values.

To me one of the biggest things is the whole power and respect thing. Is recognising when you are having feelings that aren’t equal, respectful, when you are feeling like judging that person. God what an idiot, if she hadn’t done this she wouldn’t have gotten into such trouble. That little dialogue is always going on in your head, the little judge that’s always on, you can’t turn it off. So what we try to do is get people to acknowledge it so it doesn’t rule their behaviour, try to get past it. (KI:2:72)

This is discussed further in chapter 8.

### 6.3.3 Operationalising practice approaches

All the practice approaches espoused (such as advocacy, gender, working with the poor, sustainability) and to varying degrees applied in the village, are based on the values and concepts of participation and empowerment. In turn, these are fundamentally premised on the value of

equality. In theory, it is important for an individual to be empowered, or to participate, because each person is considered to have dignity and worth simply because she or he is a human being. Most participants articulated a connection between human rights and their approaches. While in name the activities/tasks carried out correspond to the desirable outcomes, in effect the methods or procedures practitioners follow are not necessarily conducive to nurturing genuine participation, empowerment and gender equity. In my understanding this is firstly due, in large part, to the perception that development itself is delivered, rather than something that happens within and between people.

Secondly, it is the result of a values hierarchy where “getting the job done” is prioritised over processes and relationships which embody the desirable values. That is, top-down processes may be utilised to achieve pre-determined outputs rather than employing participatory and empowering methods which are time-consuming and open-ended. A third contributing factor is the issue of credibility which relates to socio-cultural norms of leadership and power. This entails practitioners needing to be seen to know the answers and how to manage people, that is, to demonstrate their power. This is antithetical to the aim of more egalitarian relations. The difficulty of practitioners empowering villagers if they themselves are powerless has been noted elsewhere (Ahmad 2002).

One of the fundamental dilemmas facing the practitioner is that often the plan of activities is already established by the NGO and the practitioner’s role is to inform the village people and encourage them to join in. It should not be interpreted that NGOs taking the initiative and raising awareness about important social issues is wrong. It is the role of NGOs to act against injustice. The concern is how practitioners perceive and enact their role. Currently some processes do not reflect the espoused values in terms of *how* they are done. As described above, this can be influenced by a range of factors including understanding of concepts and strategies to actualise them, the accompanying skills to translate these into practice, as well as whether the process itself is valued, and time constraints. In the following examples, participants justified their actions by evoking people’s participation. As already discussed, this appears to be contradicted by their words and actions related to their implementation of strategies to engineer change.

For example, declining fish stocks as well as the privatisation of communal fishing areas is a problem now confronting many villagers who are unable to catch sufficient fish to meet their needs. At the time of my field visit one NGO was expanding their existing program and establishing a fisheries association in a neighbouring commune, which they stated belonged to the villagers. Their espoused approach is to facilitate the villagers to do what they want to do. Staff

stated they had conducted PRA in a few villages throughout the commune but had not visited all the included villages. While the NGO has good intentions in terms of seeking a solution to people's food insecurity the strategy being applied was devised without the villagers' meaningful involvement, although the NGO vigorously asserted the villagers' ownership. Practitioners are now struggling to motivate poor fisher people to attend meetings and join together in associations. The villagers' preferred solution may not have been to establish a fishing association to lobby or monitor illegal fishing while their immediate needs are unmet.

Another interviewee argued that her NGO responded to the problems people in the villages where they worked wanted to address, for example, violence against women. "Most of the violence happens to women who ... have a lot of children and they don't have enough food to eat. That's why violence happens. Then we did another program — birth spacing" (P6:177). At the same time as asserting the NGO/practitioners do what villagers want, the participant added:

When we went to do birth spacing the men were very angry with us.... When I went to meet them, they prevented me from entering their house. They don't want me to talk about birth spacing. The men say that the women's duty is to give birth and do the housework ... when we talk to them the third time, we say about this or that or people who have a lot of children will have some problem, that's when they agree with us. Doing the health activity was very difficult. (P6:177)

It appeared that many participants were reluctant to admit that they initiated certain activities and campaigns. Justification of activities on the grounds that the people wanted them appeared to be a safer reason. I observed ambiguity in participants' attitudes when their activities challenged social norms. In the above example, staff persisted in their campaign, even though it was very stressful and demanding, because they believed it was right, and they were proud of the results.

### *Advocacy*

Having observed minimal improvements in people's standard of living and dependency as the result of delivering material resources, NGOs and practitioners have shifted their focus to providing awareness of human rights (as opposed to processes explicitly focused on "raising" awareness). Broadly speaking, advocacy involves practitioners providing information to villagers about their rights and the law, helping them to organise and empowering them to claim their rights. Their current practice, as observed in their village work, involved urging villagers to organise groups around particular issues. From my observation in the villages, and in discussions with practitioners, it was clear that village people have not necessarily moved with the practitioners to this point. Many villagers are struggling to meet their "basic needs" and are concerned with

inadequate food and health care. Practitioners stated that the medium to long-term strategies of advocating with government bodies and powerful people who are abusing their rights is not how villagers conceptualise the solution to their most pressing issues. The low receptivity of government officials to civilians demanding their rights is either because of their lack of capacity to respond due to resource constraints, or lack of recognition that people have rights as such.

Following the establishment of elected commune councils in 2002 it is apparent that the staff of all three NGOs have closer links at the commune level than previously. During the field visits practitioners either called into the commune office (five out of seven) or met with commune councillors in the villages. There was a noticeable difference in interactions between those practitioners who felt comfortable with “officials” as compared to those who did not. Practitioners are often sceptical of (local) authorities and assume there will be difficulties resulting from corruption and political affiliations.

Even with a focus on advocacy, development intervention is understood to be the transfer of resources, in this case, information. To varying extents field practice still assumes that some material inputs are necessary, as the vehicles (or “carrots”) to bring people together, but generally the participants did not perceive these to be the end point of the development process. Table 6 summarises the gap between the espoused or theoretical understanding of the development approaches and the actual methods of its operationalisation in the field.

### *Gender*

All practitioners espoused concern for gender equality and to be promoting women’s rights. It was clear in the field that gender was primarily applied as “women in development” and pursuit of women’s rights. Much less attention was given to gender relations and to changing men’s attitudes except by the one women-focused NGO. I observed practitioners’ frustration with women, and also poor people, whom the practitioners had advised or supported in the past and who had not effected change and continued to struggle. There was a tendency to blame women and the poor for not standing up for themselves and resisting abuse once they have heard about the law and their rights.<sup>104</sup> The assumption is that a person can/should change her or his behaviour when she has knowledge.

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<sup>104</sup> During one of the field visits a woman who was afraid of violent abuse from her brother came to see the practitioner who was with a number of members of a village community support association. The association’s role includes the protection of villagers’ rights. The practitioner informed the woman of her rights and urged her to stand up to her brother because he should not hit her. When the woman continued to be afraid and wanted to escape he admonished her saying that she should not be afraid because

**Table 6. Issues associated with the operationalisation of development concepts**

<b>Development concept/ Approach</b>	<b>Goal</b>	<b>Espoused activities/strategy</b>	<b>Gap between intention and operationalisation; between goal and practice</b>
Advocacy/ Rights based approach	Empowerment Claim rights Participation in the political process	Provide information/ knowledge Encouragement Group formation	Give information (assumes power to), forming groups assumes collective action (power with). Less attention to the facilitation of self-realisation (power within) and processes conducive to enabling power with and to. Issue of government's lack of responsiveness and recognition of citizen's rights
Gender	Empowerment of women Improvement in their situation	Formation of women's groups, strengthen women's leadership, integration of women into projects	Gender power relations generally avoided, WID rather than GAD, focus on changing women. Practitioner discretion — women more peripheral to male practitioners' practice
Working with the very poor	Empowerment Improved standard of living Dignity	Group formation Material assistance Work through the middle class, "key" people	Empowerment of the collective not capitalised on. Use of middle-class villagers to "pull up" the poor; practitioners' ambivalence about the capacity/agency of the poor; Improvement in situation rather than challenge status quo; relationship with practitioner not linked to change within; difficulty to use a multi-pronged approach to the many dimensions of poverty; dilemma of working with high-risk group and NGO survival
Sustainability	Independence Self-reliance	Strengthen leadership, associations	Sustain project activities rather than notion of response-ability. Focus on leaders over a capable and informed membership risks new elites forming
Civil society	Strengthening community Increase social capital	Group formation Links to local authorities and decentralisation processes	Limited engagement/cooperation with other organisations and local authorities Requires tangible benefits to stimulate participation, not vague ideas of the good

There appeared to be an underestimation of the myriad of obstacles preventing a woman or poor person from acting on the knowledge of her rights, and what would be entailed in the shift within a person to come to perceive of herself as a person with rights. At another level practitioners do understand a powerless person's internalisation of her or his subordinate position.<sup>105</sup> For some

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she has rights. Association members supported this. In the end the practitioner gave her some money so she could leave the village.

<sup>105</sup> The excerpt illustrates practitioners' understanding of the constraints on villagers to speak and act as they fear antagonising the local authorities. "So when I make a meeting, I want them to speak out from their heart – what is their difficulty? ... But they tell us everything is good. ... The important thing is that he is afraid because he is a villager, so he's afraid of village commune, district [authorities]. So the weak points of the village/ commune/district he didn't dare to speak the truth.... So I'm difficult to work too when we called all of them to talk to each other and they did not tell the truth to us. It makes our solution become difficult." (P4:192)



practitioners there was vague understanding of community mechanisms to prevent violence against individual women and an assumption that groups tasked with “community support” would somehow know how to act effectively in such situations but without strategising with them. This may indicate a lack of skills/knowledge rather than considering it unimportant, and the lack of wider systems for referral and consultation.

I observed in both formal and informal meetings that women were often peripheral to the main discussion when the practitioner was a male. Women were often not drawn into the discussion and their opinions were not elicited. Male workers said it was because women were too busy, and also because men are usually involved in talking to people who come into the village. Yet for women practitioners, especially in the NGO focusing on empowerment of women, village women were running and organising all the activities, attending meetings and travelling outside the village when necessary. Some male practitioners said they told male villagers to encourage the women to be leaders.

#### *Working with the very poor*

NGOs/practitioners said, and I observed, that they were working with people who were very poor to empower them and improve their standard of living. Within the villages, practitioners are aware of discrimination against very poor people who have low status.

He is a returnee [from the Thai-Cambodian border camps] not a local. So his life is very difficult.... When he first came to live here nobody gave value to him. They said that he is poor and he was not recognised/known. But now they have the [project] activity of the poor and he has some land and plants some vegetables to eat. He has enough to eat, then people start giving value to him. Before — no.  
(P3:305)

The approach taken typically involves establishing small groups of people who are poor and facilitating the activities they decide will help them improve their situation. In practice this results in the formation of groups (whose members are determined to be poor through wealth ranking and/or consultation with community leaders) and setting up an income-generating activity to improve their economic status. Empowerment is typically assumed to be inherent in the group formation process, and in being better able to survive through having a better income. Again, the strategies, and understanding of the processes (particularly psychological processes) involved in a person’s empowerment are often not articulated. This is not to say that practitioners do not have tacit knowledge around these issues as, for example, some women participants talked about giving moral support (to have courage and self-confidence) to poor women.

In organising activities to empower the poor some practitioners worked through “key people” who were primarily rich/middle-class villagers to help mobilise and support people who are poor.<sup>106</sup>

Using the rich to “pull up” the poor rather than working directly with poor people raises questions regarding practitioners’ understanding of empowerment and how to actualise it in their work.

While not all middle class or elite villagers necessarily consider themselves to be superior to people who are poor, practitioners frequently stated that those who are better off typically look down on the poor and do not respect them. That being the case, this strategy to empower people who are poor is highly problematic. It implies a lack of belief in the capacity/agency of the poor to help themselves (if they could, then they would not be poor).

Some practitioners believed that the situation of the poorest sector of the village had largely remained unchanged over the years they had worked in the villages. This was attributed to a host of factors beyond their ability to influence, including the low price of agricultural produce, natural disasters and fewer income-generating opportunities such as fishing or collecting firewood due to privatisation of previously common property resources.

### *Sustainability*

Practitioners’ strategies for achieving sustainability include promoting community leadership and strengthening the management of associations and project committees supported by the NGO, and by devising community support mechanisms for self-sufficiency. Proportionately, most time in the field visits was spent talking to community leaders about how to manage project activities. Each NGO had a focus on strengthening leaders such as committee members, which often resulted in limited interaction between the practitioner and ordinary villagers. Even when meetings were open, I observed the discussion was often directed to the key people, particularly males, and ordinary people remained peripheral as their active involvement was not encouraged. This appeared to demonstrate and reinforce the belief that to lead a person must have position, knowledge, wealth and, often, be male.

The following extract demonstrates what the practitioners feel about villagers’ ambivalence regarding their “ownership” of development activities. It reveals issues of power and status between the practitioners and villagers.

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<sup>106</sup> For example, the purpose of one of the field visits when I accompanied a practitioner was to “follow-up” a project with the very poor. This involved meeting the VDC leader and key people but, on that day, we did not meet any of the people who were poor who were to be involved in the activity. In these meetings it seemed to me that these villagers were concerned about the poor — and had ideas of how the poor could solve their problems, but there was a sense of looking down on the poor, which is in conflict with the activity’s purpose of empowering the poor.

P3: The important thing is, even we give them the power, but they are still afraid, even they think that they do it, it is right, but they still wait for us to (indistinct).

P1: It is very difficult ... giving the power, even if we want to do like that, but it is still a problem. Like yesterday I went to a village we have phased out from ... I just take the time to visit. I asked them, before the village committee has five members but now there are only two people because the other three people resigned.... I asked them will this have any impact on their work in the future if only some want to work? ... When they heard that they felt afraid.... They don't think that they did that for the disadvantaged of their community — but they still think that they did it for [NGO]. They think that if they do that the [NGO] will lose face, so they need to find some people to fill up that group again. (WS1:77)

In addition to the issue of leadership and sustainability the excerpt also describes that villagers feel a debt of gratitude towards the NGO.

During field visits practitioners expressed their frustration and disappointment with the inactivity of elected committee members or with those who failed to be neutral or were dishonest, and described the negative impact this had on the rest of the membership or the community. Practitioners spoke about the importance of democratic elections and the importance of transparency and strengthening community capacity. However, in most cases there appeared to be no rotation of committee position-holders. One significant reason was the time and energy needed to strengthen new committee members' capacity to undertake their role, which was perceived by the participants to be an ongoing drain on their time.

In some villages practitioners have encouraged/supported the establishment of a variety of groups whose role, in part, is to assist the poor and vulnerable people in their community, for example, health associations. While the idea of such a mechanism is sound, in the short-term it is problematic for the associations. I observed, for example, a health association set up to help members meet the cost of healthcare that was floundering. The accumulation of members' weekly savings was limited but the demand for assistance was high, so it had the capacity to help a member for a very short time and limited amount. It was particularly inadequate for poor people with ongoing health problems who were unable to replenish the savings. Even though the practitioners were aware of this I observed they would encourage people who were poor to go to the health association, because their hope was that the community could manage their own problems. This is an intractable problem for which many NGOs have no policy. Donors do not allow for such contingencies (as welfare or relief activities are typically rejected when the focus is development) — despite the knowledge that poor people's vulnerability to emergencies can

undermine the progress of any other activity. This often results in practitioners using their personal resources to help in emergencies.

Participants also talked of the problem of sustainability of training when there is little support or genuine investment in inculcating new ways of doing things in practice.

In my organisation we don't really have a culture of reflection. We normally add new things, send people to training ... But no time for reflection on what we are doing... That's really deadline, deadline, deadline. For me, in the community as well, if we do become a habit of reflection on what we do we will learn a lot. For me I will argue with my organisation also by saying stop! You introduce this and that — we know all of that — but it is not *in* the people... There's no sustainability there unless you're willing to provide time. Please! (CFG1:P4: 537)

Many participants commented on the never-ending busyness of their NGO which prevents — or enables people to avoid — the work of reflection and learning from experience. This is discussed further in chapter 8.

#### 6.3.4 Demands of practice

Fieldwork can be physically demanding. Workers travel long distances by motorbike on rough roads in heat and dust, and have limited access to clean drinking water or toilets throughout the day. These conditions are similar to field workers elsewhere in the developing world (Ahmad 2002; Goetz 1996). The demands on practitioners in forming and maintaining relationships were acknowledged as practitioners do not want to be seen as setting themselves above or apart from the villagers.

If the people bring water that is not boiled we have to drink. If the people eat rice that has a lot of flies — think that we have to eat. Otherwise they will think that oh, we are high ... we're not the same like them. We are different... What can you do? That's a lot of challenges for the development worker you know. When they try to be good. (CFG2:P1:403)

Emotional demands are multi-faceted when practitioners are confronted with hunger, sickness, violence and failure. Some participants expressed their fear of reprisals from powerful elites when they engage in advocacy or human rights work. A range of emotions were articulated including:

fear, pity, compassion, powerlessness, anger and frustration. Practitioners often face poor people who lack food or money to cope with medical emergencies.<sup>107</sup>

I felt depressed when I saw that problem — because the poor people did not have the ability to help themselves. We met the same problem again and again so my feeling is depressed. I have one feeling that I want to give immediately — but the policy of our NGO stops us. If we do that it is wrong so we stop our feeling... Some people [development practitioners] say they don't care and they don't feel pity. For me I feel pity. (P3:316)

The dilemma is, on the one hand, feeling guilty to give because it is not “developmental” and leads to dependency which is in conflict with the agency’s philosophy of promoting community support and self-reliance. On the other hand, not giving is felt to be “unKhmer” and lacking compassion. One practitioner stated: “sometimes I go to the village and I have to help them when they are living in very bad conditions or in ceremonies like funeral ceremony ... I have to participate ... and give some money” (P1:92).

Field practice can be emotionally demanding.

We want them to help themselves, and to know how to solve by themselves — but our heart we cannot cut it out ... so we must help with our own money. This is Khmer tradition, we cannot walk out. For me myself I know, I understand that it is opposed to the policy but when they see us they ask us for money but our heart we cannot cut out. For example, when we arrive we see that there is no rice to eat. “*Bong* please give me two to three cans of rice to eat”. So how can we walk away? We will give them money to buy it. How can they depend on themselves because they have not eaten one time already? ... If we don't have, if we are the same, we will ask for it the same. (WS3:1617:P1)

Practitioners stated that “the villagers have Khmer blood, even if it is the law but the heart does not listen”. There was a strong feeling of caring and wanting to help because they themselves would ask if the situation was reversed. Some said that it was “easy to pity even if it is not appropriate”.

One participant described a retreat he facilitated for NGO workers where the participants talked about their anger. The participants said they get angry all the time and feel angry with their

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<sup>107</sup> In one significant incident the practitioner described her informal meeting with a very poor family who had no money and whose son was sick. The family were reconstructing their house in a new location on the advice of the traditional healer, after the death of one of their children at the previous house site was attributed to negative spirits. Although a member neither the Association of the Very Poor nor the Village Health Association could assist him as they had helped on previous occasions. The NGO could not help (they had already provided assistance to deepen a pond, provided seeds plus a loan). The practitioner said she tried to persuade him not to depend on the NGO. When she was leaving the man asked her for some money. She gave a little but worried about whether this was the “right” thing.

colleagues, with the villagers. They wanted to know what to do with their anger and how not to show it. One Cambodian participant shared her own experience of anger which she attributed in part to a lack of self-confidence. She described how during the Pol Pot time that no matter what was said or done she was “patient” and would remain silent even if she disagreed. Now, the pressure builds up until she can not tolerate it any more and then she starts to argue. She explained how she did not know how to express it “normally” so there was no balance between not talking and exploding (CFG1:P4:645). For her, the experience of learning how to express what she disagreed with in a respectful way was important. Some expatriates understood that Cambodians find it difficult to express frustrations and tensions between Cambodians and foreigners regarding power, decision-making, salaries and lifestyles because there is not a language or process to do this and culturally it is inappropriate to be seen to be rude or ungrateful, as well as a fear of the consequences (FFG:1:P4:913).<sup>108</sup>

Practitioners tended to frequently work longer than official office hours, including weekends. This reflected the culture of some organisations where it was taken for granted that practitioners would work whatever hours were necessary. Participants worked the long hours because of their commitment, to build up trust and also to keep their jobs (see also Ahmad 2002). When strategies have been successful and positive changes manifest in people’s lives, practitioners were able to celebrate their successes with others in their NGO, and these became the stories the agency told donors, other NGOs and government staff. Practitioners were proud of successful work.

### 6.3.5 Values

Broadly speaking, the concepts and approaches practitioners are pursuing in the field are similar to those espoused. A strong value is compliance with the NGO proposal and policies. The strongest motivating force for the practitioner in field practice appears to be the successful implementation of their NGO’s project activities to achieve the specified outputs. The drive to do what needs to be done is more important than *how* interventions are conducted. In other words, the end justifies the means.

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<sup>108</sup> Some expatriate research participants spoke about some extreme reactions or disproportionate revenge to what appears to be mild provocation in Cambodia. For example, a “man is insulted on motorbike and hatchets someone to death” (KI:3:125), or “they just didn’t catch a thief, they killed the thief” (FCFG1:P1:348). This is contrary to Buddhist teachings to free oneself from anger (Ghosananda 1992). Hinton (2005:64) suggests that in situations “when honor and shame are at stake, a person may hold onto his or her anger and follow a path of violence”. People may avoid disputes at the time but the resentment and anger may not be forgotten but stored away until the time comes to take action.

Prioritising the fulfilment of tasks is in tension with valuing processes which involve people and their participation in decision-making (self-determination) versus top-down, hierarchical, “giving/providing” with villagers joining in pre-determined project activities. Similarly, tension exists between respect for villagers’ knowledge and ideas versus those with education/ knowledge know what is best (in-use value). Generally participants valued the development relationship more for instrumental motives (at one end of the spectrum) than as an end in itself is (at the other end of the spectrum).

The international development discourse implicitly values the equal worth and dignity of each person which leads to concepts of human rights, participation and gender equity. Consistent with these values is the notion of partnership. As with the critique of “development aid” and the persistent hierarchical nature of relationships at the macro-level (as discussed in Chapter 3.2) so too at this micro or field level where practitioners’ relationships with villagers tend to be more hierarchical and directive than might be expected if practitioners considered equality in the practitioner-villager relationship to be important. There is a growing emphasis on a development relationship in the literature which argues the relationship is central to the achievement of human development objectives (Chambers 2004; Edwards 1999b; Kaplan 2002; Scott-Villiers 2004). My research indicates that currently the participants tend not to see the development practice relationship in this light, and are not expressly concerned with this. The values-in-use I inferred from observations of field visits and significant incidents from focus groups participants’ observations of practice are shown in Table 7.

As has been suggested earlier, for each value-in-use there is a spectrum or continuum of positions. For example, participation could be operationalised using methods that range from using top-down processes and the imposition of activities which people “join-in” to the facilitation of decision-making. For a particular value, a practitioner is not positioned at one or other end of the spectrum in an either/or scenario. Rather, depending on the circumstances the practitioner will assume a position along the spectrum. In this view the option is both/and in that an individual may tend to one or other pole but her or his behaviour could move towards the opposite pole in a particular situation.

**Table 7. Values-in-action inferred from the observation and discussion of Cambodian development practitioners' field practice and significant incidents**

<b>Value</b>	<b>Observations</b>
<p><i><b>Caring</b></i></p> <p>Relationship</p> <p>Pity/compassion</p>	<p>Effort put into developing relationships with village people, especially leaders and key people. Related to building trust and confidence. This is often explained as instrumental — so people will follow them/participate</p> <p>Concern for people who are poor and/or marginalised, and efforts to help them get out of poverty.</p>
<p><i><b>Effective practice/craft</b></i></p> <p>Success/competence</p> <p>Compliance/control</p> <p>Get the job done</p> <p>Facilitation/helping</p> <p>Commitment</p> <p>Hierarchy/authority</p> <p>Participation</p> <p>Women's rights</p> <p>Empowerment</p> <p>Sustainability — of projects or capacity?</p>	<p>Success is achievement of the planned interventions. Attention is on tasks/activities less on process, and on outputs rather than outcomes.</p> <p>Follow what is in the NGO project proposal. Office work at the expense of village commitments (preference/comfort/necessarily for NGO survival)</p> <p>Appears as a continuum from facilitating villagers to find their solution to determining the solution for them.</p> <p>To doing the work. Some workers clearer about their objectives and how to achieve them than others. Practitioners are committed in spite of the physical and emotional demands of the work</p> <p>In practice, do what they think is good for the villagers, based on what they have learned from training on development and assessment of the village situation. This overrides the idea of villagers' self-determination. Influenced by the belief that villagers have low education and can't think. Practitioners identify themselves with this — before they learnt about development. The corollary to which is “if they knew what I know they would want this, it is what will help them”. Also related is the belief that if poor people had ideas and worked hard — then they would not be poor. Have more confidence in educated, middle class than in the poor. Depend on key people, often the educated (not always) to be the leaders. Practice is related to “pulling up” the poor rather than structural transformation. Villagers' concern with basic needs viewed in part as evidence of their short-term thinking.</p> <p>Participation often equated to “joining in”. Continuum from joining in to decision-making. Villagers engaged to identify problems but rarely in deciding what will be done and in project design. Expectation (from both sides to varying degrees) that practitioners have the knowledge and the resources.</p> <p>Improvement of women's situation rather than changing gender roles. Female practitioners have internalised and act on this value more than males.</p> <p>Focus on activities related to village people advocating/claiming their rights. Continuum from doing for to facilitation of. Some practitioners demonstrated clear examples and methods of how they go about empowerment in practice whereas others are vague about how it will happen. Marginalised may be left on the periphery and work done through key people. How to enact and notions of power within/to/with are vague. Power typically viewed as “power over” and as finite. Concern with strengthening villagers' capacity to manage (project activities) without the NGO, but methods/strategies often vague — particularly with regard to sustainable capacity.</p>
<p><i><b>Reward/compensation</b></i></p> <p>Do good get good</p> <p>Recognition</p>	<p>Some participants believe that what they are doing is good, so they will receive “good” in return</p> <p>By NGO, villagers, authorities</p>



Facilitating empowerment and villagers (poor people or women) to have the courage to stand up for their rights could be positioned along a similar continuum. A complication in supporting empowerment and self-reliance is as follows:

Even if we empower them [the villagers], want them to learn by themselves, they still wait to ask the [practitioner] and wait for us to give some suggestions — they can do like this or not? They still have such an idea and they can't decide by themselves without asking us.... We don't know how to find a way to make them not to depend on us. (P2:143)

Enactment depends not only on the practitioners' values and attitudes. Interventions engage with the villagers' expectations of the practitioner (regarded as a patron) and dependency may be perceived positively, as explained in chapter 2. The literature also reports the occurrence of dependency in aid recipients when the interventions do not deliberately consider how to avoid this unintended outcome.

### 6.3.6 Theories/values-in-use — issues

Practitioner discretion or one's interpretation, prioritisation and operationalisation of her or his NGOs policies and practices is dependent on what the practitioner values, as well as her or his understanding of development concepts and evaluation of what is feasible in the specific political, economic, social and cultural environment. "A value depends on [what] the person gives value to at that time. Like sometimes we give value to this and sometimes we change and give value to another one — it depends on the situation and time" (CFG2:P6:586).

It appeared from my research that in much actual practice the NGO leadership, or the staff collectively, decide what is to be done based on their observation and evaluation of villagers' needs and their beliefs about how the situation can be improved, within the framework of understanding what donors will fund. The NGO's proposal and policies, with their pre-defined activities and outputs, tend to delineate what the practitioners are attentive to. Their job in the village is to conduct the tasks which will achieve the outputs set out in the proposal, and this is a strong inhibitor to pursuing issues outside this that cannot be reported on because they are not in the plan. The project proposal appears to be either a constraining factor, or provides security and is liberating because it sets boundaries around what the practitioner should do and makes the situation seem more manageable. This latter perspective results in a complex context being seen only in terms of the "part(s)" relevant to the proposal. This simplification ignores the interconnections between an array of contributing factors. Symptomatic of this were participants'

informal discussions with villagers which skimmed over the expressed concerns and problems which did not fall within the project plan.

In practice, development is perceived by practitioners to be, and is enacted as, a transfer of resources from the practitioners and NGO to the villagers. The strategies to operationalise specific theoretical concepts were often vague. For example, activities with and empowerment of poor and marginalised villagers were often implemented through the middle-class and village elites; male practitioners tend to leave women on the periphery of discussions; actual activities contributing to “strengthening” committees were sometimes ill-defined. Practitioners emphasised the importance of advocacy but recognised that this was problematic in situations where villagers were necessarily focused on meeting their immediate basic needs. At times factors such as corruption, impunity of the powerful and a politicised civil service with limited resources in sectors such as health and education were voiced, but not consistently.

A close relationship with the villagers is espoused as key to effective practice, to know their heart and what they want to do. I observed polite and caring attitudes and good interpersonal skills, as well as hierarchical interactions which reflected obvious status and power differentials. Each of the in-use values embrace a spectrum of positions along which the practitioner moves according to the particular circumstances. In-use values which are not simultaneously attainable are prioritised differently by practitioners according to the specific context. These values include: close relationships, pity/compassion, responsibility, the desire to succeed, commitment to getting the job done, compliance, hierarchy, participation, women’s rights.

#### **6.4 Comparing espoused and in-use theories and values**

This section addresses the third research question and looks at the (in)congruity between practitioners’ espoused and in-use theory/values about development practice. Underpinning theoretical concepts and approaches to development, and what we actually do, are beliefs about what ought to be. In section 6.2 I examined Cambodian development practitioners’ espoused objectives and ways of working, and the values inherent in these. In section 6.3 I explored the values inferred from observation and discussion of their actual practice. In this section I compare practitioners’ espoused and in-use values. My analysis indicates some clear differences in the hierarchies of values and what is prioritised rather than a fundamental inconsistency in the values *per se*. Successful achievement of the outputs in the project plan is valued more highly than the processes involved in implementation.

I then explore the contrast between some of the values underpinning the Cambodian socio-cultural context with those of the international development discourse. What practitioners espouse is consistent with the international development discourse which is fundamentally premised on equality. Processes and outcomes of participation and empowerment and the pursuit of human rights are important because each person is a human being of equal worth and dignity. However, in striving to achieve the activities in their NGO's project proposal, practitioners tend to be more hierarchical in their methods than might be expected given the discourse, but which is consistent with the socio-cultural context described in chapter 2. This section prepares the ground for chapter 8 which addresses the applicability of certain development concepts, such as participation and gender equity, in the Cambodian socio-cultural, political and economic context.

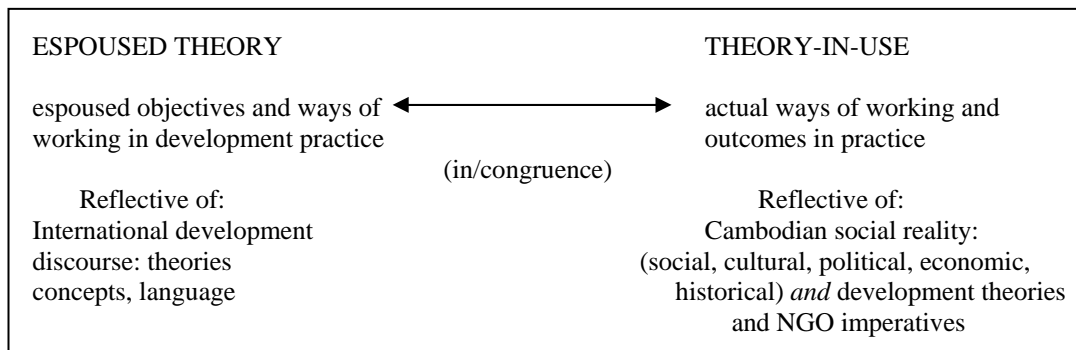
#### 6.4.1 Incongruity

It is essential to state from the outset that inconsistency between what Cambodian practitioners say and what they do is not distinctive. The expatriate focus group participants were quick to point out that the gap between theory and practice applies to practitioners regardless of nationality. Argyris and Schön's theories of action (1976, 1978, 1996) evolved out of their work with organisations in the United States, where incongruity between workers' espoused and in-use theories was common. The literature review shows that theories about the meaning of development and the multi-dimensional nature of poverty have been evolving. In theory, development should now be more inclusive, equitable, empowering and participatory. The literature also amply demonstrates that these theoretical understandings espoused in concepts such as the rights based approach, partnership and gender mainstreaming are not embodied in the practice of individuals and organisations internationally (Carr et al. 1998; Chambers 1997b; Crewe & Harrison 1998; Hinton & Groves 2004b; Porter et al. 1991). Corcoran-Tindill's study (2002) of development practitioners in Irish NGOs also found incongruity between what Northern development organisations espouse and what practitioners actually do (2002). Goetz demonstrated similar trends regarding the implementation of gender policies by NGO fieldworkers in Bangladesh (2001).

While the contrast between espoused and in-use value hierarchies is applicable to practitioners of other nationalities, from my fieldwork a key factor emerges as contributing to this incongruence for Cambodian practitioners. While practitioners' espoused theory/values are consistent with the discourse of international development, the theory/values-in-use are imbued with the values, attitudes and expectations reflective of the Cambodian socio-cultural situation as presented in chapter 2. This is represented diagrammatically in Figure 7. Cambodian practitioners' work reflects

a “both/and” incorporation of “development” and “traditional” values. Again, these can be viewed as the poles of a continuum with positioning along the spectrum varying between practitioners and specific practice contexts. Value prioritisation in practice is also influenced by the emphasis placed on “getting the job done” and achieving outputs rather than on participatory, empowering and gender sensitive processes.

*Figure 7. The underpinnings of espoused and in-use theories and values*



#### 6.4.2 “Traditional” and “development” values

“Traditional” values are those which practitioners perceive are inherent in Cambodian society and culture. “Development” values are those they are trying to promote in their development practice. Analysis of practitioners’ perceptions of traditional and development values reveals how these embrace different ways of relating to people, which has profound implications for the conceptualisation of the development relationship. Table 8 presents seven pairs of values (derived from O’Leary and Meas (2001)) which were discussed in the NGO focus groups. Each pair represents different aspects of a value dimension.

All participants agreed that respect for authority, gratitude, status, acceptance, and the “ideal” Khmer woman were traditional values in Cambodia. Development values, including equality, participation, empowerment, and gender equity were generally perceived as being in tension with traditional values. Practitioners reached no consensus as to whether agency, spiritual, collectivist/individualist values were traditional and/or development values.

Overall, practitioners considered their values and perspectives to be different to those of villagers. They stated that in their past they were like the villagers, but they now think differently. This is explored further in chapter 7. Participants mostly asserted that development values are consistent with their personal values and they considered that most villagers would identify more with

traditional values, although some participants stated that for some villagers these values are changing. What follows is an exploration of each of the seven value pairs.

**Table 8. Cambodian development practitioners’ evaluation of certain values as associated with tradition and/or development**

VALUE PAIRS	
equality/egalitarian ( <i>Development</i> )	status (hierarchy) ( <i>Traditional</i> )
participation ( <i>Development</i> )	respect for authority ( <i>Traditional</i> )
empowerment ( <i>Development</i> )	gratitude ( <i>Traditional</i> )
spiritual (Buddhism/animism) ( <i>Traditional/Development</i> )	secular ( <i>Development</i> )
acceptance ( <i>Traditional</i> )	agency (able to bring about change) ( <i>Development</i> )
gender equity ( <i>Development</i> )	“ideal” Khmer woman <sup>109</sup> ( <i>Traditional</i> )
collectivist, interdependence ( <i>Traditional/Development</i> )	individualist, independence ( <i>Traditional</i> )

#### *Status and equality*

The purpose of this section is to explore practitioners’ perceptions of equality. NGO focus group participants stated that status (being at a higher or lower level (*t’nut*)) is connected to the hierarchical social order in Cambodian society and is incompatible with the concept of equality. As described in chapter 2, people are recognisably of higher or lower status in society as a result of their power, related to factors such as wealth, knowledge, position, piety (power from goodness) and gender. Cambodians’ interpersonal language and behaviour signifies their relative status (Giles 2004; O’Leary & Meas 2001). Practitioners who understand equality to be impossible considered the concept to mean “having and being the same”. Equality is impossible because of people’s innately different capacities. Most participants considered that the belief in all people being fundamentally equal by virtue of their humanity is not common in Cambodia. Traditional views of status and hierarchy suggest that “someone who is much poorer than you having equal dignity and worth is a counter-cultural concept here.... I think that’s a new thing in Khmer culture” (FFG 2:P4:707).

Development theory is premised on human equality — regardless of characteristics, qualities or acquisitions (Nussbaum 2000). It is a core value which underpins human rights, participation,

<sup>109</sup> *Srei Kroop Leak* translated as the virtuous or ‘ideal Khmer woman’ is the cultural ideal as set out in the *chbab srei*: the traditional code of conduct for women (O’Leary & Meas 2001). See also chapter 2.

democracy, gender equity and empowerment. Mulder contends that “the idea of moral equality, fundamental to democracy, human rights and the rule of law, does not connect well with the Southeast Asian social imagination” (1996:193).

The idea of democracy and human rights stem from an environment that grounds morality in equality: individual people matter, they have a right to their opinion, are morally autonomous, and equal before the law; they have the right and the duty, to be informed and to partake in the public discourse. (Mulder 1996:187)

In Cambodian society, hierarchy is a core organising value, and as discussed in chapter 2, inequality is a characteristic of a hierarchical social order.

### Conceptualising equality

In Cambodia, as elsewhere, equality is a problematic and complex concept.<sup>110</sup> One expatriate focus group member stated:

I have to say that my problem ... is that I haven't worked out those issues [about equality] for myself. I find it phenomenally complex and also very much again a contextual thing. Yes, fundamentally I think I believe in equality of rights and that ideally there would be equality of opportunity. And then you ... try and apply some of that to different societies at different times and so on — and I just get in a complete knot. I don't know what I think. (FFG1: P7:765)

The word ‘equality’ is frequently used in the development sector. A shared understanding is generally assumed as its meaning is largely unquestioned. However, Cambodian participants’ definition of equality was primarily based on their experience and not on theory which led many to declare: “nothing is equal”.

Nothing ever, ever been equal — people often say not even our fingers [holding up their hand to illustrate the difference in their finger length which will never be equal]. Cambodians say that they never expect anything to be equal. (FCFG1:P2:437)

Linked to this was the belief that there is no justice, and that people should not expect it. “[People] think that they are never equal ... because like the Khmer word they use (*k'mein nay utethor*) it means that no justice or fairness in the world. It means that everything is not equal, especially in Cambodia” (CFG1:P2:29). Many participants believed that the notion of equality before the law

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<sup>110</sup> There is a body of literature which addresses the question: Equality of what? (Sen 1980, 1992). In chapter 3 I argued that capabilities are the most appropriate dimension for considering equality in the development context.

exists only on paper because impunity for the powerful is currently endemic. However, practitioners believed there should be justice.

Sometimes we train them [people] about the human rights. They know. But they still say that — oh just in the books but not in reality. And until right now I think maybe 3-5% understand that people in the world have equal rights. (CFG1:P2:29)

Many participants said the common understanding is that equality is a measure of something, such as education or wealth. In popular understandings a person who has a high education has higher status than others so they are not equal.

If we talk about Cambodian society when they say equal they have something in their head or in their mind. They say that equal in terms of property, in terms of power, in terms of family status or whatever, so they have different meanings. That's why we find it difficult to get the same meaning ... they will say people are not equal. It is the same as the fingers. (CFG1:P1:9)

Cultural differences in resource distribution priorities were discussed in chapter 3.1. Whereas in some cultures distribution according to need is the most important factor, in others distribution in proportion to individual effort, or everyone receiving exactly the same regardless of their circumstances, might be considered to be most appropriate.

I will give you one example when they [villagers] talk about equality they think about the amount and not about the concept. For example, in one village after the flood comes we do the relief. And in the village there are 30 people who need relief. So [the international agency] gave 30 packages for relief. But the chief of the village refused. He said “no it is not enough because in our village we have 60 or 80 families and only 30 we cannot share equally and it can cause a problem”. So they use the word equality like amount [Other participants agree.] But I'm sure that for the educated people or CD worker they can understand the word equality clearly. (CFG1:P3:80)

Another perception is that educated Cambodians could apply the notion of equality in “the proper way” but uneducated people would continue to defer to the educated or their social superiors, and adhere to traditional expectations. It implies that practitioners felt that this adherence to social expectations does not concern their own behaviour. This issue is discussed later in this section.

### Equality and hierarchy

As described in Chapter 2, the social order in Cambodia is characterised by relationships of super- and sub-ordination. In popular belief status differences at birth are attributed to merit gained in previous lives, so that a rich person is regarded as someone who had the good fortune (or goodness) to accumulate merit, whereas a poor person is perceived to have accumulated little merit

and is thus, deservedly, of lower status. Some participants felt this interpretation tended to create acceptance of the social order and reinforced power and status differentials in society.

The idea of the social hierarchy being cosmically ordained has implications for development practice. The following excerpt illustrates the obstacles to people of lower status attempting to assert themselves. While some participants indicated their understanding that people internalised the social expectations of their status in society, this tended not to be linked to how this might impact on their intentions — both in terms of the practitioners themselves overcoming stereotypes, and in their interventions to empower people.

The development worker has to [be] smart to encourage the poor.... Let's say the poor always isolate themselves and the poor always believe that — I was born in the poor family I have less voice, I have less opportunity. Even he or she believes, or he or she have some skill to do that, they are still afraid to stand up because the middle-class might say your karma is with poverty. When you stand up so high it's not fit to your living conditions. That can make people feel like I should not stand up or move beyond what I live right now. That makes other people laugh or makes other people say — your karma is with the poor family, don't stand too high.  
(CFG4:P2:561)

A strong socio-cultural norm is that a person should accept one's status and behave accordingly. Clearly the idea that you cannot/should not aspire to move higher socially and economically is not absolute, as there are countless examples of people who have prospered and practitioners firmly believed everyone has agency and can change their situation. Mulder (1996) writing about religion, everyday life and cultural change in Southeast Asia, describes a moral hierarchical social order and argues:

What life in society demands is respect for its order, and that is how a moral way of life is understood. ... This begins at home where it is exemplified in the morally unequal relationships of obligation between exalted parents and dependent child. By extension, the measure in which a person is thought to be moral depends on his way of handling the obligations inherent in his relationships with others, depending on the role he is playing. (1996:10-11)

I believe Mulder's argument is not totally applicable in today's Cambodia. It would be a mistake to think that the social order now is as it was in the pre-war era. While there are status differences the criteria and positioning of individuals in the social order is less clear cut in the present time as a result of extensive economic, political, social and cultural changes (L. French, personal communication, 22 March, 2005). For example, the upheaval and reversals of the social order imposed by the Khmer Rouge raised profound questions about the traditional worldview which



left many Cambodians unable to make sense of what had happened.<sup>111</sup> Migration and new economic and educational opportunities for both women and men are contributing to flux in the order.

One Cambodian practitioner stated that he valued equality but believed he must behave respectfully according to the hierarchy as this was perceived to be necessary moral behaviour. Morality is thus measured by compliance with societal norms, not personal beliefs and values.<sup>112</sup>

For instance if [name of a participant] is a big person in the government and I want to treat people equally but at this time I have to play morally.... I have to do all hierarchical respect to [name of a participant]. But it does not mean that I really want to do that but this time I have to do that (FCFG:P2:28).

I interpret this to reflect a hierarchy of values where respect for, and conformity to social expectations is valued more highly than equality.

Development practitioner – villager relationship and equality

Equality was unanimously regarded as a “development” value although explanations regarding if and why the concept is important were somewhat vague. Whether equality between practitioners and villagers was desirable or possible was contested. Some Cambodian participants said that although there were obvious differences — or inequalities — between practitioners and villagers they asserted it was possible to be equal in terms of relationship. Some described this in terms of being “like family”.<sup>113</sup> If the practitioners “put themselves down”, acted and dressed appropriately and did not consider themselves to “higher” than the villagers — then they would be equal with the villagers.

When we are going to the village, we have to adjust ourselves to be equal to them ... and think that they have the same status as us too. We can't get along well with people if we think too highly of ourselves since we are NGO workers who are more educated. (WS2:626:P2)

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<sup>111</sup> One Cambodian practitioner referred to the attempts of the Khmer Rouge to break the hierarchical mindset by eliminating the social hierarchy. Words reflecting relationships of super- and sub-ordination were outlawed. Social classes were reversed with richer, urban people becoming manual workers. “Equality in Cambodia is a very big topic. Khmer Rouge was a group of people who wanted to achieve this by destroying all social basis [the basis of society] — even the monk they destroy ... in order to achieve their dream of having equality inside Cambodian society.... But it [equality] was still not achieved” (CFG3:P3:439).

<sup>112</sup> “Theoretically ... values influence the attitude and the attitude influences the behaviour. But ... the Cambodian experience is that we have been distorted — sometimes our attitude has to be different from the value and sometimes the behaviour has to be different from our attitude, [they] do not influence each other” (FCFG:P2:147).

<sup>113</sup> “We broadcast already that we are one family, we treat the villagers as our relatives so we don't think that we are someone. We are relatives so we can know each other's hearts and be very close so they don't think that we are more valuable than them. They consider us as their relatives so when they have trouble or any news they will inform us truthfully of the fact and reveal it to us in open way. They dare to coordinate with us”. (WS2:166)

Others felt it was impossible to have an equal relationship because of innate inequalities. They argued that simply wanting villagers to be confident and at ease in the relationship does not mean it will happen automatically in that people of lower status continue to be grateful, afraid, and respectful of practitioners who have more power and status no matter what they do.

It is the villagers' habit, they think that the people who work with NGOs are bigger than them and have education/knowledge, know everything including the character, understanding, wealth, and the way of dressing. They can see it by themselves, so they will put themselves down by themselves. They always compare themselves to us and say that they are poorer than us. Even if we try to put ourselves down with them but it still not equal.... The value that they give because they think that they are less than others. (WS1:P4:109)

In the next excerpt the practitioner recognises that practitioners' own beliefs about status are not easily put aside. "Sometimes we want to put ourselves down to be equal with them but it cannot be. This is what we say, but in our heart we cannot give it up totally because it is in our heart for a long time. So what we say is like that, but our heart it cannot be like that" (WS1:P1:61). There appeared to be a range of positions as to whether inequality was a result of circumstance (education, wealth and so on) and whether this was indicative of human worth.

One participant posited that the issue of equality was unimportant — or inevitable and unable to be changed.

For me equality is not so important because it is the natural thing ... when they were born they are not equal. Even if we try very hard, we cannot go ... if we understand the situation we can do easily — but if we don't understand, we only think of our power, I think that it will not be easy.... The important thing is to understand about the needs of our lower level people, so we can live peacefully with each other.... For equality, even if we want to be equal and we try to put our heart down but it is still not equal because there are many factors that can make the inequality. (WS1:186:P1)

From this perspective the most important consideration for practice is to listen, understand and respond to the needs of poor villagers. It suggests acknowledgment of the unequal power dynamics and a role for the practitioner which is feasible given the cultural context. It implicitly indicates a concern for "lower people" and implies working within the framework of a hierarchical culture to improve people's situation, rather than to transform it. Another Cambodian argued similarly: "we cannot treat [villagers] equally" as respecting higher people is "part of the morality of Cambodia". He stressed that it does not matter if villagers treat the practitioner with respect or call them *neah kru* [teacher]. He suggested that, rather than focusing on equality, what is most

important is to “focus on the way that we can humble [ourselves] to make people to feel confident to talk” and show “love for them” (CFG2:P5:296). The practitioner argued that to establish a genuine relationship of trust, humility and love are necessary. The shift involved in transforming one’s feelings and ideas from being the one of higher status and all that entails, to being humble in relating to a person who sees her or himself as “lower” was not elaborated.

NGO focus group participants also pointed out the risk in being equal or putting oneself down is that people would not pay attention or respect the opinions of that person. It was stressed that knowledge and wealth are essential if a person is to receive respect.

But another thing for the villagers, if we put ourselves down too much lower than them it is also difficult. It means that they do not follow us. The example of the village committee ... if a member has ability, wealth, knowledge, so that member will run [do well] — the members will follow. But if that member is poor, they will think that “Hmm... you yourself are not good — how can you help us?” (P4)<sup>114</sup>

The reality of higher and lower levels in society is encountered in development practice everyday, and is not particular to Cambodian development practitioners and the Cambodian context, as already demonstrated in chapter 3.1. The cultural dimension of “power distance” relates to how particular cultures address human inequality.

Jackson (1997:245) identifies the contradictory status demands placed on field workers in India. Practitioners are to have high status in order to have effective interactions with stakeholders outside the village but low status in the village to facilitate participation. The village situation is complicated by the “pressures towards patronage within the social dynamics of the village but against it in project objectives”. This is a similar issue for practitioners in Cambodia and is likewise unrecognised in project planning and management.

The understandings depicted above have implications for the operationalisation of concepts such as participation and empowerment. The belief that leaders must have “ability, wealth and knowledge” explains the problematic nature of encouraging the participation and leadership of people who are poor. The predominant understanding is that if people are poor then they cannot

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<sup>114</sup> These leadership features are highlighted in the following excerpt: P2: If someone has education and wealth, they will have confidence ... In the past we used to take the poor people to [be in the village committees] and they [villagers] said that to take them is not good ... because they are poor. How could they listen to them?

P3: In [name] village, the village leader is poor, the villagers are not afraid of him. Not afraid at all. When the village leader walks somewhere the villagers do not look at his face. But when we go to another village [where] the village leader is wealthy and has high knowledge, all the villagers call that village leader “uncle” — they give the value like that.

even help themselves, so what would be the point of listening to them? Poverty may be perceived as an indication of individual inadequacy (lack of ability and/or a reflection of lack of merit to be born poor) and not the result of structural injustice. These understandings also correspond to the literature describing the attitudes and actions of leaders in chapter 2.

In view of the problematic nature of equality some practitioners suggested that “partnership” and other words are used rather than equality. “The word equality we do not use much with the people. We use partnership or something like that” (CFG2:P3:359). The indiscriminate use of partnership in the development sector often masks or disregards power inequalities such as between practitioners and villagers, and donors and NGOs.

Some expatriate participants felt that people from different cultures had very different perspectives on hierarchy. “There’s a notion in the West ... hierarchy, now culturally is like a dirty word. We may practice it all over the place but we see it as kind of undemocratic.... Whereas I think in Cambodia hierarchy is seen as security” (KI:3:72). Consistent with this Hinton urges caution in foisting “Western liberal democratic egalitarian ideals onto the Cambodian landscape and [assuming] that people view hierarchy negatively, as a form of domination opposed to their ‘natural’ desire for equality” in view of the positive value given dependency, protection and order (2005:186).

It would be simplistic to attribute hierarchy to Cambodia and Cambodian NGOs as though it was not also a feature of Northern NGOs and most interactions between donors and recipients. Dembour (2001) argues that equality and hierarchy are not binary opposites. Cultures may be predominantly hierarchical or egalitarian (as indicated by power distance preferences). Where the dominant principle is hierarchical it also includes tendencies towards equality. In the West equality is the dominant principle but hierarchical tendencies and practices have not been eliminated. Equality is often held up as the ideal in Western countries and portrayed as if it were reality, with inequality in other societies being pathologised. In truth, hierarchy exists in the societies that espouse equality and is based on the same differentiating factors of power, wealth, gender and education that make some “more equal than others”.

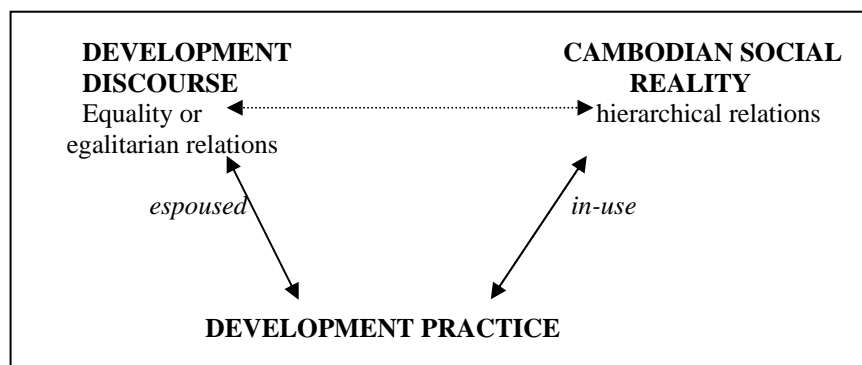
The power inequality between practitioners/professionals and “beneficiaries” was raised in the literature review. Anderson (2001) argues it is essential to declare a common humanity but at the same time to recognise inequality which is the consequence of circumstance. She views this as important for the integrity of the relationship. Inequality cannot be removed by “putting oneself

down”. Goulet believes that it is essential for practitioners to recognise their own vulnerability which is an essential aspect of humanity. Beliefs about equality and about the essential nature of the difference between people have profound implications for development relationships and practitioners interactions in the village. This is discussed further in chapter 8.

## Reflection

The research reveals that the meaning and conceptualisation of equality varies among practitioners, as do views on its importance in the development relationship. I have argued that issues concerning the operationalisation of development concepts in Cambodia, and in the development sector more broadly, can be linked to the dichotomy between equality and hierarchy, as depicted in Figure 8. If hierarchy is the dominant principle in Cambodian society, a key question for Cambodian practitioners is how concepts underpinned by the value of equality are to be applied. What do participation and empowerment mean in a hierarchically organised society, if people of different statuses are not generally regarded as equal?

*Figure 8. The values of equality and hierarchy in development practice*



## *Respect for authority/participation — the right to decide*

Participation is one of the central theoretical concepts guiding the development strategies of the participating NGOs. The social and cultural factors influencing the practice of participation are explored in this section. The participants generally regarded respect for authority negatively because it was conceived as people being afraid and accepting the power of the leader to make decisions by himself. (Leaders are almost invariably men (Beaufils 2000).) In apparent contradiction, when participants were asked which traditional values were important for Cambodian society, some said that respect for authority was important. The context chapter describes the social hierarchy and its benefits for stability in the social order in Cambodia. At times

participants implied that the problem is not with hierarchy *per se* but with the misuse of authority by “bad” leaders.

It [Cambodian tradition of respecting leaders] is good and bad for some part. If the leader ... wants to help the community, so it is good, but if that village leader has the bad idea and wants to take the advantage over them I think that it is not good.  
(WS1:144:P3)

The excerpt implies that in theory an authoritarian system can work. The onus is on leaders to be good rather than people ceasing to be respectful of or obedient to authority.

Hierarchy and patronage have been, and are, consistent features of Cambodian social interactions. As discussed in chapter 2, research shows that development practice commonly perpetuates the status quo, with the existing system of village elites holding popularly elected positions, or new elites being created (Biddulph 1996; Soontornwong 1996; Vijghen & Ly 1996). Research also indicates that the development practitioner – villager relationship replicates some aspects of the patron-client relationship (O’Leary & Meas, 2001).

In the current discourse of human rights and development each person having a right to participate is regarded as being desirable. If the leader is bad, people are to take action to claim their rights. Development concepts such as empowerment, participation and agency are particularly relevant. Research in Latin America suggests that the rights approach is applicable in democracies where the government is responsive to civil society. Where governments do not respect human rights or are not receptive to civil society, effectiveness of this approach is limited (Molyneux & Lazar 2003). Democracy in Cambodia is regarded by some commentators as becoming increasingly fragile with more autocratic rule being re-asserted (see chapter 2). The detention of five journalists, trade unionists and prominent human rights activists in Cambodia between October 2005 to January 2006 on defamation charges related to criticism of the government, and the fleeing of a further six who have also been charged, indicates a serious threat to Cambodians’ right to freedom of expression. As a consequence, civil society organisations are increasingly fearful of expressing opinions (LICADHO 2006). The stripping of immunity from three opposition parliamentarians and prosecutions made against them in 2005 is a threat to political rights and the existence of a political opposition in Cambodia.

The crackdown on freedom of expression, which follows three years of severe restrictions on freedom of assembly, marks a continuing backward slide in Cambodia’s democratization and efforts to promote human rights, rule of law and judicial independence. (LICADHO 2006:1)

Embedded cultural and power relations can easily prevent “rights”, such as participation, from being realised. Expected behaviours are often played out (the “lowers” waiting for the “uppers” to make decisions) to demonstrate the individuals involved know the correct protocols. These norms, along with fear of reprisal from those with power and learned survival behaviour, act against efforts to stimulate participation in decision-making.

If people are regarded as unequal, the question arises as to whether participation in this context is accorded the same value. Focus group participants from India, the Philippines and Thailand had different views about participation. An Indian participant stated that in India inequality is taken for granted, so participation is about joining in and has nothing to do with decision-making.

I think the Western concept of understanding what participation really is, is different from how ... Asians understand participation. Asians understand participation as taking part, not necessarily decision-making with taking part. Taking part is a good concept because everybody gets a chance to say things but it's not culturally a thing where everybody actually participates in making a decision. That's very un-cultural in an Asian culture. So however much we might say that participation in its true sense ... is one of the things that is essential to development as we all learnt development theories, I still think it doesn't apply. (FFG 2: P2:668)

A Thai participant agreed with this view and added that it was necessary to have a leader who would make decisions. One Cambodian participant commented:

Because here [in Cambodia] the top-down culture, the top-down structure creates a form of participation that people just to come and participate with a person and this is the way that they see it ... They [development practitioners] become frustrated and complain that now people no longer participate with any project because they perceive this is the only way of participation. (FCFG1:P2:449)

Some participants were beginning to question the concept of participation, partially as a consequence of the dwindling number of villagers participating in their NGO's activities over the past decade. This was attributed to: the unequal distribution of benefits in favour of certain groups, particularly the local authorities; villages now being less isolated than in the early nineties when NGOs started to work and “people [had] never heard about development”. NGOs introduced new ideas and brought resources so people were very interested “so our reputation seemed to be very big, very incredible”. However, as the communities opened up “our face become not so important anymore because people have more choices and they have to run for the choices that they want” (CFG4:126, 212); people prefer individual benefits whereas much NGO work has been

for the benefit the whole community or sections of it; positive change is slow and villagers withdraw if they feel their situation is unchanging; political interference in the aided development process, such as the manipulation of NGO village meetings for political purposes, is a deterrent; poor management of activities has discouraged participation; and lastly, practitioners are too task-focused (which contradicts the observation of informal chatting) and call people to meet and “talk only about the work, only about the work, work and work” so people feel bored or afraid about what to do next.

Participants suggested the decrease in participation demands serious reflection. The context into which practitioners are now intervening has changed significantly since the 1990s when large numbers of villagers “participated”. A review of current practice is needed to understand what people’s participation means in the present circumstances and the form it could take in future. In addition analysis of poorer villagers’ “right to participate” in the context of a hierarchical society needs to be undertaken by practitioners.

#### *Gratitude and empowerment*

The NGO focus group discussions linked the concept of empowerment to gratitude. Gratitude is regarded as an important value in Cambodian society. Chapter 2 describes how gratitude is considered the proper response to receiving something from another. “Khmers always have the habit of gratitude — even if they take advantage of them, they still feel grateful to the other” (WS3:P4). Several participants commented on the dis-empowering effect of too much gratitude and the consequent vulnerability to dependency and exploitation. The following excerpt describes aspects of the patron-client relationship.

If there is more gratitude for a long time it does not empower but is losing power.... The poor borrow money from the rich when their child gets sick, and when that person goes to take the money, they will ask that person to work in order to pay them back. For example, in the rice harvesting season it [labour] is 150 Baht/rai<sup>115</sup> but they will give you only 100 Baht when you borrow their money.... So they take profit and interest from them, they cut the price. But the poor still feel grateful to them. They have to be in harmony ... So they still empower the rich. They are “big”, the boss so they are grateful and afraid of them. So do they have any power to advocate? In the future, for example, one day the rich ask them to cut the orange grass and pays them 200 Baht per 1/2 ha. They know that to cut 1/2ha of orange grass is worth 400 baht.... Do they dare to complain? They always think that before the rich used to lend them money. So in

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<sup>115</sup> *Rai* is a land measure used in Cambodia. (6 *rai* equal one hectare.) The Thai currency, the Baht, is widely used in north-western Cambodia.



the future the next time something happens they can go to borrow from the rich.  
(WS3:867:P3)

What can be regarded on the one hand as an exploitative relationship can also be seen as an integral part of the informal social security network, providing assistance to vulnerable people in times of acute need.

Empowerment was unanimously regarded as a development value. The participants argued that previously people (poor villagers or women) kept quiet and accepted situations because that was the “social habit” and was viewed as normal. They contend that when people do not know their rights “people are afraid, shrivelled, they don’t dare; it is because of us [meaning the people themselves], we don’t dare” (WS1:1144:P1). To understand the dynamics in (unequal) development relationships between practitioners and villagers it is important to understand the significance of gratitude in Cambodian society. As previously mentioned, in the development relationship the practitioner provides resources and tends to be referred to as “teacher”, while the villagers gratefully receive those resources. I believe this “gratitude dynamic” influences what both the practitioner and the villager bring to, and expect from, the development relationship. Gratitude is a natural response to a kindness shown, and is not bad in itself. However, villagers being grateful, humbly accepting what is “given” to them, and feeling indebted can be an obstacle to empowerment. “It is difficult to be empowered when you are busy being grateful ... Where does the empowerment or equality come from when in fact I owe you and I’ll always owe you and I’m never out of that owing?” (FFG 2: P1:24).

Habit, fear, low expectations and unjust living conditions distort people’s choices and even their wishes for their own lives. Nussbaum depicts a two stage process in people’s awareness. The first is coming to see their situation is bad (as opposed to “normal”) and having a conception of oneself as someone who has been wronged. The second stage is coming to see themselves as citizens who have a right to a better situation. That is, learning these concepts and coming to see themselves as “rights-bearers” (2000:114). This depiction of what needs to happen inside a person is a crucial understanding to inform effective facilitation processes.

However, from my experience the idea that people have a right to whatever it is the practitioners are providing is not prevalent — among practitioners, villagers or the wider society. My observation is that gratitude from the person(s) helped is often accepted by practitioners as normal. The corollary to this is that people who are grateful for the help they have received are more likely to participate in the practitioner’s (patron’s) plans. Several practitioners argued that it is

the response of the practitioners to gratitude which is important. Whether they accept the gratitude as their due (for providing the NGO's resources) or whether they release people from their debt of gratitude by explaining their role and duty.

So the thing that the practitioner can do is ... to open the eye of the people to see this is the duty that the practitioner must do ... When the people extend gratefulness he should explain it is my duty.... But if the practitioner still accepts the gratefulness from the people without explaining to them this attitude of the people will continue. (CFG3:P3:60)

This view of poor people as citizens with rights to a decent life, rather than as passive recipients receiving benevolent charity for which they should be grateful, is discussed in the development literature review. The values and principles characterising the 'helping relationship' in development practice, and the significance of these for the attitudes and behaviours of practitioners, requires further exploration by practitioners.

#### *Spirituality (Buddhism and animism) and secularism*

Spirituality is an individual's personal philosophy "referring to beliefs in something bigger that guides life processes, feelings of connectedness and community and/or a desire to live life meaningfully" (Coholic 2001:70).<sup>116</sup> The secular nature of international development discourse has resulted in a tendency to ignore spirituality and how this might influence the enactment of an individual's development practice, and the ideas and responses of the people practitioners work with (that is, host communities). Coholic, referring to social work, attributes its dissociation from its roots in religious charity work to the "notion that a professional practice should be separated from personal values" (p.xvii).

The importance of spirituality in how people give meaning to their lives and make sense of their world, and its relevance to development is discussed in the literature (James 2003; Ryan 1995; Ver Beek 2000; Verhelst & Tyndale 2002) and in chapter 3.1. Chapter 2 established the importance of Buddhism in Cambodia. The development sector in Cambodia, as elsewhere, has generally not explored how the perceptions of hierarchy, gender, agency and poverty are related to people's spiritual beliefs, and how these might impinge on every day development practice.

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<sup>116</sup> In comparison religion is defined by a more formal system of institutionalised worship "that is dependent on a notion of God and that is based on doctrine or a system of organized beliefs and behaviours, usually shared by people (Coholic 2001:xix).

## Practitioners and villagers' beliefs in spirituality

All interviewees thought village people have much stronger beliefs in Buddhism and respect and maintain spiritual traditions and ceremonies than practitioners.

As we work with the villagers we know that the villagers believe in spirits or fate very much. They believe much more than us ... and when they are poor they always blame their fate. They haven't done merit well. So when they are poor they need to depend on that a lot. We also believe ... but we analyse a lot in that belief. (WS3:P2)

Recent literature on Cambodian (c.f. chapter 2) describes the importance of villagers' religious beliefs (Collins 1998; Gyallay-Pap 2004; Kim 2001; Komai 1997; Pellini 2004).

Most Cambodian development practitioners in the interviews and workshops said that they do not believe in sin or fate or *promleekut* (destiny) or *p'boit* (seed/inheritance), or that they believe only a little bit.<sup>117</sup> Most practitioners felt that their perspective was "secular" although they may call themselves Buddhists.<sup>118</sup> From my experience Cambodian practitioners may be somewhat reluctant to acknowledge, in a "development" context, some spiritual or religious beliefs because of the association with a lack of education. Participants' statements often suggested that, as people are educated and become more economically and physically secure, religion becomes less influential in their lives. This corresponds to research elsewhere (Inglehart et al. 1998; Norris & Inglehart 2004).

## The relevance of spirituality in development work

Opinions differed among participants as to whether spirituality was important in development work. Despite mixed responses from the participants I continue to believe that the spiritual beliefs of practitioners and host communities are relevant to development practice, because of their centrality in making meaning of life and its events. Many participants said that development work is separate to spirituality.

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<sup>117</sup> *P'boit*, the literal meaning of which is 'seed', describes the family or ancestral line. It is used to describe how a person's situation is passed down to them through their parents or inherited from their ancestors (Hinton 2005:71). *Promleekut* is translated as 'destiny' and refers to what is assigned to you from your past.

<sup>118</sup> Although practitioners stated that their beliefs were not as strong as the villagers there was considerable evidence of their spirituality. On the numerous occasions I have entered a *wat* with a Cambodian practitioner in the course of their village work, very few have not paid their respects in front of the Buddha's statue. In their personal time many (particularly the women) attended the *wat* during ceremonies such as the ancestors' festival (*P'Chum ben*) and organised ceremonies such as *kutan* or memorial ceremonies for dead family members. Throughout the years I worked in Cambodia almost all my colleagues consulted fortune-tellers at significant times, and many consulted *kru* (traditional healers) for the treatment of a variety of illness. "For Cambodians before they get married at least 95 out of 100 persons go to see the fortune-teller and how many couples are divorced? Abroad — do they see the fortune-teller before they get married or not? ... And how many are divorced? For building the house it is the same. Cambodians before they build a house they go to see the fortune-teller". (WS3:P2)

My idea is that the villagers always think that poverty, that their way of living is not good because their “seed” was poor, because in the previous life they haven’t done the good thing.... They believe in the spiritual and depend on religion very much. But if we think about development work we see that it is not related to religion. We have to work hard in order to have. (WS3:318:P3)

This separation of spirituality by some participants results from it being regarded as not instrumental in improving people’s lives, whereas development is equated with improving people’s material standard of living. Development results from hard work and scientific thinking. Religious ideas and beliefs are replaced by education and rational ideas which are more scientific and modern.

Development work helps their lives be better, to make progress in the villages ... we see the poor villagers are getting poorer and poorer.... And then they blame themselves and say that it is because of their fate ... because they did not make merit in a previous life — they believe this very much. We want to say that it does not mean we don’t believe in religion or Buddhism, but ... as we are development workers ... we don’t think ... religion makes the standard of living better. We don’t think it is connected to each other. (WS3: P2)

Another reason given for the irrelevance of religion to development is that religion does not bring justice, only the law does. For some, experiences during the Khmer Rouge regime made Buddhism less credible. The belief that “if you do good you get good” and “if you do bad you get bad” was challenged by the fact that people who perpetrated horrific crimes did/have not received “bad” (punishment).

For example, my grandmother, she did a lot of merit, but during the Pol Pot regime she was very, very difficult because Pol Pot did the bad thing to her. She screamed that she tried to make a lot of merit, but merit did not help her. So in this case, I said that religion is not effective. It only makes people do good, but when people do bad religion does not punish people, only the law punishes people. (WS3:515:P1)

A smaller number of practitioners argued that religion was important in terms of working appropriately with villagers’ beliefs, and also because they regarded spirituality as an important aspect of spiritual and emotional well-being.

Understanding poverty and the core value of helping one’s self

[Poverty is the] outcome of economic, social and political processes that interact with each other, but until cultural processes, values and beliefs are added to this list the analysis will never be complete and recommendations for change will lack essential ingredients. (World Faiths Development Dialogue 2001)

Ideas about the cause of poverty and responsibility are relevant to development practice. Many interviewees expressed views similar to the following: “most of the village people think that poverty is the result of sin and it is their destiny (*promleekeut*)” (P4:81). However, practitioners also said that some villagers see their poverty is the result of war and losing their land.<sup>119</sup> Participants stated a person who is poor and who accepts their circumstances as fate believes too much in religion and does not think “scientifically”. “Some kinds of people are poor because they don’t develop themselves — it means that the family still have the perception to believe very strongly in religion and also they are lazy too” (P5:45). Participants also stated that generally people would attribute their success to their hard work, whereas if they fail they attribute it to their fate.

The people who believe in sin most of them are poor — then they say [it is the reason] we’re poor. But the rich people don’t believe that. They say it is because of their hard work that can cause them to become rich. If they are lazy, they’ll be poor. They think like that. (P3:48)

Practitioners’ understanding of poverty included both structural causes and as well as individual functioning, although very few practitioners mentioned global influences or macro economic policies.

[Poverty] is related to society that does not give the chance to all people ... leaders did not help in reducing poverty, but they made the people get poorer and poorer. One more thing is related to helping themselves. They say that God helps you if you help yourself first ... if the teacher works hard, but the students did not study hard, so the students will know nothing because they don’t work hard. Poverty is the same, it is not like they said that “if the parents [seed] is poor the children will remain poor”. I don’t think like that because it depends on themselves. If they know how to work hard to help themselves and society gives value to them and gives a chance to them I believe that it can progress.... I don’t believe in fate because it depends on ourselves and the society too, that could help them. (P2:98)

Some expatriate focus group members stated that practitioners’ attribution of poverty was related to what practitioners were trained to see, and what they have funding to do.

Participants frequently expressed a strong belief — attributed to Buddhist teaching — that each person must help her/himself because in Buddhism there is no God to intervene. Only the

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<sup>119</sup>“Some people said the war caused them to ... lose their land. His or her land belongs to someone else. Some say because of nature [droughts or floods], some because the government isn’t just/fair. They think like that. They don’t think much about that [sin or fate]. The rice farmers say just with enough rain they can live. If nature gives the favour to them, they can live. They don’t have many ideas to advocate and to protest or find another way. Some people say because of their sin that made them born as a poor people.... Yes, some believe but some don’t. (P3:48) In this research there is an over-emphasis on “spiritual” causes as I wished to pursue this topic in the research. Other literature has explored, for example, the influence of landlessness, and indebtedness on impoverishment (Biddulph 2000).

individual herself or himself can change the situation and make merit or demerits. There is an implicit understanding that individuals are responsible for what they do or do not have, and a consequent strong onus on the individual to work their way out of poverty.

If we talk about religion, some people say that it is destiny from their previous life — but if we study more, one theory says that if you don't help yourself, nobody can help you. Like we pray to the god — if you don't help yourself how can god help you? (P7:52)

Contrary to Buddhism's emphasis on self-reliance there is a popular belief that making offerings and praying to the Buddha and "gods" can influence one's circumstances now, or in the next life.

Mostly they try to go [the *wat*] in order to save the merit, in order to not be difficult for the next life. Even putting one spoon of rice, one peanut, they always wish that — hmmm, please don't let me be born poor. (WS1:1229:P1)

There is an implication that people are poor because they haven't struggled enough. Even though development practitioners spoke of the structural causes of poverty there seemed to be a lingering belief that people who are poor are lazy. In doing this research I came to understand that, for Cambodian practitioners, this may be linked to that idea that you have to help yourself. It implies an understanding of development which embodies functional change — the improvement of people's circumstances (as connected to individual responsibility) — rather than the transformation of structures which impoverish people.

### Reflection

It is difficult to ascertain the extent to which spiritual beliefs are integral to practitioners' thinking about a person's circumstances; how beliefs are a way to deal with the difficulties of understanding poverty; or how much beliefs influence behaviour in development practice. What is clear is that practitioners perceive spiritual beliefs to be important to villagers. Some practitioners' responses implied that beliefs in the previous life, sin and fate are not modern or progressive or are for the uneducated. Many participants regard spirituality as separate to development practice, as spirituality is perceived not to be concerned with material things whereas interventions focus on improvement of the standard of living.

### *Acceptance/agency*

Development theories presuppose the agency of human beings, that is, people have the capacity to change. For development practice, belief in the agency of the individual is a key value, fundamental to beliefs and optimism about the possibility of personal and structural change. The connection

between a person's situation (their status for example) and fate or karma raises questions about Cambodians' beliefs about agency, especially of poor people. My intent was to explore how these beliefs might influence practice, for example, practitioners' beliefs in their own ability to effect change, as well as their beliefs in poor villagers' capacity to change, and also practitioners' perception of villagers' own beliefs about the possibility of changing their situation. I think that examination of these questions is important to ascertain whether these have unconscious effects on practice.

Among the issues raised in the focus groups this topic had least resonance. The emphasis on individual responsibility, self-help and hard work assumes a belief in agency, and Cambodian practitioners strongly believe that people can change their situation. It is not fixed by fate or destiny, although a few qualified this by adding: "I believe only a little" (in these). The practitioners' experience of poverty and powerlessness during the Khmer Rouge regime and after, and of working hard to overcome it convinced them that the circumstances of life are not fixed but depend on one's own efforts.

If we say about Buddhism, they say it [poverty] is from the previous life. But if we are modern and progress already we think that it is not from the previous life. It depends on our idea. I was told that if you sinned in a previous life in this life you must get that. But I studied about myself. I had nothing, I was very difficult. I picked morning glory from the field and sold it at the market — until I get all these things now. I don't believe it is from the previous life, I think it is from the result of what we tried hard to do. We can overcome the problem, we did not rely on fate or we don't say sin from the previous life, we have to stand up by ourselves. We think that it is good for ourselves. (P6:51)

In the NGO focus groups practitioners distinguished between the poor who want to live (*neah cram jong rueah*) and the poor who want to die (*neah cram jong slarp*). The former are those who know they have to struggle, and the latter that segment of poor people who fail and blame their poverty on their fate which can make them feel hopeless.

Related to the poor want to die because in their perception they believe in sin ... in the previous life. They didn't do a lot of merit so in this life they are poor — so even if they work very hard they will not become rich. They think and understand like this.... So their idea is they don't think ahead and they do not worry. For example, they work for other people and get one bag of rice. They sleep and eat until all of that rice is gone and after that they will go and work again.... They don't have a belief that when they work hard they will have something to eat — they think that it is the result of action in their previous life. (P4)

Some participants stated villagers want to change their lives but they don't know how. Practitioners strongly believe that the villagers have to be given things (material resources, ideas, knowledge of their rights) in order for change to happen. A number of practitioners also stated that a person can only get out of their situation if they believe they can: "We have to believe in ourselves — we can do everything if we try hard. Except the person who is hopeless. I see most of the poor people are hopeless. They think that, they couldn't be rich, even if they try hard" (P4:64).

Participants' perceptions of people who are poor oscillated between sympathetic understanding and blame. On the one hand they understood the attitude that poverty is the result of fate which can result in feelings of powerlessness. On the other hand, practitioners also criticised the villagers for their short-term thinking. The efforts of the poor can be denigrated by others who are better off. One practitioner related his own story of transporting goods to make a living after the Khmer Rouge period. Because he was weak he was not able to carry heavy loads but people blamed him for not working harder (O'Leary & Meas 2001).

P1: [The villagers] said — oh teacher — I don't know how to do because this is the limit of my *promlelut* (destiny) — my fate and my destiny are like that. I give one true example to the villager, if we depend on (lean on) our *promlelut*, it makes us unable to do anything. If we determine we are against the *promlelut* — if we know that the *promlelut* limit is like that but we try to against the *promlelut* so we can change from what we have depended on before.

P2: It is difficult to pull them [to change their belief] — we pull them and some of them follow but some of them go back and depend on the *promlelut*. (WS1)

Participants posited that some people who are poor accept their lives of poverty because they have never experienced anything different, and because they do not have the imagination or initiative to improve their situation. Like poor people elsewhere, their low expectations are fixed by their experience (Nussbaum 2000).<sup>120</sup> The following excerpt could also indicate that people are traumatised and depressed. Feeling hopeless, accepting a bad situation and not taking the initiative are all signs of depression and trauma (Boyden & Gibbs 1997).

P2: When I go to the village I try to ask them what is the thinking of their heart? ... They respond that they don't think anything — whatever I earn, I eat up to that. If they think, it is only for tomorrow ... if tomorrow there is enough — it's

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<sup>120</sup> "For some poor people who want to die ... it is what they see. Before they used to live with their parents they used to have only one plate of rice and one plate of fermented fish paste (*probok*), they don't know what is better than that, they don't want more than that". (WS:P3)



enough. For the day after tomorrow they don't think up to that. They say, why do we need to think about that — it has no benefit.

P3: On the other hand, if we give them to think – *bong*, if today you have food but for tomorrow you don't have, what do you think? They say that if they are busy to think about tomorrow tonight they can't sleep. If they can't sleep they will be sick, if they are sick they will have to spend more money to buy medicine. So they sleep to be happy to have the strength to make a living. Catch two or three fish.  
(WS1:353)

In summary, practitioners believe individuals have agency to change their lives. There is an element of judgement of poor people based on the belief that if people work really hard they can succeed. There is also a strong theme of individual responsibility and that each person has to help themselves. At the same time there was an understanding that some people, particularly the poor, may attribute their circumstances to their fate or destiny and explain their problems and hopelessness in these terms.

#### *Gender equity and the "ideal" Khmer woman*

As described in chapter 2, traditionally gender roles have been clearly defined in Cambodian society and acceptance in society, particularly for a woman, depended on adherence to their role. Traditionally men are given a higher status than women in Cambodian society. In contemporary Cambodian society change has been thrust upon women and men and the way they live their lives although the ideal persists as the standard against which women are judged.

The idea of gender equality is incompatible with many traditional beliefs about women and men. As a first step in understanding this issue, a shared understanding of the meaning of gender equality cannot be assumed. For some participants, gender equality means that men and women must be able to do and be the same. All participants perceived that the "ideal" Khmer woman was a traditional value and many of the participants espoused the view that if this ideal was to be kept for the future then "we won't develop or progress" (WS3:988:P7). This was primarily in reference to women's leadership and role in civil society. Participants' espoused beliefs about negative traditions that should be changed most commonly included the traditional role of women. This was a marked shift in practitioners' attitudes in 2001 where the majority expressed the view that the notion of gender equality was "un-Khmer" (O'Leary & Meas 2001).

At the same time, women's traditional role was viewed by some participants to be constitutive of Khmer identity. In some (particularly male) participants' minds, the maintenance of women's roles is linked to the preservation of Khmer identity. Other practitioners, particularly women, pointed

out traditions which they disagreed with such as women not speaking loudly, making no sound when they walk, being afraid and shy of men, obeying their husbands. One female practitioner questioned how she could be “ideal” given the nature of development work which required her to behave in untraditional ways.

Participants espoused gender equality — or more accurately, women’s rights — to varying degrees, and, as observed in the field visits, individual practitioners’ concern and efforts to promote women’s rights varied greatly. The research indicates that, while there is recognition of women’s rights, there is less appreciation of the need for structural change in gender roles if women are to achieve their rights. Overall practitioners’ emphasis was on women, with only one of the NGOs having specific strategies to work with men on gender issues. Generally women practitioners demonstrated a greater commitment to women’s participation and leadership in their work than their male counterparts. Even if practitioners do value gender equity an obstacle to action is others’ expectations — be it NGO colleagues, the villagers or other stakeholders — and not wanting to be seen as “un-Khmer”.

Practitioners have different understandings of what gender equality means. Given traditional gender roles and their significance for “what it means to be Khmer” the value of gender equality requires considerable exploration by practitioners regarding relevance and how it is to be operationalised in Cambodia.

#### *Collectivist/interdependence and individualistic/independence*

This point explores whether participants considered Cambodia to a collectivist or individualist society and how this fitted with what they were doing in development practice. Participants were unanimous that collectivism/interdependence is a development value which they said they were hoping to achieve in their work, and which they also desired in their own community. Collectivism was understood in terms of community mutual help — sharing, helping each other, depending on each other and doing things together. This resonates with Cambodian definitions of community as described in chapter 2.

Collectivism is related to mutual help. In the past, most Khmer people always depended on each other and helped each other. We can borrow something from others and they can borrow something from us too. (WS:P7)

This emphasis on “helping each other” stands in contrast to the previous sections where participants emphasised individual responsibility. It raises questions about the fit between

community development and strengthening community responsibility with the idea of each person being individually responsible for her or his situation. The majority of practitioners felt that Cambodians now are individualistic — that they want to be separate and independent of others.

P1: In the community most say ... they want to live separately. They don't want to join together with others, each family by themselves. If you raise the awareness to make a cooperative group, they don't want to join. And if you ask them to join together in order to save together they don't want to join.

P3: To build up a road — they want to build only in front of their house.  
(WS1:1270)

Individualism was defined primarily in negative terms: only thinking of oneself, not wanting anyone else to have control over them, not wanting to join together, not sharing and putting a monetary value on things. It also meant not being dependent but self-confident and able to think and decide by oneself. In the discussions a number of binary opposites were raised: rural/urban, past/present, family society/wider society. In each, the first item in the pair was considered to act more as a collective than the latter item. There was debate as to whether collectivism and interdependence applied in the present time to rural Cambodian villages, although there was general agreement it did not apply to urban living.

This individualism was regarded as a break with the pre-war past. Participants attributed peoples' lack of desire to work together to their experience in the Pol Pot regime when everyone was forced to live and work collectively and most experienced tremendous suffering. Individual survival depended on hearing and seeing nothing, that is, necessarily ignoring the plight of others or also risk being killed. "I chose [individualistic] for most villagers because in the past experience of "three years, eight months, twenty days" [duration of the Khmer Rouge regime] I notice that the villagers hate the collectivism. They hate it very much because collectivism made them hurt very much" (P4).<sup>121</sup>

Development practitioners' goal to rebuild communities is obviously challenged by attitudes and behaviours which reject collective actions and focus on individual benefit. What is being described above also marks a shift to materialism which is subsuming other values such as social relationships as illustrated in the next excerpt.

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<sup>121</sup> "Experiments" in collective action were also tried and failed during Sihanouk's Buddhist socialism in the 1950s and 1960s (cooperatives) and in the 1980s under the PRK socialist government (solidarity groups).

If we compare the past to now, we see that it is not the same. I don't reject that they don't help each other, they help each other, but it is very different to the past. In the past, villagers never sold any crops or plants to each other, they gave to each other to eat for free, but now if we don't have money we will have nothing to eat. So this point we see that it [collectivism] has been reduced. But for the ceremony they still join and help, but some part they can't help too. Only if there is money to hire them they will help.... But in the past they helped each other very much. The head of the ceremony is not very tired or difficult because the participants gave the money to help. (WS3:P1)

A recent study in Cambodia concluded that capitalism and the unregulated market had had a greater negative impact on social capital than the years of war and conflict (Krishnamurthy 1999). At one level it suggests that economic development acts against mutual help.

Other Cambodian participants argued that collectivism is a current value in village society as people in villages continue to help each other.

As the collectivist, interdependence is the Cambodian tradition which lasted for a long time and which until now is not eradicated. Someone never dies and they leave the body until it smells, they will help each other. Cambodian culture is not individualistic or selfish. (WS3:P8)

This notion of depending on each other was strongly emphasised in the in-depth interviews where all participants said that a person cannot live alone but has to depend on others. Some participants contended that people only care about and help their family, and are not concerned for others except perhaps immediate neighbours.

The current context in which practitioners intervene is complex. There is a tension between people's negative experience of enforced "participation" and now wanting to make their own decisions, with the belief that people cannot live alone and the desire to strengthen the positive tradition of helping each other which is being threatened by market forces. There is also tension between the emphasis on individual and collective responsibility. Community development aims to support and promote villagers' initiatives and their collective action. A range of forces act against this ideal and have important ramifications for the dynamics of development interventions.

#### **6.4.3 Development values versus traditional values**

Practitioners are aware, at different levels, of the tension between development and traditional values.

In our development work we want to empower the people to join in selecting the leader. The tradition of leadership is the leader has control. So this is an opposite thing... For example, we develop people — not allow the poor to be afraid of the rich, but in tradition, the poor are afraid of the rich, they do whatever to make the poor afraid of the rich. The smaller respect the bigger.... For development, we do not want them to have that. (P2)

Participants' espoused aim to empower villagers to “stand up” aims to reverse the socio-cultural norms and power relations.

Although positive change is perceived as integral to the success of their work and participants talked of the difficulty in trying to change the villagers' habits and beliefs there was limited evidence in their actual practice that practitioners were setting out to achieve structural change.

Development work is very difficult. We can say that it is like we burn a piece of iron and bend it into the form of something. It takes a very long time to change that. But in the community, what is their habit ... what they dream/imagine now — we are very difficult to change. It is hard to change people's habit and belief. For example in the community people respect the local authorities. If we do not contact local authority, people dare not work with us or come to attend our NGO meeting, so we have to kill ourselves and adjust ourselves according to what they want so that we can work deeply with them.... We have to understand how they live in that village ... then later we can change their habit one by one until we can be successful. (P5)

Participants who argued that development values were opposed to traditional values spoke of internal conflict:

For me I think that it is difficult, sometimes I am against myself. Sometimes we think that it should do like that but we can't get out from that. For example, gender equality. We say that men and women are equal but sometimes it seems that we haven't got out from that yet [regarding traditional behaviour as the norm]. And somebody saw a woman who is a little bit brave they are surprised and they want to strongly criticise her — why she is so brave? So it is very difficult when it is opposite each other like this. (WS1:P1)

The practitioner perceptively acknowledges her spontaneous response to women who have confidence and speak up (her development objective) and her tendency to feel critical of that behaviour — because it is not the behaviour of “ideal” for a woman in Cambodian culture which is to be demure and softly spoken. The aim of development and what practitioners perceive to be desirable change, and how this relates to tradition and culture in everyday life and practice, is explored in chapter 7.

This section presents some of the tensions between development values and traditional values, and some of the ways these influence practitioners' attitudes, their conceptualisations and their willingness to actualise development values in practice.

#### 6.4.4 Conclusion

The research findings indicate that values in-use are not incongruent with those espoused but they are prioritised differently. However, the ways in which they are operationalised tend to be inconsistent with the achievement of participatory, empowering, gender equitable development. That is, the hierarchical method of doing what needs to be done in order to get the job finished is in conflict with the values of empowerment and participation — and enacting empowering and participatory processes — and is not conducive to producing the espoused desirable social change outcomes. This section argues that some development values are not readily compatible with some Cambodian socio-cultural values. The development discourse which is largely formulated and articulated in western, “developed” nations is transferred to the very different contexts of developing countries as though the vastly different realities of people's lives are unimportant.

A fundamental premise of the theories and concepts of international development is that of human equality. Cambodian values about what is morally good and right in personal and social behaviour are grounded somewhat differently to western notions of equality and individualism. These understandings of human relationships have profound implications for development practice in the social, cultural, political and economic context of Cambodia. Cultural norms influence a practitioner's perceptions of poor people, their practice role and how to enact it. In practice the attitudes and actions of Cambodian practitioners reflected both development and traditional values and could be regarded as being in a pendulum motion between two poles, moving according to specific situations rather than being fixed according to a dominant principle.

From the “development” perspective, hierarchical relations in developing countries are regarded as barriers to development and pathologised. There is the implication that these same values, for example, hierarchy and gender inequity, are not also present in donor countries, donor organisations and (international) NGOs. Review of the literature indicates that hierarchy imbues the development discourse, knowledge and aid relationships generally. It is integral to the notion that developers know best and “have” what the recipients need. While both Cambodians and expatriates may exhibit hierarchical behaviour, the underlying motives may differ according to personal and socio-cultural values and norms. What a particular person brings to a situation is their

personal orientations, qualities and objectives. The assumption among international and Cambodian development practitioners that development values and their meanings are held in common has meant that values are rarely explored in detail. The in-use values and beliefs motivating actual practice are not clearly articulated, and have not been integrated with development theory.

In the next chapter I look at practitioners' conceptions of the good life in relation to their espoused and in-use theory and values of development practice. I also explore the connections between change, culture, tradition and identity and the practitioners' role as agents of change. The applicability and application of development knowledge, skills and values in practice is investigated in chapter 8.

## CHAPTER 7 DEVELOPMENT AND CHANGE

Research participants' definitions of development unanimously included the notion of positive change and improvement in people's lives. In community based development, practitioners are regarded as the agents of this desirable change. Chapter 6 examined what practitioners aim to do, and actually do, in their development practice and the incongruity between these. This chapter looks more broadly at desirable change and comprises two parts. I firstly explore what, for practitioners, constitutes a "good life" for themselves, their families and their society. In the second part I explore the dilemma practitioners face when the promotion of "development's" desirable change creates a tension with Cambodian culture and tradition, thereby threatening Khmer identity.

### 7.1 Cambodian development practitioners and the good life

The purpose of this section, which addresses the fourth research question, is to examine what Cambodian development practitioners value as important elements for their own lives to be "good", and what they think is desirable for the ideal society. As ideas about development are concerned with what we think is desirable or valuable for society it is important to articulate our vision of the good and clarify the nature of the positive change. My purpose was also to explore the congruence between practitioners' visions of the good life with both their previously espoused theory regarding desirable development outcomes, and with their actual ways of working in development practice. In addition to discussion of the good life and the good society in the in-depth interviews, NGO focus group participants completed a series exercises in rating and ranking motives for valuing particular aspects of a good life such as education and having a job.

The four most important aspects of a good life identified by participants were family, education/knowledge, neighbours/community and work/occupation/income, as shown in Table 9.

#### 7.1.1 Family

The most important reason given for valuing family is that a person "cannot live alone". This same rationale was used for valuing relationships with neighbours. The belief "if we live alone it means that life has no meaning" (P7:9:358) was shared by all the interviewees. This suggests the understanding that a person is a person through relationships with other people, or through belonging in families and communities (Vaux 2001:45 citing Holy and Stuchlik 1983). Other reasons articulated for valuing family were related to duties or functioning. About half the interviewees said family was important because it could be relied upon to provide help when there



is a problem, or to support and take care of members when they are sick or older. One practitioner said that family was important to discuss problems with as outsiders cannot be trusted to keep secrets.

In the future when we have a problem no one will help us except our family....  
When we are sick; we are old who will look after us before we die? So I think it is important and give value to the family. No one will take care of us other than our children, our grandchildren — our family. (P2:427)

**Table 9. Cambodian development practitioners' perceptions of the most important elements of a good life**<sup>122</sup>

Components of the good life	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Family								
Education/knowledge <sup>123</sup>								
Neighbours/community								
Work/occupation/income								
Standard of living								
Health								
Society								
Dignity								
Freedom								
Equality								
Free time								
A peaceful heart								
Morality in society								

N = 8 in-depth interviewees

When asked about the family members to whom an individual had reciprocal duties and obligations, the responses varied. For most, composition was dependent on the quality or state of their actual relationship with members of their immediate and extended family members.

Interviewees described relationships of mutual care and support with those members to whom they felt close. Other factors included an individual's relative financial wealth within the family and their geographical accessibility, as most interviewees had family members dispersed throughout Cambodia.

While practitioners considered family to be the most important component of a good life they also talked about the disintegration of family life. All the interviewees considered bonds within the family to be less strong now than in the past. (The "past" typically refers to the pre-war period.) A

<sup>122</sup> Practitioners' explanations for their preferences often related to their immediate interests, problems and personal circumstances. For example, "a peaceful heart" was valued by a woman experiencing serious marital problems at the time. (see Clark 2002:129-30)

<sup>123</sup> The Khmer *joumneabdung* can be interpreted in English as both (higher) education and knowledge.

number of interviewees said that it is more difficult to make an income now, forcing either the husband or wife or both to seek work away from the family thereby affecting relationships.

Because in the past, most people work in the field, live in the rural area so they can make enough income to take care of their family. So they will have more time to be attached with their family more than now. But now, their capacity to make income is a little bit so they have to go very far ... [to] the [Thai Cambodian] border to make income but they left their children to live with the grandfather or grandmother so there is detachment within the family. (P1:106)

Others commented that, whereas in the past people shared what they had, nowadays things have a monetary value and people think about what will benefit them. It was also said that some children no longer listen to their parents' advice. Some participants attributed the change to the impact of Pol Pot regime which resulted in people not believing in or trusting others.

The interviewees stressed the importance of children learning to behave appropriately, that is, behaving in accordance with society's expectations and fitting in with social norms.<sup>124</sup>

I want them to study this or that, and they need to have the morality inside to make the society not look at them and say that they are people outside society. So I do whatever to make them appropriate, to fit into the society. (P7:278)

The behaviour of children, but especially girls, impacts on the moral reputation of the family.

So we need to remember and know what law belongs to Khmer. As Khmer children, what kind of morality that we have for old people, or friends, the way of living, what should we do to be appropriate of Khmer to make other people see, we have dignity. (P7:281)

There was a clear theme that a person must be flexible, that is, she or he needs to adapt to the situation and follow the majority. "We do not do something as we wish, we have to respect the tradition. We should walk following society, do not go beyond society" (P3:215). Practitioners' responses suggest people value compliance and conformity with society's expectations, which encompasses the ideas that a person cannot walk alone, a person cannot think that they are always right, and that being flexible is necessary to avoid conflict. Most participants indicated that a sense of what is right and wrong depends on the situation of the society, not only on the individual

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<sup>124</sup> Practitioners stated on the one hand they wanted their children to be confident and able to think critically, and on the other they wanted them to be obedient and conform to social expectations. Mulder (1996) contends that the model on which society is based in Southeast Asia is that of the family, so change in the nature of relationships within the family signifies wider social change.

(P3:370).<sup>125</sup> Participants also suggested that, at one level, it was important to be seen to follow the majority, but in fact this did not mean a person had to change her or his belief.

Yes we should comply with society's expectation Moira. Sometimes our belief is doing this, but society expects us to do that — so we dare not do it. In some places, for example, they don't allow us to speak about what we see — we want to speak but they don't allow it. If we dare to say they will mistreat us so we follow them ... so we have to be flexible, we have to look at the circumstances.... We can't do things against them and we still have the belief in our heart, but the people who have power think that they are right. (P2:556)

Conformity and agreeing to follow the majority was considered to be the right thing to do. This implies that moral correctness is based on conforming even if one's ideas or values differ.

Sometimes we think that if we do it, it is right, but sometimes society identified that it was wrong. We still believe that we are right — but as we are living in the society we have to flexible according to the society. Sometimes we need to follow them, adjust to society. (P3:366)

Personal values are regarded both as creating social change as well as being changed by society.

Sometimes because society forces them to think about their own benefit. For example, I'll tell you a story. A few years before when there's a thief in a village, the people will shout out and unite together. However, nowadays whose house belongs to his/her house. They don't help because it can cause a problem to them. Most of the people are like that through my observation. They don't know how to be in solidarity. (P5:437)

When asked to evaluate the importance of developing and maintaining good relationships with a set of pre-defined groups of people (Figure 9) a similar pattern emerged.<sup>126</sup> Almost all respondents gave relationships with family highest rank, and considered relationships with their neighbours to be very important. Relationships with older and respected people were considered important by almost all respondents.

In their espoused theory (see chapter 6.2) practitioners did not raise the family as a component of their practice, although family well-being was implicit in activities such as preventing domestic violence and strengthening family livelihoods. Practice strategies focus on activities with interest groups within communities. Work with individuals and families is not generally an explicit aspect

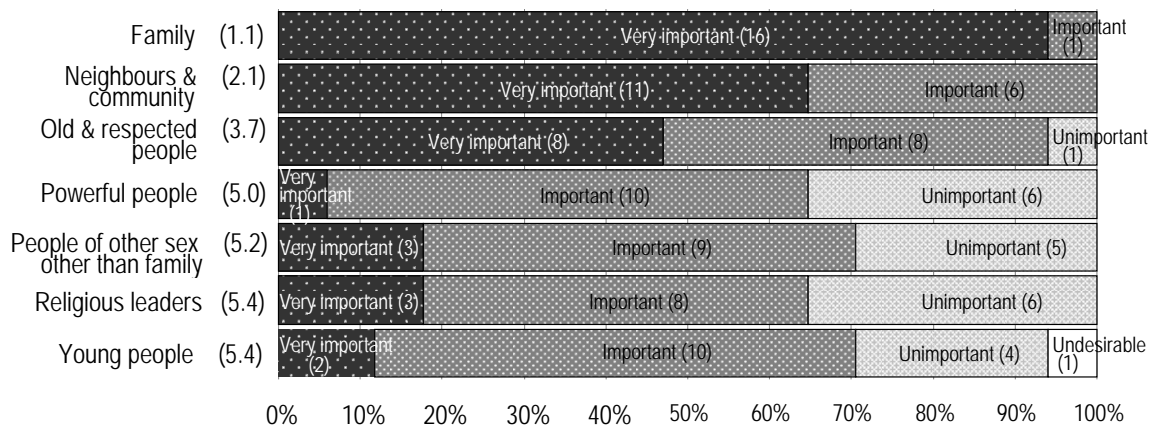
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<sup>125</sup> Most interviewees felt that what they valued came from within themselves, for example: "From my experience, what I have seen and what I have believed on" (P1,6); from my teacher, grandparents, some adults (P1); from my heart, from my ideas by analysing and comparing" (P6); "from inside ourselves and some are from the society" (P3). The genesis of values is beyond the scope of this thesis.

<sup>126</sup> The source of this, and the following four figures, is Clark 2002.

of rural community development agencies' repertoires in Cambodia. The thrust of development practice is community participation and empowerment to collectively address common problems.

*Figure 9. Cambodian development practitioners' ranking and rating of relationships with different categories of people*



Based on responses from 17 respondents from 3 NGOs (including the 8 practitioners who participated in the in-depth interviews). Ranking in column 1, a score of 1 indicating most important.

### 7.1.2 Neighbours/community

The most common reason for valuing neighbours was described in terms of protection. “Your living is not peaceful or secure if you depend on yourself, you have to think about your neighbours as well” (P8:539). Several interviewees invoked the same Khmer saying.

We can’t live alone, only our family in the village.... Like one Khmer proverb: Don’t take the wire to build the fence, take the people to build the fence. That’s a very important point to take people to be the fence — the neighbours. We needn’t buy materials to build it — that can only stop the cow, animals, but we can’t stop the people. But if we take people to be the fence we won’t lose anything. So living in the village, each family must know each other’s heart in that village so that they can live and have happiness. (P5:155)

Responses were imbued with a strong sense of reciprocity. Interviewees said that what they most wanted from their neighbours was a close relationship of trust, honesty, love and respect and they believed that this was mutual. “However, I myself have a feeling as a Khmer, I need neighbours. I want to go for a walk and talk happily together” (P8:544). Most said that when a neighbour has a problem they visit them, and vice versa. One interviewee considered the relationship with neighbours as very important but superficial. “[For the neighbour] I just do the good thing to them in order to make them do the good thing back to me” (P4:205).

There is a sharp contrast between the type of relationship participants described as desirable between neighbours, and their assessment of the current situation. Participants frequently said that Cambodians now do not care or help each other but think only about their own survival. All the interviewees or, more accurately, their family members, are involved in the community/village where they live.<sup>127</sup> All mentioned participation in funerals, weddings and religious ceremonies. When asked about the community they belonged to, the interviewees struggled with the question. They related the term “community” to the village where they worked, but said they did not belong there. After four interviews I altered the question to: “Is where you live the community you belong to?” Participants then said their community was the village where they lived.

The following excerpt exemplifies the notion that development practitioners are “bringing” development and building community through their interventions, rather than facilitating or strengthening what already exists.

My village doesn't have community.... In fact in Cambodian the word community — to have it we [have to] organise first. In one locality where we don't yet have an NGO, and don't have action in that village so it doesn't have a community. So at my village and my own house, that locality doesn't have community yet. (P5:104)

It highlights the disconnection between “doing” community development/organising and applying the meaning of community to one's own village, and being part of a community. “No, it [my village] doesn't have [any groups], we have not formed a community.... We just live in the same village, we have sympathy and love each other. But it has not reached like the community” (P5:128). The responses generally indicate, as discussed in chapter 2, that the term ‘community’ is somewhat problematic in the Cambodian context. Community typically refers to a geographical entity and is used synonymously with the village where people help each other.

Most interviewees said that there were no associations or groups in their village/community other than the groups previously set up by the village authorities for administrative purposes (the former PRK regime's “solidarity groups”). Practitioners did not remark on a lack of “civil society organisations” despite these being central to their development practice as they are regarded as the vehicle through which communities are developed. This suggests a gap between their development practice goals, and their personal or social goals, and how they are to be achieved. All interviewees said that they were not involved in decision-making or organising in their home community and

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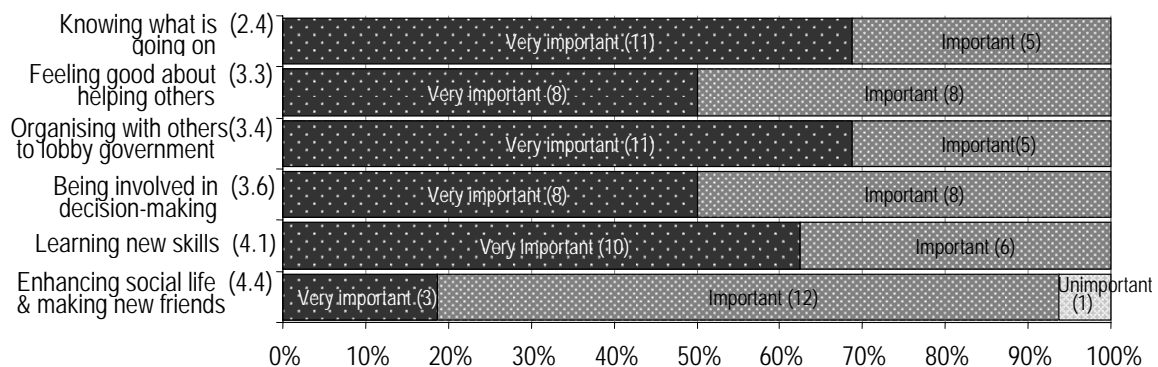
<sup>127</sup> Most of the practitioners participating in the NGO focus groups and in-depth interviews lived in peri-urban areas of Battambang. A number of participants said that because they left early in the morning and came back late at night they were not so active and that other family members were more involved in the community.

attributed this to lack of time due to their work commitments. Interviewees said that when the village authorities wanted to do community activities such as road or canal construction they are always approached to make financial contributions, which are given as a perceived necessity, but “they do not ask us to join in a meeting or in organising the plan in the village” (P4:156). Overall there was a sense of distance between the interviewees, as NGO workers, and local authorities which seemed to be connected primarily to the overtly political nature of people in government positions.<sup>128</sup>

The nature of the interviewees’ involvement in their community contrasts sharply with their espoused valuing of involvement with their community as shown in Figure 10. Organising with others to lobby the government for improvements was considered by all respondents to be a very important/important motive for being involved with one’s community.

I think that groups or individuals must have the role to influence the government policies. We already know that it is the duty of the government that they have to control the country or the people. But what we see is the government just makes promises and never implements it so all the people must have the role and do something to make the government understand their difficulties.... I believe we cannot wait for them to give power to us — but we have to advocate in order to pull — in this way we can go forward. (P2:150)

*Figure 10. Cambodian development practitioners’ ranking and rating of reasons for community involvement*



Ranking in column 1, a score of 1 indicating most important. (n=16)

Interviewees’ responses indicated that they did not feel personally responsible for solving problems in their own community (for example, sanitation and drainage problems) and stated this was the responsibility of the village leader or other government officials. All interviewees described

<sup>128</sup> Local authorities (village leaders) are often regarded as affiliated with the Cambodian People’s Party as many of the village leaders in Battambang in the nineties were those appointed by the then PRK in the 1980s. This is changing with the establishment of elected commune councils in 2002, although the members are still affiliated to political parties.

development activities in the village as being organised and conducted by the village and commune leaders (in the absence of NGOs.) This suggests the practitioners rely on and value the structures of local government to organise change where they live. This may reflect a time factor or, for some, that what they apply in their development practice is not appropriate or relevant in their own lives.

From the practitioners' espoused theory regarding people standing up for their rights, one might expect practitioners to be active in their own community regarding social issues, for example, the education of their children. There is a sense that practitioners expect the villagers to participate and take action but that they would not do this themselves. This of course is not limited to Cambodian practitioners. One expatriate key informant remarked that, while doing an evaluation of a local governance project where there was an expectation the villagers will go to commune councils, it struck him that he and his expatriate colleague had never been to the local council in their own country. Theoretical considerations of the benefits of the participation of civil society for democratisation and good governance do not necessarily translate into a belief that it will be of actual benefit, for self or the community. The Cambodian socio-cultural norms discouraging participation are discussed in chapter 6.4.

The high priority practitioners gave to neighbours/community as a component of the good life corresponds to practitioners' espoused objectives of strengthening or building community and their strongly espoused value of "helping each other". A tension exists between "helping each other" and collectively working together to resolve issues with the strongly held view that individuals are responsible and have to help themselves. This may be better understood as a both/and proposition rather than either/or, but there is a tension between these differing expectations.

Acceptance by society was considered to be important for well-being, and this entailed conformity to social norms and expectations.<sup>129</sup> This is consistent with practitioners' in-use theory which embodies functional change, or improvement in the existing situation, rather than the structural change implied in practitioners' espoused aims of social change. This is explored in section 7.2.

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<sup>129</sup> Crewe and Harrison state that the assumption that norms or social structure drive behaviour is still generally held, despite the fact that people violate the rules they espouse subscribing to. They suggest that essentially the issue is not whether the action conforms to or disregards norms "but which norms, ideas and reasons were invoked by the actors for the performance of the action" (Crewe & Harrison 1998:45 citing Holy & Stuchlik 1983).

### 7.1.3 Education/knowledge

Education is a highly valued component of the good life. Its value is instrumental in terms of being able to get a job and thereby earn an income, and being able to solve problems. Practitioners stressed this was the most important aspect of their children's upbringing, as it is seen as a precondition for a better life and getting out of poverty.

Before my family is a poor family, farmers. And their education at that time is very little, that made their standard of living difficult, using only their labour ... [My parents] said: "You must try to study, to get education/knowledge in order to pass the life as the farmer and become a government staff. You must study hard". So I tried to study very hard until I finished in 1975 because of the Pol Pot regime.... And after that time I have used my education to get a job, that made my life better ... For a fact, my three sisters and brothers, because their study is very low, nowadays they are still farmers. Doing the farming work is very difficult. (P3:328)

Research conducted with people who are poor throughout the world shows similar findings regarding education (Clark 2002).

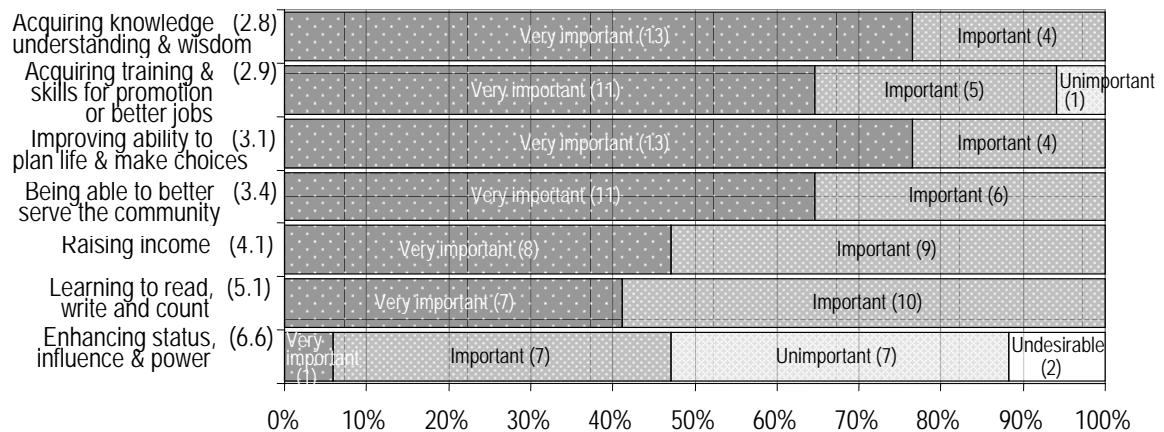
Education is viewed as enabling people to envisage alternatives when they meet a problem so their standard of living can be maintained. Conversely, uneducated people are perceived as being unable to see options and they "are very difficult to live" (P3:284). When asked to evaluate a set of pre-defined reasons for valuing education all respondents gave highest value to "acquiring knowledge, understanding and wisdom" (see Figure 11). Interestingly "raising income" was ranked fifth whereas in the spontaneous responses, this motive seemed to be synonymous with the motive for getting an education.

Despite the low ranking given to "enhancing status, influence and power", in the interviews the link between education, and status and respect was strongly emphasised.

Education is the most important thing in my life, because when we have education/ knowledge the people will respect us, this is what I believe. They respect us even if we say something wrong ... they did not dare to argue, they listen to us.... People give value to educated people.... But if we don't have education when we say something they never listen to us.... I think that educated people are not different from rich people. The educated people they are always easy to associate with and if they want to find a wife it is so easy. (P2:402)



*Figure 11. Cambodian development practitioners' ranking and rating of reasons for valuing education*



Ranking in column 1, a score of 1 indicating most important. (N=17)

The perspective of all the interviewees was that people without education (synonymous with being poor) cannot analyse or solve problems, they do not have any power, and are easily led or exploited by people with education/knowledge because “they will not know whether it is right or wrong because of their ignorance” (P2:75). Participants also stated that even if someone is educated and can evaluate ideas “when most people decide to go that way, we alone cannot oppose them. We have to agree regardless of whether it’s good or not but we disagree with them inside our heart” (P7:519). This reinforces the high value given to conformity. Based on the interviewees’ responses education was not considered valuable in its own right, that is, for the enjoyment of learning or developing a general understanding of life.

In their espoused and actual practice practitioners prioritised providing information or education to villagers so they could know the law and their rights. Despite regarding education as one of the most important components of a good life and seeing it as key to securing the future of their children, this was not a key development priority for any of the practitioners (or their NGOs) in the NGO focus groups. Practitioners said they had been successful in advocating for all children to be able to attend primary school in the villages where they worked. (Evidence in particular villages seemed to contradict the claim of universal education, such as poor families being unable to pay the necessary school fees on an ongoing basis so their children’s attendance at school is discontinuous.)<sup>130</sup>

<sup>130</sup> In one NGO focus group the factors contributing to poor quality education in the villages appeared to be overwhelming and it seemed practitioners felt unable to change the situation except to advocate the admittance of poor students. The national and provincial governments have not prioritised funding for education (World Bank 2004). As a consequence, teachers are often

#### 7.1.4 Work/occupation/income

Work/occupation/income are aggregated, as in the responses work/occupation was seen to be of instrumental value as it leads to obtaining an income, enabling the practitioner to support their family and live appropriately in society. “I think that work is the most important for my life. If I don’t have any work to do, I don’t have the money to take care of my life and my family” (P7:5). This could be related to the high priority practitioners give to their in-use value of fulfilling what their NGO requires them to do. Put another way, NGOs have a strong hold over their staff to perform/conform so they can retain their jobs. The greatest perceived threat to security was losing one’s job and therefore one’s salary.

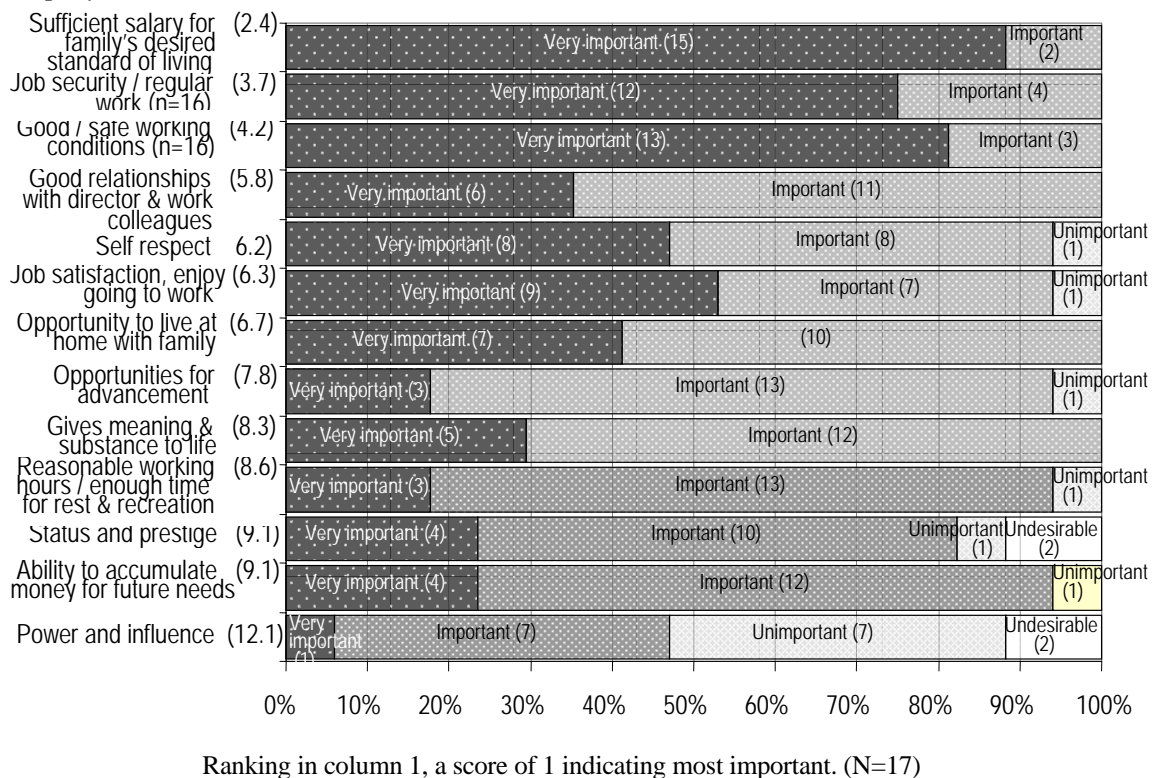
First, in Cambodia the people who have a job they give value, and honour to them. They think that the people who have a job, that that person knows a lot about society, so others may come to us to ask for help ... if they have a problem they depend on us. That’s why I love working, I want to use my knowledge to help others. (P5:288)

From the practitioners’ perspective having work and therefore an income and a standard of living which is “appropriate in the society” (P7:351) brings dignity and face. While status and prestige are regarded as valuable by most respondents, this was ranked much lower than other objectives, as shown in Figure 12. There is a contradiction between the emphasis practitioners in the interviews spontaneously placed on the link between having a job, and therefore an appropriate standard of living, and status and dignity and its low ranking in the pre-defined reasons. This may be related to status, power and influence having negative connotations in the development discourse, and hence being theoretically “undesirable”.

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untrained, have low education themselves and are regularly absent – partly as a result of low salaries which are paid irregularly. Schools are overcrowded and in poor repair. In addition, school parent associations are typically concerned only with school repair and are often non-functioning. Some villagers regard education as useless as it does not lead to jobs.

**Figure 12. Cambodian development practitioners' ranking and rating of reasons for valuing employment**



Practitioners frequently mentioned that the poor are looked down on, and fear of being humiliated is an obstacle to poor people's participation in the community as the following quote illustrates.

Because people when they lose their standard of living ... they seem shy/ashamed and they don't want to join the group, they walk alone. When they see the group of rich people they think that "Oh! I'm poor, I will not join in that group. If I join with them, they might say something about me. I am also a human like them, how can I let them say something to me like that." So I don't want to have that feeling. (P7:298)

In their espoused and in-use values, practitioners rarely mentioned the compensation motives of their work (that is, earning an income and social recognition). Whereas for their good life the achievement of success and expertise in their practice was given low priority, this motive was important in practitioners' espoused theory/values, and featured even more strongly in their in-use theory/values. One interpretation of this is that this response was perceived to be socially acceptable. Another could be that practitioners endeavoured to do what needed to be done to fulfil their NGO's requirements — and so retain their job. This interpretation must be balanced by the moral concerns (caring and integrity motives) practitioners espoused and demonstrated in practice, which included values such as commitment, caring, pity/compassion, responsibility and courage. In their unprompted responses a number of the practitioners espoused that helping society

through their work was important. They emphasised that it was essential to help themselves first, to get income so their family could survive, and helping society was secondary.

### 7.1.5 Standard of living, health, society, dignity, freedom

#### *Standard of living*

While only two interviewees said that standard of living was a key element in achieving a good life (although others implied it as the goal of having a job), in their espoused development objectives practitioners gave high priority to improving the villagers' standard of living. Most interviewees said that compared to poor people they were well-off, but their situation was much lower if they considered business people or the rich. A few suggested that knowing the reality of poor people's lives when they may only eat twice a day affected them.

Because when I work for a long time, and see only the poor people's life and their difficulties, sometimes I am dissatisfied. I think that I have food, I have money, if I want to eat something I can eat, but sometimes I say that I am not happy. What about them? They don't have any rice — sometimes I see nothing in their house not even rice. When I consider that it tells me that my life is better, it has meaning, it is important, if we compare with them — but we don't look at the person who is higher/above us. We look at those below. (P3:153)

There is a fundamental moral dilemma for all development practitioners who espouse the alleviation of poverty in their work, equality and a decent life for all as an ideal, but whose standard of living is much higher than those of village people they “serve”.

#### *Health*

For practitioners the greatest perceived threat to safety was related to their vulnerability if their health failed and consequently they would lose their job and income. Throughout the interviews the link between good health and prosperity, and poor health and poverty as a result of medical expenditure was stressed. However, only two interviewees mentioned health as a necessary component of the good life. Improved health care was not a stated objective of the participating NGOs. In their practice some practitioners had facilitated villagers to set up associations which aimed to assist families in times of medical emergency.

#### *Society*

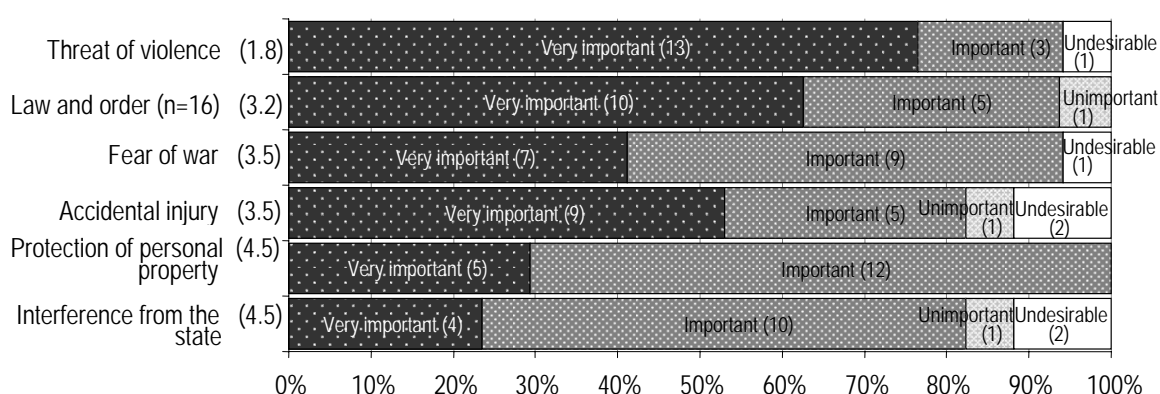
Only two interviewees identified society as being a factor in achieving a good life; however, many interviewees considered that their aspirations for themselves and their family were interdependent with their aspirations for Cambodian society.

If our society isn't an ideal society and it is ideal only in your family, it's impossible.... We can't be happy only by ourselves alone. If we have enough but when we go out from our home, we will see a lot of things such as robbery, people without food — it makes us feel not so good too.... We don't have safety.... It means that our house is clean but outside is dirty and there is a bad smell and after a time it will come to our house. (P8:470)

It seems reasonable to suggest Cambodian respondents' perceptions of the interconnectedness between their personal and societal well-being is possibly related to Cambodian history and people's experience under the Khmer Rouge regime, when the life of every individual and family was so profoundly affected by the enforced changes in society. By contrast, an Australian study found that Australian respondents did not link achievement of their personal aspirations with their aspirations for society (Flowers 2002).

When asked if they now felt safe and secure, most interviewees said they felt unsafe due to the situation in society. According to one interviewee: "even if we don't have fighting we still have a lot of unjust things happening in the way of leading our country. We see powerful people still use their power, still oppress weak people" (P2:95). Other fears related to thieves and robbers, corruption in society, instability in the political situation and high unemployment as shown in Figure 13. Most interviewees commented negatively about the nature of social interactions in the present time, comparing it to a much better past. This included lack of respect for the law, and for other people and a lack of solidarity. "Now it [society] seems anarchic and the people think only of how to make themselves good ... they don't think about others around them" (P4:341).

*Figure 13. Cambodian development practitioners' ranking and rating of concerns over personal safety and physical security*



Ranking in column 1, a score of 1 indicating most important. (N=17)

Interviewees struggled to articulate their response regarding what they liked about Cambodian society or where Cambodian society was exceeding their expectations, but were more forthcoming regarding society's failings, perhaps indicating that it is easier to identify what is lacking than to appreciate aspects of life that are taken for granted. Most dissatisfaction related to poor governance and democracy, for example, the double standards used in the application of the law. "When the lower levels are wrong the law will be applied to people at the lower levels. But when the top levels are wrong, they don't implement the law.... There is no justice anywhere" (P8:19). Interviewees were also dissatisfied with aspects of the economy, education and the loss of Cambodian culture.

The obstacles to achieving the ideal society were identified as politics, political parties and the leaders. Leaders are regarded as ambitious, loving power, greedy, corrupt and authoritarian. In large part the failings of society are synonymous with the failings of government. That is, the situation of society was perceived to result from government failures. Government is implicitly regarded as a key — if not the key — vehicle that can influence society.

A pre-eminent value in interviewees' discussions about the development of their ideal society was democracy,<sup>131</sup> which was envisaged as the government and authorities helping the people and providing better services (P1:25). However, interviewees also perceived political parties to be divisive and creating discord in villages.

The political parties can cause the village people to be broken up. They used to love and respect each other but when there are two or three parties ... there is a gap of trust between each other. This person is belonging to this party and that person is belonging to that party — they stop joining hands. (P3:270)

There is a tension between democracy which is built on the idea of plurality and a tolerance of conflicting ideas and harmony which is built on consensus and conformity. For example, commentators on the political development of Cambodia (see chapter 2) note that the notion of a legitimate opposition is not well-accepted in Cambodian political culture (Downie & Kingsbury 2001; Heder & Ledgerwood 1996a).

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<sup>131</sup> Other factors mentioned were: development of human resources (education and health systems improved), good governance (no corruption, respect for the law), economic development (jobs, development of factories, agriculture improved, attention to the poor, particularly land distribution, improvement of markets) and social solidarity/cohesion (solidarity, no violence, drugs or banditry).

To achieve the ideal society interviewees predominantly said that education about human rights, the law, advocacy and democracy was needed so people do not “wait for the command from the higher people” (P1:212). However, the ambivalence in some practitioners’ thinking regarding the balance between structural causes and individual responsibility for one’s poverty is illustrated in the next excerpt.

The poor in Cambodia nowadays do not have rice field to do farming and they don’t have jobs. Especially, they don’t have knowledge. They say that to be born into the poor family, we couldn’t change. The poor don’t have any idea to earn more in order to help their living standard be better. Another thing they’re gambling a lot.... The people who don’t have jobs are sleeping and dream about the lottery. (P4:56)

There is a strong inconsistency between the participants’ ideal society which is inclusive, and the perceived social reality which is individualistic and seemingly disinterested in the common good. Ambition was often mentioned and was regarded negatively, as selfish and incompatible with conformity.

In the past Cambodian people ... have solidarity, they were honest, they didn’t have ambition, they didn’t take advantage of others.... Nowadays they don’t care.... Now if they see some problems happened in one family, they don’t help but before they helped.... Even if we travel along the way, for example there is a problem, we won’t help, we just stand and look or see and go past it.... We can say that maybe it is because the Khmer used to undergo or were affected by tragedies for a long period — I don’t know. (P5:232)

These tensions are pertinent to how community development is put into practice.

#### *Dignity, freedom and other elements of a good life*

These elements were mentioned less frequently by the interviewees as components of the good life. Dignity was related to having education/knowledge, an appropriate standard of living and having relationships with relatives and neighbours so that one is accepted and can live with their family and society.

[When we have a house] nobody looks down on us and the thief is afraid to come near. For example ... when the Vietnamese came in 1990 I lived in a hut, in a chicken house; some men looked down on me. They wanted to do bad things to me. When I have a house they stop looking down on me. They are afraid of me. (P6:279)

When a person has relationships and is respected and loved then she or he has “dignity inside” (P3:297). Dignity comes from behaving in the “right” way, according to societal norms and

expectations. Freedom was mentioned a number of times in other contexts but only two interviewees offered it as an important component for a good life.

We must have freedom to live and the right of expressing ideas. This is also the important thing for our life too.... For example in the Pol Pot regime we lived without any right to express any opinion. When we want to say something, it seems we feel pressured because they did not allow us to talk, if we dare to talk, we are afraid we will die at that time. So I think that living at that time had no meaning. (P2:3)

Freedom may be viewed as incompatible with conformity as the former is primarily concerned with individual rights whereas the latter prioritises collective well-being.

A peaceful heart, morality, equality and free time were each identified once as a component of a good life. A peaceful heart was achieved by putting troubling things out of one's mind and not thinking about things which cannot be. Morality was regarded as an important part of being human. The interviewee implied that morality involved respecting what was constitutive of Khmer identity. "Khmer have their own morality and law, to make other people identify that we are Khmer, because Khmer is a gentle, soft, and has dignity ... so we have to keep it (P7:364). The interviewee who identified equality as an important component believed that equality was based on being equal as human persons.

#### **7.1.6 Meaning, suffering and self-reliance**

This question sought to understand how practitioners' beliefs about suffering might influence their practice and responses to people confronting difficulty. Three themes emerged in interviewees' responses regarding what sustained them when they encountered difficulties. One was the Buddhist understanding that suffering is an integral and inevitable part of life which everyone must face. It implied a philosophical acceptance of suffering, but not acquiescence (see chapter 6.4). The second theme was the notion that a person has to struggle and must rely on her/himself and not depend on other people. "It is that only we ourselves that could help us.... It is general in society when we are poor they don't respect us, we lack people who want to associate with us" (P2:200). Thirdly was the belief that doing good gets good in return (which is linked to making merit), and doing bad gets bad, or if something bad happens this could be attributed to sin in a previous life.<sup>132</sup> Overall they suggest an emphasis on individual responsibility in coming to terms

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<sup>132</sup> Several of the interviewees said that "to be Khmer is to be Buddhist", but explained they knew little about Buddhism. "I am Khmer so I have to believe in Buddhism ... From what I have studied, religion is like a book that leads people to walk in the good way ... belief in religion. I am Buddhist but I don't know clearly but I remember one word is "do good get good" (P5:332).



with and dealing with hardship, which is consistent with findings in chapter 6.4. It again highlights the clash with ideas of cooperation. At the same time “reaping what you sow” provides a motive for people to be compassionate and “do good” to others.

### 7.1.7 Discussion of the good life

Interviewees identified a number of elements necessary for a good life, most important of which was family. This was followed by neighbours/community, valued because they provide protection and support. Essentially, people cannot live alone. The high value placed on family and neighbours is linked to values of conformity and compliance to social norms, particularly of one’s children behaving appropriately and being accepted by society. Education was highly valued primarily for its instrumental value as the vehicle to escape poverty, to solve problems, and as a source of status and dignity. Work/occupation had instrumental value in gaining an income. They were important so a person could provide for their family and achieve an appropriate standard of living and therefore live with dignity in society. Interviewees valued the status and dignity that education and work/position conferred. They typically linked leadership to wealth, education and position, and stated that it was difficult for poor people to be leaders, partly due to the idea that if they had ideas then they would not be poor. The corollary to which is, if they do not have the capacity to help themselves, how can they lead others?

A number of implicit tensions emerged between practitioners’ visions of the good life and their espoused and in-use theories regarding development practice. Personal values which stress acceptance, compliance and conformity with social expectations and norms (consistent with the notion of “not living alone”) are in tension with the more “progressive” values espoused within the NGO framework which are essentially concerned with a social change agenda. For example, in development theory empowerment implicitly aims for transformation of hierarchical relationships whereas compliance and conformity values implicitly suggest functional change, that is, improvement within the existing system.

The espoused respect for villagers’ knowledge and ideas and self-determination is in tension with the belief that those with education “know”. A consistent theme in the research findings is that NGOs and development practitioners bring/provide development, and that without them development is not happening in communities. This view is not particular to Cambodians. Giri argues that developers generally believe that they are the “architects” of development (rather than

facilitators of a pre-existing and ongoing process) and that this is accompanied by arrogance and dominance (2002:206). Practitioners also emphasised rights but at the same time indicated a dependency on others (the government) to give them. There is a desire for democracy but discomfort with conflicting ideas and a desire for harmony.

Another tension is the espoused value given to cooperation and the ideal of building community to help each other, while at the same time individualistic values such as individual responsibility, working hard and helping one's self come through strongly. Uphoff (1996a) argues that practitioners' expectations influence development goals and approaches. If these anticipate and expect individualistic motives, communal and altruistic values are undermined.

Much of what practitioners valued in their personal/family lives is reflective of traditional values and Cambodian culture. It suggests actual practice is more consistent with personally held (traditional) values and social norms and that incongruity exists between practice and organisationally espoused values which embody a social change agenda. A further tension is present between NGO espoused values — expressed in mission/vision statements — and the in-use organisational culture values which prioritise organisational survival. What occurs in practice is related to practitioners' own values, keeping their job and contributing to their NGO's survival, what they believe is expected of them by a range of stakeholders, and what they need to do in order to develop and sustain their credibility.

## **7.2 Change, culture/tradition and Khmer identity**

What constitutes positive change is contested, and depends upon what is valued. In this section I first examine how practitioners see themselves and their values in relation to the village people they work with from the perspective of education and knowledge. This is pertinent to understanding practitioners' attitudes toward "bottom-up" and "top-down" development processes. This theme emerged in the NGO focus group discussions of traditional versus development values and practitioners' identification of villagers with the former and themselves with the latter. It also emerged in participants' descriptions of their actual role.

This is followed by an exploration of the role of practitioners as agents of functional versus structural change, which leads into practitioners' understandings of Cambodian culture/tradition and the dynamic between development interventions and change in Cambodian culture. The ambivalence some Cambodian practitioners expressed regarding their espoused role as agents of change, in view of their concern that change in Cambodian culture and tradition will result in the

loss of Cambodian identity or “what it means to be Khmer”, emerged in the course of the study. Throughout the research Cambodian practitioners held differing opinions as to whether or not development interventions impinge on Cambodian tradition and culture, and whether this is desirable. Intervention issues include incongruence, compartmentalisation and integration. A discussion of these comprises the last section.

### 7.2.1 Knowledge and change

There was no clear trend regarding participants’ beliefs about the congruence between their own personal beliefs and values and those of village people. All commented on the difference in education/knowledge between themselves and villagers. A recurring theme is practitioners’ tendency to equate poor people’s lower education to lower knowledge and an inability to think deeply, long-term or analyse their problems and find solutions.

Importantly poverty makes them not think about anything... They never think about considering the long term ... I ask them: “Do you think about the future for your children?” And she said that she didn’t worry. She was born without anything and remains without anything — like that. She only thinks about how to have enough food to eat for today. (P4:102)

If a poor family, they always think that: No need to go to school. If the children go to study, what can they have to put into the pot? Just ask the children to go to collect the scrap metal is better. At least they will get something to eat for one time. (P7: 447)

Several participants said that before they were like the villagers — concentrating on their immediate survival. They argued that if the villagers knew what they now know, then the villagers would think as they do. There is strong sense that what the practitioner believes is right.

People who live in the remote area they cannot consider very well. They don’t understand much. If they have education and understand a lot like me the values will be the same. They’ll think like me too. It [what they want for society] is the same. People don’t want war. They want to live in a society which has peace, and live happily with family. If the society has peace, our families will live in a good standard. Then we’ll live a good life. (P7:296)

In the following excerpt, the image of steps implies a linear progression of development where knowledge is equated with education which will produce a new set of values — such as human rights — which are the same as those of the practitioners. It suggests that the practitioners identify themselves with development and that what they did before is regarded as not good.

When we ask them what they want they say they want rice, money. No one answers that they want to go to school — because they lack food to eat. It is not different from myself before. When ... asked — what do you need — I said like they do.... So when we ask if the village level thinks the same as us — they don't. They are under us so everything must follow each other. When we're on the stairs, we say we are on the 10th step but they haven't reached and seen the first step yet.... It means that we have enough eat, but the other — they don't have soap to wash their clothes. The poor are very difficult.... If we say about the community, there are different levels ... some people have the same knowledge as us too. Not everyone doesn't see the first step. (P8:568)

On the one hand, practitioners may empathise with poor people because of their own experience of poverty during and after the Khmer Rouge regime, and their feelings of pity and compassion for people who are suffering. On the other hand — or simultaneously — some practitioners separate themselves from poor people. They got themselves out of poverty because they had ideas, struggled and worked hard. One commonly expressed understanding among phase 1 and 2 participants was that, if poor people could think, they would not be poor. Therefore, villagers will change their situation “only if we go to change them”.

It is useful at this point to clarify what I think is at issue here. The practitioner does have a knowledge base which is essential to the helping process but which needs to be utilised to work with people, not to decide for them. Reeler suggests:

The poor are generally poor because of inner and outer hindrances to their natural impulse to develop, blockages to what they know and can do. Unless they are free of these, no amount of smartly delivered capacity-building, skills or resources will make any sustainable difference. (2005:4)

Helping people to be free of inner hindrances such as “fear, self-doubt, self-hatred and other deep consequences of deprivation and abuse” (p.4) is crucial to people pursuing their own development and dealing with outer hindrances of social and economic injustice. From a western perspective, the intention to facilitate change shifts to paternalism when the outsider “disregard[s] the wishes of the local people by assuming that they know best” (Dominelli 2005:704).

These hindrances were recognised by Cambodian focus group participants who argued strongly that villagers can think — but this can be constrained by two sets of factors. One set relates to the practitioners themselves. A key issue for development practice is whether practitioners believe villagers have the ability to think and make good decisions. This is crucial to the expectations practitioners have when they work with villagers, and without this belief it is unlikely they will respect values such as self-determination. It is also influenced by their practice knowledge and

skills to facilitate, and their ability to empathise or imagine, that is, to think one's self into the situation of someone in need (Vaux 2001:10). This is explored in chapter 8. The difficulty of "developers" to listen and value the knowledge of people who are poor is widely described in the development studies literature (Chambers 1993, 1997b; Crewe & Harrison, 1998).

The second set of factors relate to socio-cultural norms and historical experience which discourage people from thinking for themselves. These include: false-consciousness which derives from the impact of hierarchies where people with lower status have learnt their place and the higher status educated, male or rich people are viewed as having more worth and more ideas and are to be listened to (see chapter 2); a "teacher-centered" educational system where students are not encouraged to develop independent thought (Ayres 2000; Giles 2004; O'Leary & Meas 2001), and older people and parents expect their authority to be accepted and obeyed; numerous proverbs and fables which reinforce these norms.

Conformity and not speaking out, even resisting change, can be attributed to social and cultural norms and practices. It is, however, difficult to separate this from Cambodians' experience of suffering and trauma during the years of conflict and authoritarian rule. This undeniably impacts on both practitioners' and villagers' confidence to question, to express their ideas and their readiness to trust others. One expatriate key informant with 13 years' social work experience in Cambodia stated that the extent and impact of trauma in communities is quite pervasive. "It's such a uniform society that in a way nobody sees anything differently. Everybody's been traumatised so it's normal, so no one realises this isn't the way one ought to feel, be, look, think, react" (KI:2:265). At the same time she cautioned that this has to be understood carefully. Knowing about Cambodians' experience of trauma must not lead to generalisations or pathologising behaviour.

Practitioners may not recognise their own symptoms of trauma such as flashbacks, bad dreams and memories, headaches and other symptoms related to people's inability to withstand uncertainties or insecurity. If practitioners are unaware of their own state, it is unlikely they see trauma as one of the issues facing villagers.

Somebody was here working on the [Khmer Rouge] trial a couple of years ago. She was showing people the [indistinct] trial video.<sup>133</sup> One of the local NGO directors ... saw it. And she was talking to her a couple of days later and this is what happened. She said she got home she didn't realise what was happening but she

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<sup>133</sup> The person was working on the establishment of the UN international tribunal to bring prominent Khmer Rouge leaders to justice. Videos of the South African truth commission and other tribunals were shown.

started having nightmares, but never, never [indistinct] until her husband said — all these memories of camps and the time before — what’s wrong? Would it have anything to do with that film [name] showed you? Oh! But in and of herself it didn’t automatically go to [that] — and she is somebody who is the sort of person you assume would get it. So people don’t see it in each other or in themselves. (KI:2:296)

While the Khmer Rouge period epitomised the danger of being killed for speaking out or being noticed some participants noted this is not a thing of the past. Fear, with justifiable reason (see chapter 6.4), is still prevalent today. “After we’ve gone through a prolonged traumatic experience we feel that to reveal our attitude to someone is not safe for us. So often we are under pressure to express our behaviour that is different from our attitude” (FCFG:P2:113). One participant said that even in NGOs it is better to be quiet, secure one’s job and provide for one’s family.

One expatriate key informant challenged the use of a western learner-centred, quite individualistic and conceptual model of learning that has been imported into Cambodia, to implement a western model of development. He argued that this model is not producing “the normative outcomes of that kind of approach” which include: learners taking more ownership of the learning process and being willing to shape it, that is, becoming discerning learners; the individual learning how they learn best; and the discovery of and being able to critique both their own values and the information that’s being given to them (KI:3:20).

He argued that attributing the failure of training to produce change as a gap between theory and practice is only a partial reason, positing that another significant aspect was “the desire not to disturb the harmony” or not to create discord. He suggested that training itself is the problem in that: “I think a lot of the time it creates this “us and them” which I think feeds right into the hierarchy, right into homogeneity and the whole thing solidifies”.

I’m not sure it’s reformable in the normal notion. The normal idea of flipchart, room, circle, the standard little routines we all go through in training, some group work etcetera, etcetera. I think it produces ... certain results. But ... I don’t think it will produce what it is most trainers want it to produce which is an engagement with values, so-called critical thinking, by which westerners mean a particular kind of thinking I think. (KI:3)

My experience of training using this approach is that once initial discomfort with this model is overcome, many practitioners do engage and are willing to argue their point of view. However, the shift from knowing to internalisation requires something more than training. This is discussed in chapter 8.

### 7.2.2 Practitioners as agents of structural versus functional change

Participants, as agents of change, frequently expressed their desire and intention to change the beliefs and attitudes of villagers (in line with their NGO) so that development could take place. Development values as espoused by NGOs are ultimately concerned with structural change or the transformation of aspects of society. But a contradiction exists between the transformative change embedded in development values, and conservatism and the importance of upholding culture and tradition. The question is how progress can be reconciled with culture (Kaplan 2002:57). There was ambivalence within some participants and within the NGOs who participated in the research as to whether the intention to change attitudinal and behavioural norms is ultimately to dismantle power relationships or simply to improve the position of the disadvantaged.

The radical and structural approaches in social work practice, developed between the 1960s and 1980s, emphasised the structural (socio-economic) causes of individual and social problems rather than attributing them to individual inadequacies (Fook 2002). Development practice, as premised on a rights based approach, perceives the individual as a citizen with rights who is entitled to a decent life because of her or his humanity. Social change, promoted through individual and community action, aims at dismantling the power structures responsible for denying people their rights and perpetuating their disadvantage.

“Human” development values share the concerns of Cambodian tradition. Both envisage a better life for one’s children, caring and reciprocity with neighbours and community members, being an accepted member of one’s community, living with dignity. In other ways development and tradition are fundamentally different. This relates to questions of value such as what comprises a better life for one’s children, and the acceptable ways to attain this. Whereas tradition tends to be conservative and maintains the status quo, rights-based, empowering, participatory development is implicitly concerned with transformational or structural change.

Theoretically in development practice one aspect of addressing injustice is the dismantling of hierarchical power relationships. Hierarchies exist because one party in the relationship is forced into or submits to their subordinate position while the other fights for or accepts their position of power and superiority. In Cambodian culture and tradition people of lower status typically respect and obey people in authority, who, as patrons, have/had a responsibility to provide (O’Leary & Meas 2001). The programs of NGOs and practitioners assume people remain in positions of

subordination and oppression because they lack knowledge, power and opportunity to change their situation.

In their actual practice Cambodian practitioners carry out the necessary activities and tasks to achieve their outputs. These tasks are typically concerned with functional change, that is, consistent with improving the existing situation rather than fundamentally challenging the bases of inequality. The espoused objectives of empowerment and participation of women or people who are poor to know and claim their rights are aimed at challenging and changing power relations. However there is little explicit analysis of power relationships and how these obstruct empowerment.

Confrontation of the powerful is fraught for two reasons. One is fear of confronting the powerful and their retribution and impunity in a society where the rule of law is not enforced. Another is personal “conservative” values and the desire to do what is socially acceptable and preserve what it means “to be Khmer”. These are largely unspoken influences on the practitioners’ actions.

Once again this situation is not limited to Cambodia and Cambodian practitioners. Korten (1990) argues that internationally most NGOs are stuck at the level of “teaching people to fish” — rather than accepting that people can fish but lack access to resources. An individual practitioner’s stance relates both to her or his level of structural analysis and understanding, as well as to her or his commitment to emancipatory forms of action and social change (Fook 2002). The individual’s commitment is also impacted by the organisational environment which may be active, supportive, fearful or opposed to actions that challenge the status quo. Beyond this is the political climate which may tolerate or punish activists.

Another relevant issue here relates to the genesis of Cambodian NGOs. Whereas in other countries these organisations arose from activists’ responses to injustice, this was not necessarily the case in Cambodia. Expatriate practitioners from Thailand, India and the Philippines contrasted the origin of NGO movements in their countries.

Back in the 70s, 80s the NGO movement in Thailand was born. It grew mostly from the student movement who came out for social justice when they were students ... they wanted to ... serve the people and bring about a more just society and that inspired a considerable number of people to work in NGOs which was considered low pay, hard work, in the rural area. In Cambodia the proliferation of NGOs started with so much aid money coming in. I’m not saying that all are after money but how it started.... So projects were written up to get money ... it’s a very different development. (FFG2:P3:332)



This does not mean that Cambodian development practitioners did not (and do not) have good intentions or work for structural change, but for many their motivational starting point in the early nineties may have been different. The salaries and benefits provided by international and well-funded Cambodian NGOs are comparatively better than other jobs in Cambodia. One impact of this is that NGOs and international agencies draw educated people away from their poorly paid posts in essential government services (Godfrey et al. 2000).

### 7.2.3 Cambodian culture/tradition and Khmer identity

In the interviews and NGO focus groups Cambodian culture and tradition tended to be described as they were in the past rather than the practices of contemporary times. My purpose in exploring what practitioners value in Cambodian culture and traditions was to understand practitioners' beliefs and attitudes toward the espoused desirable changes, and to ascertain what may be important for developing practice which is more sensitive to these values. One expatriate participant suggested some Cambodian practitioners may be reluctant to talk about cultural practices they feel are judged to be not progressive in the development context which they experience as being critical of Cambodian culture.

It took many years for my Khmer colleagues to actually trust that I really, actually wanted to know what they had to say about their traditional culture. They felt a deep fear in sharing things because they're so used to being in the development field where it's like — and this is why that's wrong and this is why that's wrong. (FFG2:P4:460)

When discussing culture (*vopathor*) and tradition (*prorpaynee*) these two words were run together as culture/tradition (*vopathor prorpaynee*) which is common in everyday usage. As I was looking at how Cambodian workers themselves regard culture and tradition I did not attempt to define or distinguish between the two. When discussing Khmer identity this was couched in terms of “*Khmer yerng twer unjung*” meaning, “this is what we Khmers do” (see Heder & Ledgerwood 1996a:19).

In phases 1 and 2 participants found it hard to articulate the good things about Cambodian culture and what should be retained and strengthened in development practice and what should be changed because they perpetuate injustice or suffering. The question was difficult as it asked people to think about what they take for granted — that which is “normal” — as if they could step outside their own culture. This difficulty in articulation can be understood to be partly a consequence of international development agencies and expatriate practitioners who came/come with a set of values they consider to be good and right and which they assume apply in the

Cambodian context, without spending time to explore and affirm the values Cambodians already have and which have enabled them to flourish (see O’Leary & Meas 2001). “We’ve brought in a whole new set of values that we have and tried to put them over the top” (FFG1:P4:533).

What were identified as features of culture/tradition were very similar to what was later described in relation to Khmer identity. Participants identified traditional ceremonies, behaviours such as politeness, gentleness, respect for older people and parents, helping each other in the community, Khmer language, marriage arrangements, dance and the arts, and respect for Buddhism. Some participants equated the loss of traditions to the loss of morality.

But if we talk about our Khmer traditional custom, it seems lost of the moral living a lot. It makes our Khmer children follow the foreign style.... Yes, there are a lot of traditions [lost], like Khmer children used to be polite, used to have the tradition. (P3:192)

As with Cambodian culture participants had difficulty articulating the meaning of Khmer identity. One theme which emerged in phases 1 and 2 was some participants’ concern that the loss of Cambodian culture and tradition is threatening Khmer identity, and there is a danger of “losing ourselves”.

For myself, I think that it is bad [if we lose our culture/tradition] because one race must have their own identity so they have value. If we have just a body but we don’t have anything to show the others to see and give value to us that we are one race, that’s not good. (P5: 164)

This suggests a possible reason that participants do not think about the cultural impact of what they are doing is because of its potential threat to Khmer identity, which is highly valued.

This section identifies that some participants are not clear about the aspects of Cambodian culture they regard as positive and important for development. For some, the desire to change negative or unjust traditions was complicated by a concern that cultural change is a threat to Khmer identity.

#### **7.2.4 Development and change in Cambodian culture**

In Cambodian society cultural change is often unacknowledged. There has been extensive change in all aspects of Cambodian social life over the past 40 years, particularly since the early nineties with the triple transition from war to peace, from a socialist government to a multi-party democracy, and a centralised to a free-market economy. As an example, the actual role of Cambodian women has dramatically changed in contemporary Cambodia as a result of the war and

socio-political and economic changes. Women are engaged in commerce, earn salaries and travel away from their homes. However, gender roles have not been redefined and women still tend to be judged according to their traditional gender role (Giles 2004).

In the interviews and NGO focus groups there was a disjunction between some participants' recognition of the extensive changes in Cambodian cultural practices with denial or ambivalence in their view that change was occurring in culture or tradition.<sup>134</sup> Some focus group participants attributed the rejection or denial of cultural change to fear and insecurity and not wanting to lose Khmer identity. While some practitioners implicitly considered culture to be fixed or static, others argued that Cambodian culture has been continuously changing over the centuries and is therefore not dependent on development interventions. One explanation for this both/and notion of change/unchanging culture follows.

Given the radical shift in all aspects of Cambodian social life over the last twenty-five years, it is possible that a significant change in what it means to be Khmer has occurred. Indeed Khmer often speak of this as the case, that the spirit or soul of the Khmer is gone, that Khmer culture is destroyed or is being destroyed. At the same time, however, Khmer inside and outside the country will and do argue that Khmer culture is unchanging, indeed unchangeable. But this should not be surprising. The ambiguity inherent in key symbols of national identity allows for and often subsumes such contradictions. "Khmer culture" is an ever-changing construction, though it certainly need not necessarily be viewed as such. (Heder & Ledgerwood 1996a:20)

Cambodian participants had differing ideas about the impact of development interventions on culture and tradition. In phases 1 and 2 some practitioners said that development work does not relate to or impact on Cambodian culture, tradition or religion (Buddhism). For some participants this was based on their understanding that what they did in aided development was not different to the villagers' culture and traditions. "People at the community level, if we do differently to their tradition they don't work with us. We have to work the same way as they are living" (P3:252). For other participants a conceptual separation of development from culture/tradition/religion appeared to be rationalised as follows. Development is about change, generally conceived as "from less to more". To bring about change there are a series of tasks outlined in the project proposal which practitioners are to implement. The focus is on providing things to the villagers, such as

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<sup>134</sup> The following excerpt illustrates resistance in acknowledging that change is happening. "A lot of change. But if you ask them — you change your culture? Oh! I don't change my culture. I'll give you the real example ... like the health project ... the TBA [Traditional Birth Attendant] you know, the way that they deliver the new baby. In the past they use the TBA in the village and the TBAs were not educated and a lot of people die you know.... When we educate them for a lot of years when people ... during the delivery if they have any problem they send to the hospital. So it indicates that they change from what they have — from respect or praying to the spirits. But if you ask them — did you change? No, I didn't change!". (CFG2:P5:380)

education and information, which are conceived to be conducted in isolation. Practitioners focus on their tasks to achieve the intended outputs. Considering development interventions in this light, they are perceived to be value-free. Due to the longer time-frame to achieve impact — typically beyond the project's lifespan — and the difficulty in measuring impact, outcomes such as sustained attitudinal or behaviour change are rarely evaluated, and consequently the ramifications of development interventions on the culture and tradition may not have been analysed.

Development work is not related to culture and tradition.... For example, in one area there were many poor people, we have to find the way to help them to “have” so that their life becomes better.... I taught them how to use their rights ... Before they used to respect that person. If he/she asked them to do this or to do that and they always followed. I help them ... understand clearly, then they can do it by themselves and not listen to what others command all the time. (P7:203)

Only change about the rights, power and freedom I think that it will not impact on Khmer tradition and culture because some part of Khmer tradition and culture, as I understand it, is not progressive. If we still keep it, it is not good, so we need to change it in some part. Like in the past women rarely have the role of leadership, if we change the role of leader to the women, it also doesn't impact to the Khmer identity too. (P2:380)

These quotes and other discussions raise three issues. One, changing particular aspects of culture such as the status of women are viewed as not impacting on Cambodian culture or Khmer identity because they are aspects of culture the participants consider as “not progressive”. They are those aspects the practitioners themselves no longer believe in, at least at a theoretical level. Two, a conceptual or analytical gap appears to exist for some participants between talking about values such as gender equality and relating them to the enactment of rights, empowerment or equality. Practitioners espouse women's rights and implement activities which ostensibly improve the situation of women but generally these do not challenge the basis of women's subordination. The literature review (3.2) shows this is typical of development practice elsewhere. The difference between what people say and do about gender in part can be attributed, in Cambodia and elsewhere, to the reduction of ‘gender’ to mean ‘women’, thereby not addressing the power relations between men and women.

This widespread tendency in development practice, to avoid issues of power which are inherent in transformational or development values, is described in the literature (see chapter 3.2). Rowlands (2003) argues that development agencies across the board can use the discourse of empowerment because this is pursued without addressing the fundamental issue of power. Similarly, PRA which is meant to embody development values such as participation and empowerment is criticised for its

failure to address power structures due to methodological inadequacies and assumptions of homogeneity in the community (Cooke & Kothari 2001; Guijt & Shah 1998b).

The third issue is the notion of the practitioners' intervention as separate, and having only its intended impact. By contrast, systems thinking conceptualises that an intervention into a complex situation invariably impacts on other parts of the system, due to the web of relationships and networks between the various actors or components. Complexity analysis suggests "that the interplay between rules and agents lead to emergent outcomes that are not simply predictable from understanding the individual actors alone" (Hinton & Groves 2004a:5).

Development work was also viewed by many practitioners to be separate from Buddhism/religion.

Oh, that's very true [religion doesn't connect or is not related to development], but I think that's due largely to the fact that local NGOs who depend on the largesse of international, that is, western NGOs who work in a completely secular sort of framework. And that's spilt over into the thinking and the learning curve and the way things are done with local NGOs. I would say that among the NGOs here less than 10%, maybe closer to 5% do try to work in a Buddhist community development sort of perspective. (KI:5:42)

While participants often said Buddhism was central to Cambodian identity, and particularly important for villagers, their associated beliefs and worldviews are not explicitly taken into account in development practice, although this may be accomplished unconsciously by Cambodian practitioners through their tacit knowledge and interpretation of situations.<sup>135</sup> One expatriate participant suggested that religious feeling is there but is so embedded and integrated in Cambodian culture that it is inherent in people's thinking and "it's not articulated as separate". Another participant likened this to Cambodians' expression of their feelings, which typically Cambodians do not talk about (particularly negative ones) although they are there (FFG1:P2:575).

The dominance of the international development discourse, along with Cambodian development practitioners' tendency to identify with the international community, was regarded by some as stifling the emergence of indigenous visions of development and identification of what is appropriate and applicable in the Cambodian context.

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<sup>135</sup> Despite the many positive aspects of Buddhism which are important for social development and development practice, the connection typically seems to be made only at a fairly superficial level. Over the years there have been waves of concern for particular vulnerable groups such as returnees, orphans, people living with AIDS, and different organisations have perceived a potential role for *nats* and monks in working with these groups. An expatriate participant interpreted his failure to get funding to research the role of Buddhism in the community — the response from 15-20 donors was that they did not fund religious studies — as an example of the lack of integration between development and religion.

Local NGOs do not draw on their own inner resources and strengths and ... project a vision of development of Cambodian society that, while not closed to the outside world, at least tries to work and develop as much as humanly possible on one's own terms. I think that that's just the result of the pernicious hold of international development discourses. (KI:5:238)

Practitioners' thinking, at the interface between development values and Cambodian traditional and cultural values, impacts on how NGO policy is translated into practice. This sub-section suggests that, although Cambodian NGOs and practitioners have not articulated an indigenous vision of development, actual practice is more consistent with traditional values than with the transformational values of the development discourse. This finding is consistent with the idea that the operationalisation of development policy is not a seamless transfer of policy intact from donor to NGO, NGO to practitioner, practitioner to villagers, as pre-supposed in project plans and designs, but is modified by each actor (Craig & Porter 1997). As mentioned in chapter 6.4 policy may serve to legitimate rather than drive practice (Mosse 2004).

In considering how development concepts and approaches are applied in Cambodia it is helpful to look at an analysis of how the notion of "universal" human rights has been applied and modified in Cambodia.<sup>136</sup> Ledgerwood and Kheang (2003) contend that there is an ongoing process of interchange between the global and local. The universal conceptions of human rights are given new, conceptually heterogeneous meanings to fit the context of Cambodian society. They state that some Cambodian human rights advocates argue that in the Cambodian context the legal and institutional aspects of human rights have to be supplemented with the enhancement of individual morality.

Widespread abuse of human rights is seen as the consequence of the breakdown of morality. Thus, respect for human rights can be achieved through the restoration of individual morality.... The idea that Cambodia has been in a long period of decline specifically because of a loss of individual morality is at the core of Buddhist cultural explanations of what has happened to them over the last twenty-five years. (Ledgerwood & Kheang 2003:14,19)

This focus on the promotion of human rights through the improvement of individual morality, and the internal transformation of one's behaviour rather than on the structural factors contributing to human rights abuses, corruption and impunity, relates to how the social order is perceived. Mulder argues that in Southeast Asian societies: "the threat to order, or good society, is seen to originate from individual people who do not know how to behave and accept their

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<sup>136</sup> Ledgerwood and Kheang (2003) state that human rights were introduced into Cambodia in 1992 with UNTAC.

place.... The issue is seldom discussed as a structural question, that of institutionalised poverty” (1996:190).

While the deeper social visions of human rights and Buddhism are regarded as compatible, the structures through which they attempt to achieve these visions are profoundly different and reflect different ways of seeing reality (Goldring n.d.). Whereas human rights are grounded in the use of judicial and legal mechanisms to achieve these rights, the Buddhist social vision is “one in which purity at the top [of the hierarchical society] is the primary agent of morality, ethics and social harmony.... The Buddha’s vision of social harmony is not one of setting structural limits on the exercise of absolute power; it is one of purifying the use of power, including absolute power so that it operates for the good” (n.d:3). Goldring contends that in Cambodia people have learned to speak the language of rights but it has not connected to their behaviour or beliefs. Ledgerwood and Kheang’s (2003) analysis suggests that the link to personal morality is an attempt to make this connection.

The interpretation and application of human rights principles depends on cultural norms as illustrated in the following example. Research in Cambodia reveals that violence against women is viewed not just as a matter of principle, whereby the rights of the victim have been violated, but is looked at within its context so that the character of the man and the behaviour of the victim are also taken into account (2004). Giles argues:

VAW [Violence against women] does not reflect only gender discrimination and oppression, it mirrors a greater social hegemony which is based on traditional cultural and religious systems such as: the right of the powerful to control and dominate the less powerful, the expectation that those positioned lower in the hierarchy should not challenge those higher than them, the contextual perspective of violence that depends on the behaviour and status of the victim and their relationship to their abuse. (2004:104)

Giles contends that development practitioners blame culture for problems such as abuse of women, but at the same time do not explicitly investigate culture and its impact or articulate what interventions are aiming for in relation to culture.

The fight for gender equality and the rights of women is not a challenge to culture but rather a challenge to the norms which exist as a perversion to culture and tradition. Khmer religion and cultural tradition does not advocate violence as a response or a strategy and yet this is the context in which much gender based violence occurs and it is this we are fighting to change. (Giles 2004:105)

### *Reflections on change*

There is ambivalence in some practitioners' thinking about social change and its desirability. Some participants appeared to conceptualise development interventions as value-free and contained in their effect, while others considered them as not impacting on culture. This suggests views which are not systemic, and in which change is functional rather than transformative. Good change applies to those aspects of culture which the practitioners consider to be not progressive. The international discourse has largely been introduced as if its underlying values apply universally, which has resulted in a lack of processes to discern the Cambodian values which have enabled Cambodians to flourish.

### **7.2.5 Incongruence, compartmentalisation, integration**

This subsection explores how Cambodian practitioners manage the fit between personal, development, NGO and cultural and religious values when these are not in agreement. The gap between espoused theory (consistent with development values of the international discourse) and in-use theory might be considered, firstly, as incongruence. Secondly, what an outsider may perceive to be incongruence may not be perceived as such by the individual. Different responses or actions at different times in different places may not be regarded as incongruence, simply that under different circumstances it is necessary to do different things.

One expatriate participant suggested that Cambodian practitioners dealt with dissonance between what is said and done by dichotomising change. "There was good change which was economic or modernisation and bad change which was things that threatened social, cultural norms" (FFG:2:P4:151). This resonates with my research findings. For example, it was widely agreed that changing harmful health practices by educating people about the efficacy of "scientific" understandings of disease rather than beliefs in spirits is good and appropriate change.

### *Incongruence*

As described in chapter 6.4 I encountered — from my perspective — several examples of incongruence such as the following. The staff of the participating NGO stated that to be successful it is essential to follow the villagers' ideas and that they did this. They had listened to what the villagers were saying about a particular problem. They wrote a project proposal and decided what should be done to solve the problem. In this case their solution was to set up village associations to do advocacy, and they argued that this is what the villagers wanted to do. In practice however, practitioners said that villagers do not have the time or interest to form



associations. They are too busy. What they want is the NGO to give them material assistance to help them in their lives now. The NGO staff maintain that forming associations is what the villagers want to do and they contend they are following the villagers, even though they are finding it difficult to get the villagers to participate in their project.

From my perspective there is incongruity. On the one hand is the idea of self-determination and respect for the villagers' ideas. On the other the NGO decided on the solution and expected the villagers to follow because it is what the practitioners believe is good and right as a sustainable solution. For that group of participants there appeared to be no contradiction. Their position appeared to derive from the above process of reasoning or justification, based on the following underlying assumptions. Firstly, their belief that development has not happened in the village because the villagers lack ideas and information. Secondly, because they studied the situation and development they know what needs to be done. Thirdly, as their intention is good their plan is good, and fourthly, they are doing what the villagers want because it will improve their lives. When the above example was presented to an expatriate focus group one participant suggested, and others agreed, that this process of reasoning and re-interpreting information to justify what you want to do was not something particular to Cambodian practitioners but something they also do.

The question arises as to whether acknowledgment of dissonance between espoused and in-use theory is useful in the Cambodian context. As discussed in chapter 4, Argyris and Schön (1974) contend that when incongruity is exposed dissonance is created and the resulting discomfort motivates the person to address the inconsistency. This is debatable, firstly in the light of different cultural abilities for "cognitive tolerance". People in some cultures have the ability to hold "more than one system of cause-effect relationships" (Carr et al. 1998:179). The universal application of cognitive dissonance theory and the experience of discomfort as providing the impetus for change is challenged by studies that indicate dissonance is culturally based. Do Cambodian practitioners experience inconsistency? The question of dissonance may apply primarily to the gap between the values of development theory and those of the personal, social and cultural lived experience of practitioners, rather than to a gap between theory and practice (J. McAndrew, personal communication, September 2005).

First of all I think Khmer culture has a huge capacity to hold competing ideas simultaneously and that's been my experience — that there's a great capacity to do that. (FFG:2:103)

But to me there isn't that perception of competing ideas — but rather this is suitable now and then it's suitable a different way here, and here we do it a bit differently and there's no necessary correlation between those, but it works in different situations.... Whatever you think you need to do. (FFG:1:P5:116)

Cambodian participants frequently mentioned the necessity of being flexible. In terms of practitioners coming with ideas and villagers having their own ideas (maybe compounded by donors' ideas also impinging on the mix) the common response of Cambodian participants in the focus groups was that the two have to learn from each other and seek a middle way.

The second factor is the tension between value priorities. Practitioners generally, not only Cambodians, can tolerate or hold various principles or values which are prioritised differently in different circumstances at different times, as one applies what is deemed to be appropriate. This is consistent with the notion of hierarchies of values which are context specific as outlined in chapter 3.1. For example, getting the job done versus listening and facilitating a process, suggests that while both are valued they are hierarchically ordered within a specific context. The promotion of participation is based on the belief that the individual's right to take part in decision-making is a better model than respect for and acceptance of hierarchical authority. There is a tension between the practitioners' role as an agent of change — to intervene and improve the situation of their target group according to the knowledge and skills developed from their training (the imposition of outside models and ideas) — and valuing the villagers' knowledge and capacity. Practitioners may (un)consciously reject development values and work in a way they perceive to be culturally appropriate, regardless of the theory. At times official NGO policy may also embrace incongruity. For example, a policy for self-help groups may prioritise self-determination but “if the village group said they want money ... we tell them, no sorry, we don't do that. Try again, wrong answer.... That's a hard thing for the Cambodians to cope [with] ... yes — but not yes, and where the rules actually are” (KI:2:385).

The importance of naming value priorities for development goals and approaches and articulating how these are to be put into practice, including what it means for the practitioner's own attitudes and behaviours, is central to “walking the talk”. Greater congruity is assumed to improve effectiveness. For this to be meaningful a frank assessment of the organisational, political, economic, social and cultural obstacles to putting ideals into practice is essential. This is discussed in chapter 8.

### *Compartmentalisation*

Some expatriate participants described the separation of development from culture, tradition and religion as “compartmentalisation”. One expatriate focus group suggested that development was regarded as a project, separate to culture, whereby development work may be conceived simply as task to be carried out by the practitioner. The intervention is perceived as something that “stands alone”. Expatriate focus group members felt this tendency to compartmentalise was true for both expatriates and Cambodian practitioners, and was regarded to be the consequence of differing expectations and social pressures.<sup>137</sup>

There were many indications that what practitioners did in their work life was separate from what they considered acceptable or desirable in their personal life. For example, one expatriate focus group member related a review workshop with health staff involved in HIV/AIDS education. While the staff went into villages and spoke to young unmarried women about condoms and safe behaviours they did not want NGOs to come to their neighbourhood and talk to their own daughters about such things. Similarly, practitioners promoted villagers speaking out and demanding services. When they spoke about problems in their own neighbourhoods almost all stated that it was the responsibility of the local authorities to solve the problem.

Theories about holistic human development suggest a systems perspective can engender approaches that address the multi-dimensionality of poverty and engage with the interlocking systems of exclusion and power which perpetuate it.

### *Integration*

It has been recognised that new ideas and theoretical concepts are introduced into Cambodia and other developing countries without, firstly, questioning the universality of the concept, secondly, taking time to look at what is there in Cambodian understandings and making connections or thirdly, identifying Khmer words or phrases to achieve meaning equivalence.

Different concepts and theories evolve over time and are then introduced into countries like Cambodia despite that fact that the context in which the theory was developed is radically different.

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<sup>137</sup> One foreigner articulated compartmentalisation as follows: “I prefer the idea that actually we all have it, and that we live quite comfortably with it... That we all operate like this in separate rooms. [A woman relating] ... the example of a ... bishop who had been sexually abusing children — but who was the most brilliant theologian and preacher that she’d ever heard, and could really minister to his people.... The idea of being able to live here and here quite comfortably and not actually have some kind of conflict within.... It’s the same for us. We all live comfortably in Phnom Penh with our housekeepers and our whatever and whatever, and live with 90% poverty on our doorstep kind of thing. And of course we don’t live comfortably with that all the time, but we do live with it and have ways of justifying it to ourselves” (FFG:1:P4:187).

You know the international community ... on a decade by decade basis tends to ... focus on some overarching theme or discourse. In the ... 90s the buzz word has been building civil society structures and processes and so on. The trouble with that is ... it comes out of the historical experience of civil society emerging in Europe by the middle classes against the absolutist State, and then the big industrial economies and so on.... It's sort of a middle-class phenomenon ... where the disconnect occurs is that the civil society discourse when this is transferred here [Cambodia] it assumes that we need to transform the villagers into good middle-class consumers and so it implicitly embraces what we call the neo-liberal agenda. (KI:5:136)

Examples of development concepts which do not have cultural resonance are identifiable by the use of English terms or Khmer phrases which fail to convey the appropriate meaning. One example of this is empowerment which is typically translated in Khmer as “*p’dol omnach*”. Literally meaning to “give power to” it is problematic as power is usually envisaged in Cambodia as “power over” (O’Leary & Meas 2001). One expatriate Khmer speaking participant said her attempts to find a meaningful translation led to a phrase with the literal meaning: “internal change of the heart to give confidence to” (KI:1:151). Finding words that have realistic and cultural resonance for development practice can be difficult.

The idea of democratic participation in decision-making historically has not been characteristic of Cambodian culture, yet participation is talked about by all in the sector as though we all share a common understanding. Beyond clarification of meaning is the exploration of what it would mean for the practitioner to embody the value in her or his practice, consideration of how receptive villagers might be and why, and the development of appropriate processes to engage in a meaningful way with people’s lived experience.

### *Conclusion*

Focus group participants expressed the view that there has been insufficient integration of the ideas and concepts of international development discourse with the cultural, social, political and economic lived experience in Cambodian society. This derives primarily from the assumption of the universal applicability of development concepts and values. The need to facilitate exploration and articulation of issues at the interface between development interventions and peoples’ lived experience is apparent. This facilitation depends on the practitioners/trainers’ own understandings of the meaning of development, recognition of the relevance of Cambodian social realities and their ability to facilitate such discussions.

What actually happens in making the fit between development and cultural values, and deciding what is good and right, appears to be an unconscious process. As a result, religion, culture and tradition were seen by some Cambodian participants to be separate from development. Some participants said this lack of integration created the feeling that development was being imported. The context of aided development is complex and multi-faceted. However, the conceptualisation of the situation is often simplified to make the problem appear manageable. There is a dilemma for some practitioners as agents of change who feel concern that change in Cambodia culture and tradition will result in the loss of Khmer identity, which is regarded as undesirable. Difficulty is experienced in articulating the aspects of Cambodian culture which are positive. For the most part these have not been explicitly or consciously integrated into practice.

The next chapter examines the issues involved in applying the espoused theoretical development knowledge, skills and values to interventions in uncertain, changing and complex Cambodian village situations.

## **CHAPTER 8    APPLICABILITY OF DEVELOPMENT VALUES, KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS**

### **8.1 Introduction**

Good intentions and the expression of common objectives and processes have contributed to the assumption that those working within the NGO development sector have a similar value base and behave accordingly. Practitioners are at the interface in the application of development theories and NGO policies into actual practice in rural Cambodia and must juggle a range of competing expectations and demands.

The literature review suggests that an individual is likely to carry out a particular behaviour if she or he has the intention to do so. This is determined by their attitudes towards the behaviour and its likely consequences, in conjunction with their personal norms (their belief that it is right and ought to be) and the norms of significant others (Kristiansen & Hotte 1996). For development practice this suggests that, to operationalise a development concept or NGO policy, an individual must believe that the expected consequences of the behaviour are desirable and have the support of significant others. The latter includes the various stakeholders such as NGOs, 'recipients' and donors, framed by the broader political and economic context. It is already established that policies are not passed intact from the NGO to the practitioner's interventions. The practitioner must interpret how things are to be done, balancing, for example, the NGO's espoused value of empowering the poor with the expectation that the practitioner will comply with project plans and time schedules.

In this chapter I explore the implications of the findings from chapters 6 and 7 with the aim of understanding how the gap between what is espoused and what is actually done might be bridged, assuming that increased congruence leads to improved effectiveness. I look at some aspects of knowledge, skills and values which are considered inherently good in the international (human) development discourse in relation to their application or operationalisation in the Cambodian socio-cultural milieu. This raises the question as to whether certain aspects of development knowledge, skills and values are universally applicable in development practice.

I first look at the challenges in conceptualising the values construct and identifying a Khmer vocabulary to talk about them. This is a fundamental step in establishing values as constitutive of development practice, along with knowledge and skills. I suggest that the clear articulation of values may reduce the extent to which practice is driven by unconscious and un-named valuing. I

have argued earlier that equality underpins all development theories, concepts and approaches. If the individual is to enact the espoused approaches then the values of justice, participation, empowerment and gender equity must be embraced and prioritised. Considerations of how this is to be achieved must take account of the organisational imperatives, political constraints, the hierarchical nature of Cambodian society and a range of other socio-cultural norms that influence practitioners' value priorities in specific circumstances.

The second section looks at development theory in relation to development practice. I suggest that the design of development interventions must consider the Cambodian political, economic, social and cultural norms and practices, and the uncertain, changing complexity of situations encountered in practice, alongside development theory and concepts. The knowledge of clearly articulated strategies which embody the values and the likely obstacles to putting new models of being into practice is essential. I then look at self-knowledge and the use of one's self as a tool in the development relationship.

Finally I examine practice skills. I focus on the skills involved in facilitating just, participatory, gender equitable and empowering processes, and in reflection and learning from practice. Knowing about the practice skills and enacting them are two very different things. Enactment requires a valuing of the skills, knowledge of how to operationalise them and a supportive organisational and political environment.

## **8.2 Practice values**

### **8.2.1 Introduction**

For this study to be relevant to improving development practice there must be an understanding of the relation between values and behaviour. The literature review provides evidence that our behaviour, at least in part, is driven by our (in-use) values. Training for development practice has addressed knowledge and skills but neglected values, both those underpinning the knowledge and skills and of practitioners themselves. Values have been regarded as constitutive of social work practice since its beginnings (Reamer 1999:134). Core values include service, social justice, dignity and worth of the person, importance of human relationships, integrity and competence (1999:26-27). By contrast, western development theory and a practice model focused on technical solutions to people's poverty — in the diverse fields of health, water and sanitation, education, infrastructure development and community development — have previously disregarded the role of the development relationship in the realisation of developmental outcomes, although this is changing,

as discussed later in this chapter. The relationship has been seen as instrumental to rather than constitutive of development. In the pursuit of technical solutions there has been little notion of the practitioner as a tool in developmental processes. Section 2 of the literature review reveals how unacknowledged and unchallenged in-use values can hijack good theories and intentions.

NGOs are value-based organisations, and these values are expressed in the features which characterise their comparative advantage in the development sector, as discussed in chapter 3.3. Their ‘reason for being’ characteristically centres on issues of justice. Organisational culture may reflect incongruity between largely unspoken values hierarchies, such as the tension between organisational survival and meeting donor demands, and pro-poor policies and participatory practices. This impacts on practitioners’ in-use values.

### **8.2.2 Values concept**

As previously discussed, talking about values is difficult everywhere, including Cambodia. If the discernment of values and their influence is to be more conscious and applicable to improving practice, it is essential to find appropriate Khmer words. The result of using an English word which does not have a Khmer equivalent is that the concept remains vague. The words are used as if the contextualised meaning is understood and shared. This problem is evident when the English term appears in Khmer discussions, usually indicating there is no commonly used equivalent in Khmer. Despite their problematic nature Cambodian NGO practitioners do talk about NGO and development values. As discussed in chapter 7.2 there is a need to identify the values that are desirable for a good life, as well as how they are to be actualised.

### **8.2.3 The role of personal and socio-cultural values**

Cambodian research participants suggested that in Cambodia moral behaviour is dictated by the social order. Discussions throughout the fieldwork revealed that Cambodian behaviour is strongly influenced by societal expectations. To behave correctly or morally requires compliance with the socio-cultural mores, representing the opinions of the majority. As parents participants wanted their children to be accepted by society, as “a person cannot live alone”. The idea of individuals adhering to values regardless of social norms was said to be uncommon. There may be tensions between personal values and the values embodied in social expectations regarding moral behaviour. A number of Cambodian participants suggested that the idea that values guide or influence attitudes and behaviours is distorted in Cambodia because behaviour is more strongly influenced by social expectations than personal values. Hence some Cambodian research



participants said behaviour does not necessarily reflect a person's values but what she or he views to be a social necessity. This may also result from the person's historical experience of learning to behave in certain ways to survive horrendous political regimes.

If morality is socially determined and the repercussions for 'immoral' behaviour are too great then individuals feel they have no viable option but to comply. They may not value that specific behaviour but they value being accepted by society more. This suggests that behaviour may influence attitudes and values more than the reverse in the Cambodian context. On the basis of her research Arensen (n.d.) concludes that values are mandated by Cambodian society rather than personally chosen. That is, personally chosen values are not given the status of actual values by Cambodians. Good or appropriate behaviour is always used when it reflects cultural or traditional values.<sup>138</sup> I would argue that participants' responses indicated that fitting in and being accepted is more highly valued than asserting oneself and risking adverse reactions. The 'anti-social' behaviour of some Cambodian youth (as for young people elsewhere) indicates a preference for non-traditional modes of conduct.

Personal values are influenced by the socio-political environment. For example, the person who has opportunity to benefit through dishonesty but remains honest is not necessarily admired or respected, and may even be viewed as stupid because they did not make the most of their opportunity. Endemic corruption in Cambodia has, on one level, weakened the value of honesty. Honesty is valued *per se*, but not when you and your family miss out.

The notion that behaving correctly in accordance with the in-use values of society is more important than what one thinks personally is right was also related to the importance of the appearance of everything being smooth and ordered, which reflects the values of face and harmony. Behaving in a socially acceptable (conservative) way to preserve one's face may restrain a person from taking action to promote social change.<sup>139</sup>

One is polite and gives respect to one's superior not just because it is necessary and expected, but also because such face norms have been internalised and constitute a key element of a person's sense of self. Moreover, face is directly related to duty,

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<sup>138</sup> "Values both come from [what] is mandated by your tradition and your society, and from what you personally choose and claim. And my hunch is that the Khmer don't agree. The ones you personally choose and claim aren't considered actual values ... when people talked about what they thought was good behaviour or appropriate behaviour it ... always comes back to what they consider according to Khmer tradition, according to Khmer culture" (KI:1:89).

<sup>139</sup> "Face is the self-image one asserts in given contexts, depending on the evaluations of and esteem accorded by self and other" (Hinton 2005:252). Face is indicative of an individual's place in the social order and this position is negotiated during interactions. Evaluation of a person's face determines the respect or honour given to them by others. If a person has face then they will have honour.

since a person gains or maintains face by properly carrying out his or her status tasks. (Hinton 2005:255)

It was suggested by a number of participants that what one does is more important than what one believes, at least partially because identity is socially defined. This is supported by the literature about the interdependent self in collectivist societies who is encouraged from childhood to see one's self and derive meaning by reference to the thoughts, feelings and actions of one's family and community, rather than to view the self as independent (see chapter 3.1). This construal of self as either inter- or independent has also been related to different processes of moral reasoning.

The ethic of justice which focuses on the rational application of principles, rights and rules is more frequently used by those with independent self orientations, whereas the ethic of care which gives greater emphasis to responsibility, relationships and context is associated with the interdependent self (Kristiansen & Hotte 1996). The example given in chapter 7 regarding human rights and domestic violence indicates that Cambodians may appraise a situation by considering the nature of the relationship between those involved and the circumstances, rather than the context-free application of principles. It would take a detailed study to ascertain the relative importance of relationships and principles, and the consequence of these on values and behaviour in development practice. However, whereas the ethic of justice suggests that values influence behaviour, the ethics of care suggests that behaviour is influenced by social expectations and relationships, which is the case in many societies.

The question arises as to whether behaving in accordance with socio-cultural expectations and in-use values is experienced as being inconsistent with espoused development values. The individual may not experience incongruence or inconsistency (if the latter are given a lower priority) but may simply regard this as appropriate and necessary under the circumstances. Discussions most commonly indicated that values are more contingent on the situation than on what an individual considered to be intrinsically right or wrong, good or bad. Although to an outsider these might appear to be incongruent, to the individual they are consistent.

The other possibility is that people can hold apparently competing ideas and this does not create dissonance. As previously mentioned, Cambodian participants often emphasised the importance of finding "the middle way". It seems to me that this enables practitioners to negotiate competing expectations. However, if the pursuit of development values is to be given higher priority — therefore increasing the possibility of conflict and confrontation — these issues require further discussion among Cambodian practitioners, as well as clarification regarding aims for functional or

structural change. The research suggests that in the workplace Cambodian practitioners may not think much about values and simply follow instructions. This was attributed to their past experience of trauma and learning how to survive violent and authoritarian regimes. Personal safety and security remains a key consideration in investigating if and how practice is to be more transformatory.

The genesis of Cambodian NGOs is also relevant to the discussion of values as this is regarded as a contributing factor to the lack of clarity regarding non-government, not-for-profit organisational values. As noted in chapter 3.3 many Cambodian NGOs originated as a response to opportunities and not necessarily from a passion to address injustices in their society, although certainly not all. Some research participants observed that gender exemplified this issue, in that many Cambodian practitioners (at least in past years) regarded this as a foreign concept rather than an issue of injustice in Cambodian society.

#### **8.2.4 Whose values/beliefs?**

Participants argued that the international community mostly came (and come) into Cambodia with preconceived ideas of what was needed and how things should be. They did not value or seriously try to understand what was pre-existing. It was suggested that Cambodian NGOs and practitioners identify with the international development community, are constrained by funding that requires them to work in certain ways and deliver certain outputs and hence have not explored indigenous ways of achieving development outcomes.

Some Cambodian managers and trainers expressed concern that practitioners use their discretion or impose their personal beliefs on villagers without following NGO policy or consulting the villagers once they are away from the scrutiny of the organisation. At worst it is feared that some practitioners regard the villagers as ignorant and think, paternalistically, of themselves as bringing development to the villagers. The literature indicates this is true of practitioners elsewhere (Dominelli 2005; Terry 2002).

If development practice is to embody participatory, empowering values then some Cambodian values consistent with the Cambodian social, cultural, political and economic context are seen to be in tension with these practices. For example, there is a clash between the expected behaviour of a person with knowledge and resources and the respect and active listening expected of practitioners working with people who are poor. As discussed earlier, respect and active listening are premised on a belief that villagers have capacity, whereas poverty may be understood to be

indicative of their inability to help themselves or others and is linked to broader religio-cultural beliefs about poverty. For the practitioner, demonstrating one's knowledge may be important in establishing one's credibility as a leader, which may be in conflict with egalitarian and gender equitable behaviours. These cultural tensions are not easily resolved by individuals.

In a similar vein, mutual expectations between the practitioner and villager means that values such as the right of each individual to decide for themselves, a belief in people's capability, and humility to listen and learn from "lowers" cannot be taken for granted. These values would be conducive to the enactment of skills such as establishing non-hierarchical relationships, active listening, facilitation of open-ended processes, and reflection on and learning from experience. My own experience is that working in participatory ways is a continuous struggle to address power differentials. The literature reveals that hierarchical practices, even by those claiming to be egalitarian, are widespread.

PRA is often given as an example of practice, both in this research and in the literature, where a key stumbling block is not the theory or the approach but its operationalisation merely as a method of data extraction. PRA exemplifies the impact of introducing value-based processes without taking into account existing expectations and behaviours and examining how to inculcate the required value change at both the organisational and personal levels. It was suggested by an expatriate participant that conceptualising development as change management is helpful whereby development is bringing new ideas and values into a system and if change is to happen and be maintained it requires the creation of enough support within the system.

### **8.3 Practice knowledge**

This section discusses knowledge regarding NGO policy, development theory, the social, cultural, economic and political context of Cambodia, and how policy and theory can be operationalised in this milieu. As discussed in chapter 3.2 the perception of development practice as a value-free technical intervention has resulted in the over-simplification of complex situations whereby only 'relevant' aspects are taken into account in the conceptualisation of the plan and execution of development interventions. This is also linked to the analytical approach, which separates the whole into its component parts. Participants suggested that simplification, for example, by compartmentalising things, is a coping strategy that enables practitioners to deal with a very complex situation without being overwhelmed.

### **8.3.1 Knowledge of Cambodian context**

Chapter 2 describes the social, cultural, political and economic context of present-day Cambodia. It is not only the knowledge of what is “out there” which is important but also practitioners’ awareness of how this impacts on what is within them, their own emotions and coping mechanisms. One such example is Cambodians’ experience of conflict and trauma and how this influences people’s responses and behaviour. In looking at values, attitudes and behaviours, what can be attributed to culture or to trauma is difficult to ascertain. For example, people not daring to give their opinion can be attributed to hierarchy and people’s experience of authoritarian rule, but could be reinforced by people’s experience of trauma. Throughout the interviews and focus groups, participants often spoke about people who are poor as being lazy and not helping themselves. The possibility of people’s inertia being due to trauma was rarely given as a reason by Cambodian practitioners.

Another aspect of knowledge which influences, and is influenced by, attitudes and values is whether poverty is understood to result from structural causes or individual problems. Linkages are made between poverty, personal morality and laziness. Associated with this is the kind of change one envisages: structural/transformational or functional.

### **8.3.2 Knowledge of development theory in view of the intervention context**

In development discourse there is now an understanding of the multi-dimensionality of poverty (Chambers 1983, 1997b; Narayan et al. 2000b) and this demands a complex, multi-pronged response. At the same time, the limits to the power of the individual practitioner and small NGOs to bring about change must be recognised. A critical review of what can be expected of community development practitioners — which shifts the development relationship to a more prominent role — is needed to provide more clarity about what change is being espoused.

A dominant theoretical framework for development practice is the rights based approach, a central tenet of which is that people are citizens with rights to a decent life. This implies achieving greater control over the decisions that affect their lives as well as access to the necessary resources. In theory the aim is for transformational change in the structures which impoverish people, as well as transformation in the attitudes and behaviour of people who are poor and powerless. A sound knowledge of the social order, of the (hierarchical) nature of relationships and the penetration of democracy in Cambodia can explicate what might facilitate or obstruct rights based development work. As discussed in chapter 3 this move to rights based practice is problematic when not

grounded in lived realities such as the government being neither receptive nor responsive to public opinion. A number of participants were concerned with NGOs' increasing focus on rights awareness and the provision of information, arguing that this approach to empowerment is inadequate if separated from economic and social rights. It is argued, for example, that improvement in women's economic situation is a necessary component of women's empowerment as their involvement in decision-making was seen to be problematic if they are economically dependent on men.

In pursuit of their democratisation and good governance agenda donors in Cambodia have in recent years directed funding away from material-based projects and encouraged their NGO "partners" to engage in advocacy. This is indicative of donors using NGOs as instruments to achieve their policies and practitioners having to change their approach regardless of concerns about its efficacy. Likewise, international NGOs providing funding to local NGOs have terms and conditions which they expect their "partners" to comply with, as this conforms to their ideas about good practice. As NGOs have adjusted their vocabulary, goals and activities it is clear that there is a gap between the NGO aims and the villagers' needs, at least in the short-term.<sup>140</sup> From participants' descriptions, many villagers still want to be given material inputs (loans or wells) to solve their immediate needs. This expectation is consistent with a social safety net that is built on patronage and reinforced by political leaders providing things such as schools as 'gifts' rather than providing basic services as a citizen's right.

(Community) development theory assumes that the establishment of community organisations will lead to an increase in social capital (Inglehart & Norris 2003). It embraces inclusion and caring and promotes a collective response to communal problems. As discussed elsewhere, this is in conflict with the participants' assertions that Cambodians today are self-interested and care only for themselves and their families, along with the strong notion of self-reliance and the emphasis on the individual needing to struggle and work hard. The actual operationalising of community development strategies to strengthen community or social capital is often vague, and perhaps undermined by expectations of selfishness over cooperation and altruism.

Practitioners' understandings of the concept of sustainability and how to achieve it is sometimes blurred, in that the perpetuation of project activities becomes the end rather than the means to

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<sup>140</sup> An example of the problematic nature of donor demands is the expectation of sustainable programs, which are generally not feasible if the NGO target groups are very poor, disabled, older or sick people requiring welfare assistance in an environment where government does not provide basic welfare support.

strengthening sustainable capacity. Capacity building of organisational leadership is a key sustainability strategy which is believed to lead to communities being better able to manage problems and change when the NGO withdraws. From my experience and field observations a major factor impacting this strategy is the withdrawal of many trained committee members or representatives when the benefits of their involvement does not compensate the time lost in meeting the subsistence needs of their families. Focusing capacity building efforts on the leaders while neglecting the broader membership also risks concentrating knowledge and power in the hands of a select few.

Participation is a core development concept and value which, as already discussed, is ubiquitously espoused across the development sector. Participation is fundamental to the enactment of empowerment and requires more than good intentions. Practitioners need a conceptual understanding of the goal and processes, and the skills to facilitate the latter. It is only when empowerment is clearly defined that it becomes possible to think about the process of empowerment and how it might be enhanced in a particular context (Rowlands 1997).

Empowerment can be conceived as having four dimensions: “The cognitive (critical understanding of one’s reality), the psychological (feeling of self-esteem), the political (awareness of power inequalities and the ability to organize and mobilize) and the economic (capacity to generate independent income)” (Molyneux & Lazar 2003:51).

My observations and discussions of field practice indicated that practitioners want village people to be empowered but were often uncertain about how that can be achieved. Some common development activities frequently have a desired outcome of empowerment as well as economic improvement, for example, credit activities. It has become evident that if the focus of facilitation is on the ‘things’ which are provided, for example, the loan, rather than on relationships and group processes, the end result is more likely to be dependency than empowerment. Rowlands (1997) stresses the facilitation of understanding, or conscientisation and self-analysis, rather than the delivery of facts. This is based on the understanding that it is the process of self-realisation itself which is empowering. However, without an analysis of power, development practice itself can exercise power over the ‘recipients’ rather than facilitate participants to develop their power from within, power to, or power with. The development sector’s avoidance and/or neglect of power analysis as the fundamental basis of empowerment is widely documented (Hinton & Groves 2004a; Rowlands 1997; Townsend et al. 1999).

Some practitioners recognised that people who are poor and marginalised may have internalised the status given to them by others. To facilitate the process of (women's) empowerment Rowlands argues that "the methodology needs to be based on an attitude of complete respect for the women involved" and "in no way collude with the 'internalised oppression' that women carry" (1997:134). Other values/attitudes required are belief in the villagers' capacity, humility, flexibility, commitment to the process and "an eagerness for learning to be mutual" (p.135). The practitioner needs to be self-reflective in order to assess their enactment of these values. This is discussed in the following section.

### 8.3.3 Emotional demands of practice

Chapter 6.3 described some of the challenges facing practitioners in Cambodia. Development theories typically ignore the emotional and psychological issues within practice although Vaux argues that "aid work is essentially emotional" (Vaux 2001:70). This disregard can again be attributed at least in part to seeing development as the provision of technical solutions to what are essentially human problems, rather than an engagement involving values and emotions.

As previously discussed an ethical dilemma confronting all practitioners is whether or not to give, even from personal resources, when asked by someone in need. In Cambodia there is a strong expectation that those who have will help those who do not (and in the process earn merit). In development, 'giving' has come to be seen as creating dependency as opposed to the development goals of empowerment and self-reliance. The appropriateness or otherwise of giving, pity and compassion in development practice is contested by Cambodian practitioners. Some argued that pity and compassion were inappropriate and that it was important for practitioners to control their feelings; otherwise, to avoid discomfort and dis-ease, they will avoid working with people who are poor. Vaux (2001) describes how practitioners' lack of self-awareness results in unconscious personal motives interacting with practical responses so that they are prevented from responding with impartiality to the person in need. This includes awareness of the role and place of these emotions in development practice.

The cultural tendency or 'correctness' to suppress negative emotions such as anger and frustration, as well as lacking the words or skills to express such emotions, is recognised as causing difficulty for practitioners. The knowledge and skills to deal with conflict, both with others and within one's self, are important and often neglected in development practice.



#### 8.3.4 Knowledge of the practitioner's role and the development relationship

I focus on two aspects. First is knowledge of the development relationship, and particularly its role in relation to culturally conditioned ways of relating and practitioners' beliefs about the development of people and their role in this. Second is knowledge about the conscious use of self, and I explore the knowledge or awareness of one's motivations, power, reactions and vulnerability in engaging in the development relationship.

##### *The development relationship*

Some of the literature argues, and this is supported by my observations, that the development relationship is fundamental to developmental processes and development itself. If this is so, what characterises the relationship between Cambodian practitioners and those they work with? I argue the purpose of the relationship is not merely technical delivery, but is to embody the desirable values and be purposive. A rigorous exposition of this relationship has not been established in development practice. I would argue that its central role is similar to the "helping relationship" in social work practice, whereby the practitioner consciously uses her or himself to establish "a specialized kind of goal-directed connection with another person" (Brill 1990:89) for the purpose of effectively serving and providing what the NGO espouses to offer in enabling people to realise their capabilities to do and be what they value.

To operationalise human development theory, the interaction between the practitioner and the villager is where a villager could and should be able to experience being valued as a human being of equal worth (equality in the sense of being a worthy person, not in terms of pay, education, clothes or other material things) and regarded with dignity and respect. Empowerment, participation and gender equality can be enacted in this relationship. (Human) development theory implicitly assumes practitioners value, accept and respect people who are poor and marginalised. This more egalitarian and mutually respectful quality of interaction should likewise characterise relationships within the NGO, that is, their practice of internal democracy (Molyneux & Lazar 2003).

However, the knowledge, skills and values of the international development discourse which has dominated the rhetoric of development in Cambodia has not, and does not, engage deeply with or understand the potential tension with the norms, practices and values of the socio-cultural reality. When this reality is considered, the application of ideals inherent in the practitioner – villager

relationship for developmental practice is problematic. The idealised behaviour envisaged in an 'equal' development practitioner – villager interaction runs counter to socio-cultural expectations.

Cambodian participants often said they “tried to be like family” in their relationships with villagers. Differentiating between relationships among family and friends and the 'professional' relationship is important. Its purposeful nature must be clarified so that the effort to be close and build a relationship of trust and confidence is balanced with the objectives to be achieved through the relationship. Clarity regarding the nature of the relationship would provide the the possibility for practitioners to reflect on their own attitudes and behaviours towards villagers and address the gratitude and respect shown by the villagers appropriately. This begs the question of what is 'appropriate' and effective in the Cambodian context, and whether the relationship I have described is universally applicable. Understanding villagers' perceptions of development and the development relationship is an area for future research. What is beyond contention is that human development is facilitated in the context of human relationships.

#### *Conditioned ways of relating*

Two main factors emerged which have implications for the establishment of developmental relationships and the enactment of developmental processes. First is the culturally conditioned ways of relating between people of different status in Cambodia. This concerns inequality in the relationship and the power differential between development practitioners and villagers.

Asymmetry exists because the practitioner has something to offer which the 'client' wants to receive. It is clear that both parties understand they are at different levels (*tnult*) and this is reflected by the choice of speech registers and non-verbal patterns of behaviour.<sup>141</sup> Inequality, gratitude and dependency are intertwined.

Practitioners' ideas about the development relationship are influenced by the way people of higher status in Cambodia typically respond to people of lower status. Chapter 2 describes how children are taught from birth the essential inequality in society. The use of appropriate pronouns and other verbal patterns as well as a range of non-verbal behaviours demonstrate how an inferior gives respect to a social superior such as sitting lower, not looking directly at them, not touching them, *sampeah* (that is, greeting with the palms of the hands pressed together) with hands raised to a high

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<sup>141</sup> Practitioners find it difficult to position themselves in relation to villagers in terms of their status or power (O'Leary & Meas 2001). In an exercise designed to explore status differences in the community, some practitioners placed themselves below the villagers in status, some gave themselves equal status and others put themselves at a higher level. Confusion may reflect what some practitioners felt were “socially desired responses” in the development context whereas others responded based on what they actually felt.

level and so on. Relationships between people are negotiated and structured according to their relative “age, gender, familial background, ethnicity, birth order, occupation, political influence, power, education, benevolence, religious piety and personal character” (Hinton 2005:186). Some participants suggested that in Cambodian culture the usual tendency is that a person should have respect for those with higher status, whereas interactions with people below you are characterised by pity and compassion. A number of participants spoke of how they themselves were “looked down on” by others when they were poor. Whether or not people of higher status can respect someone of lower status, and if this is significant for the development relationship, was contested. Awareness of the dynamics is important.

Chapter 6 explores equality and the popular understanding in Cambodian culture that human beings are not of equal worth. From the perspective of many Cambodians, ranked status differences are “natural” and, as discussed in the context chapter, interpretations of Cambodian Buddhism regard this as a moral hierarchy whereby a person’s place in the social order is indicative of her or his relative store of merit.<sup>142</sup> Scholars have argued that, while Cambodians may often resent the power of people with higher status and having to defer to them, relationships of dependency are valued because they provide order and protection and the possibility of improving one’s life (Hinton 2005; Marston 1997; Meas 2000). Hierarchical relationships of patronage are not necessarily regarded as ‘bad’ but as providing a “sunshade” or protection in an unpredictable world.

There are various understandings as to whether equality is possible or desirable. These range from equality is possible but “we have to put ourselves down”, to the impossibility of equality because villagers will always perceive practitioners to have a higher status. In this cultural context what relational norms are appropriate for effective practice? Should/could the development relationship model different behaviour which reflects and embodies ‘development’ values? Could the desired development outcomes be achieved by a different relationship? One source of power and authority (*bon amnach* or “merit power/authority”) comes from piety and ethical behaviour (Hinton 2005:104; see Giles 2004). Respect is given to people who demonstrate good morality or proper

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<sup>142</sup> One expatriate participant (KI:1) argued that particular (mis)understandings of karma (the acceptance of fate based on the idea that a person gets what they deserve according to their karma) can potentially obstruct the workings of compassion.

behaviour, regardless of their status, in recognition of their honour (*ketteyas*),<sup>143</sup> not because of their power over others.

Given the impossibility of equality some Cambodian participants suggested that equality is not the issue, instead practitioners should be polite, humble and understand the situation of poor people. Chambers (1997b) has written extensively about “uppers” and “lowers” in development practice and the notion of practitioners disempowering themselves. Similarly Vaux (2001:7) argues practitioners have to “obliterate” the self “in order to understand the person in need and his or her full social, economic and political context”. Gilbert (2005:65) contends that while practitioners cannot step outside themselves they can develop their ability to be more self-aware and monitor the “self’s power to distort our motives and actions”. Edwards adds a further dimension by suggesting it is the presence or absence of “the love that does justice” — which signifies “the deliberate cultivation of mutually-reinforcing cycles of personal and systemic change” — that influences whether or not enduring commitments can be made to care for the common good and address the structural barriers which prevent this (2003:1).

The nature or quality of the development relationship depends, to some extent, on the practitioner’s attitude, which is influenced by personal values and feelings, their understanding of the role and goal, ideas about humility and how they respond to gratitude. As discussed previously, the asymmetry of the relationship between the practitioner and the villager can lead to gratitude on the part of the villager when the practitioner is seen to give resources (from the NGO). Gratitude is linked to deference and indebtedness where the status of the giver is higher than that of the recipient. If the status quo is to be changed the practitioner has a responsibility to explain her or his role and the concept of rights, rather than perpetuating the notion of charity and gratitude.<sup>144</sup> A dilemma for Cambodian practitioners is whether they accept gratitude and respect as their due, or model different ways of relating.

While Cambodian society is changing, as is the nature of hierarchy and patron-clientelism, strong imperatives remain for individuals, and by association their families, to attain a high social standing and be given respect, thus gaining face and honour (Hinton 2005). The nature of this issue is not

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<sup>143</sup> Hinton suggests that while honour (*ketteyas*) “may be gained through proper moral behaviour” reflecting a characteristic of self that leads one to act in a moral manner, in Khmer the word is more “focused on the external recognition and evaluation of one’s glory, prestige, and reputation” (2005:257).

<sup>144</sup> As one expatriate participant said, the intent is not to destroy gratitude which is human nature and common to different cultures, but the practitioner should not abuse the gratitude to become more powerful.

specific to Cambodians. Gilbert, who has worked in the UK and a range of developing countries, poses the questions:

Do we actually *want* the person to whom we are listening to become more confident and to assume more power? ... It can feel much 'safer' to hold on tightly to the image of ourselves as being the person who knows. Can we care enough to empower the other person if that means letting go of our own power? (2005:67)

Empowerment is the antithesis to accepting dependency derived from a person's acceptance of their lower worth. In theory, a hierarchical relationship with 'inferiors' giving honour and respect and being grateful for what the 'superior' (the development practitioner) gives is regarded as perpetuating relationships that replicate patron-clientelism, embody domination and are potentially exploitative. In theory, hierarchical relationships are viewed as not conducive, even obstructive, to genuine participation and empowerment and the achievement of the desirable processes and outcomes of development interventions. Implicitly a developmental relationship is premised on the notion that equality and egalitarian ideals are good. Whether this can happen in a different way in Cambodia requires further research.

The ultimate aim of development interventions to facilitate self-reliance and independence envisages practitioners working themselves out of their jobs. Ambivalence about this may be reflected, for example, in an NGO's failure to develop exit strategies for strategic withdrawal. The embodiment of this ultimate aim is to take seriously the change in the practitioner-villager relationship from dependence to independence to interdependence as a measure of empowerment.

#### *Practitioners' role in people's development process*

The second factor intrinsic to developmental relationships is the practitioner's conceptualisation of her or his role in the development process of others. As previously discussed many practitioners believe that, without their intervention, no development will happen. That is, NGOs bring development and practitioners develop people who would not otherwise develop.

The development practitioners' view of themselves as 'having' and those they help as 'lacking' poses a serious threat to recognition of the fundamental equality of persons. As discussed in chapter 3.2, Goulet contends that to reach this understanding each person has to realise her or his own vulnerability. Some practitioners argued that to be respectful does not require equality. This fundamental issue for the development relationship requires further consideration.

Practitioners must strive for a balance between being confident and believing in one's competence, and seeing oneself as bringing development and giving empowerment. Practitioners believe that they developed themselves but that the villagers will be developed by them (O'Leary & Meas 2001). Although the espoused belief is that practitioners listen to and learn from villagers this is contradicted by their assertion that they know what to do, and by the presence of pre-existing goals/plans. As discussed in chapter 7 the assumption among Cambodian participants is that villagers will (and should) come to think like the practitioners and 'catch up'.

### 8.3.5 The self as a tool

"The distinguishing feature of social work and welfare practice is the skilful, disciplined use of the self. This practice is mediated through relationships" (O'Connor et al. 2003:3). The concept of the "self as a tool" simply means "how I behave, with what intentions in a situation I define in a particular way" (2003:56). The practitioner's use of self is intrinsically linked to how they conceptualise the role of the development relationship. It requires an understanding of one's self and a conscious valuing process as outlined in the following sections.

#### *Knowledge of self — a focus on values and motives*

The separation of personal development from development *per se* has been typical within the development sector, however, there is an increasing awareness that focusing on the development of the 'other' without understanding one's own process of development or having the capacity for self-reflection is problematic. (Chambers 2004; Chambers & Pettit 2004; Edwards & Sen 2000; Gilbert 2005; Pasteur & Scott-Villiers 2004; Scott-Villiers 2004; Uphoff 1996a; Vaux 2001).

As a component of increasing one's self-awareness Gilbert emphasises the development within the self of the "internal observer" which is the capacity for detached internal reflection to face up to one's own complex and multi-layered reactions without fear, particularly "those feelings which make us uncomfortable, frightened, and ashamed, and which are most difficult to acknowledge in ourselves" (2005:67). Vaux highlights that part of us which is not necessarily good. "People tend to identify with power, and vulnerability has a tendency to evoke disgust. We identify with what we like rather than with the real needs of humanity" (2001:70). In response to Vaux's identification of the paradox confronting practitioners "of being emotional enough to feel concern while not being so emotional that we limit that concern unfairly" (Vaux 2001:70), Gilbert contends that, by listening to, and hearing "the 'noise' of the self (selves)" complex, emotional responses can be

acknowledged and monitored, giving more possibility to actively listening and attending to the person in need.

Practitioners' espoused values compared to their actual behaviour in the village tend to indicate they judge their behaviour according to their intention rather than their practice (whereas they judge others on the basis of their actions) (Dick & Dalmau 1999). Without reflection on our actions we may be unconscious of or unable to discern the actual motives and values which guide us. This is one role for supervision or mentoring of field practice. (See next section.)

### *Improving field practice*

In view of what has been learnt about the context of development practice in Cambodia some implications for strengthening practitioners to undertake developmental practice have surfaced. In addition to the capacity for self-reflection discussed above, I will address others here briefly. One issue is the importance of working consciously with the intrinsic tension in implementing value-based approaches which challenge cultural norms and potentially impact on Khmer identity. It is easier to do what is expected than to enact something new.

Cambodian participants were highly critical of practitioners being sent for training when there was little organisational effort to reflect and assess the organisational and personal change needed if new knowledge is to be integrated into existing policies and practices. This problem has been known for some time. VBNK, a training institute for NGO managers in Cambodia, attempts to reduce this by incorporating mentors (often the managers of training participants) into their training cycle. An evaluation of a training program for community development field workers which focused on helping participants to become more self-aware and reflective about their relationships to others around them concludes that one of the barriers which has to be overcome to stimulate self-awareness relates to what people do to secure safety and/or a sense of power, such as keeping a low profile or aligning oneself with powerful people (Langelier & Sok 2005:23-24).

Some research participants who are trainers/managers stated that, where practitioners had been given opportunities for personal reflective processes, this resulted in practitioners feeling more confident and experiencing higher levels of self-esteem. The difficulty for practitioners to facilitate the empowerment of villagers if practitioners themselves have not experienced it has been noted (O'Leary & Meas 2001).

Another relevant issue is the lack of mentoring or a model of supervision which is explicitly concerned with strengthening field practice. Supervision's purpose in social work is: to be educative (ensure best learning experience); to be supportive (ensure best way of learning); and to meet administrative requirements (ensure best service to clients) (O'Connor et al. 2003:226,227). Supervision of field work is not a constituent part of development practice in the sector. I use "developmental supervision" to refer to the facilitation of experiential processes focused on fieldwork. This includes feedback and discussion of observation of field practice and the use of critical incidents to help practitioners develop their skills and ability to become more reflective and examine patterns of in-use behaviour and values, to learn through linking theory and practice, and to generate practice theory which is based on tacit knowledge of culture and other factors which practitioners incorporate into their practice (Dick & Dalmau 1999; Raymond-McKay & MacLachlan 2003). At the same time it must be acknowledged there are a limited number of Cambodian managers with field work experience able to provide this supervision.

#### **8.4 Practice skills**

The use of skills depends on practitioners' evaluation of their desirability, as well as having the technical abilities to enact the skills. That is, the enactment of skills is influenced by attitudes, beliefs and knowledge. Goldstein suggests:

Interactions that express values such as commitment, self-determination, or honesty are not "interventions" deliberately interposed within the relationships to promote certain results. Rather, they are personal skills that are constantly and consciously being worked out, tested, and reworked with the flow of human experience. (1998:247)

At the interface between the NGO and the villagers the development practitioner requires a range of skills to translate the NGO policy and plan into reality. At the same time, the individual exercises her or his discretion as to whether a particular skill is applied. In the literature there is little written about the people who deliver aid and development (Ahmad 2002; Goetz 1996; Raymond-McKay & MacLachlan 2003). Practitioners are simply seen as the conduit for change, and the importance of people skills in facilitating interventions is often not recognised because the focus is on outcomes rather than process (Raymond-McKay 2003:168). In this subsection I will concentrate on the skills concerning the facilitation of development processes and the skills for reflecting on and learning from practice.



#### 8.4.1 Facilitation skills

Facilitation skills are essential if objectives such as participation in decision-making and empowerment (having power with, to and within) are to be achieved. Focus group participants commented that facilitation skills are often inadequate which was attributed to a number of factors including: the existence of preconceived plans; a lack of commitment to conducting analysis with villagers (which also relates to practitioners' doubt about villagers' capacity to analyse and decide); and the lack of skills or knowledge about how to facilitate a deeper analysis of situations and conscientisation. The evaluation of the training program referred to in the previous section states that their "biggest concern at the community level was an observed lack of experience by participants at facilitating groups" which they attributed to "lack of experience in actual application of facilitation tools and inadequate exposure to experienced village level facilitators" (Langelier & Sok 2005:15).

Active listening is identified as a core skill, but in the unequal relationship between the practitioner and the villagers active listening requires vigilance on the part of the practitioner. Participants identified several factors which obstruct active listening. One crucial influence is the hierarchical order and the fact that those with higher status are not expected to listen to those below. Those without education are presumed not to know or have ideas (as this is a cause of their poverty). A recurring theme was that some practitioners do not believe the ordinary village people have good ideas. There is a tendency among practitioners to relate to those villagers with status and authority, such as the village chief and key people.

Gilbert (2005) argues that in training/supervision the facilitation of experiential tasks involving active listening brings out issues related to power and its inequality. She posits that developing the capacity to listen accurately and actively to another person is one of the most essential capacities of self (along with the capacity for internal reflection) for the personal development of practitioners.

Participation is regarded as essential for sustainability and is presented as people's involvement in decision-making and subsequent ownership of the activities. Participation as underpinned by notions of equality and democracy (everyone should have a voice) is incompatible with traditional notions that the views of wealthy, powerful people are more important than those of the poor. As previously discussed in section 3.3 evaluations of NGO activities indicate that participation is more often "joining in" rather than making decisions, and that socio-cultural factors conspire to enable the village elites to capture the intended pro-poor development activities (O'Leary & Meas 2001;

Vijghen & Ly 1996). Chapter 3 explains the norms of leadership which elucidate why unfairness is tolerated, even if it is considered to be wrong.

#### 8.4.2 Skills for reflection and learning from practice

Aspects of this topic have been addressed earlier. The director of one Cambodian NGO striving to become a learning organisation remarks that they are “still stuck with some attitudes and practices that prevent us from moving into a new way of life” (VBNK 2005:3). This is attributed to a number of factors including: not making the time for effective learning processes; not believing that learning can come from experience and from others and not only from formal workshops; seeing learning primarily as a process of acquiring knowledge and skills to do something; and the limitation of the Khmer word used for learning (*rein*) to mean study rather than learn.

Many focus group participants argued that practitioners do not give value to or believe it is possible to learn from their own experience. Generally there is a tendency to see knowledge as something to be gained from outside, through formal training. The skills to reflect on and draw out the learnings from experience in the field have not been developed. My experience, based on practice and observation and discussions with trainers, is that it is often difficult to encourage Cambodians to believe in themselves and their own knowledge. The tendency is to value and defer to the knowledge of foreigners and formal training and to undervalue their own knowledge and practice experience. Cambodian research participants connected empowerment to confidence and stressed the importance of practitioners being willing to try new things and not being afraid of failure. Fear of failure is related to losing face through receiving negative criticism. Supervision has a role to facilitate reflection on practice and develop theory.

While field practitioners are blamed for not showing initiative this in part is due to the pressure from above to do the planned activities on time. The busyness of NGOs which allows little time to reflect, or sit down and listen to village people carefully and engage with developmental processes can be attributed in part to an outputs oriented process which is donor driven and the top-down pressure to fulfil tasks.

#### *Conclusion*

The claim that it is individuals rather than materials which determine the success of an aid project is not new (Raymond-McKay & MacLachlan 2003). Edwards takes this a step further. “At the deepest level, we help by what we are, not by what we know or even what we do” (1999:205). This chapter looks both at the question: What should I do? as well as: What should I be? It suggests

throughout that, for the values underpinning development theory and skills to be enacted, or applied in practice, self-awareness is intrinsic to the process.

## **CHAPTER 9 CONCLUSION**

### **9.1 Introduction**

The study used a range of research methods and data collection sources in a four-phase process to investigate the influence of values on the (community) development practice of Cambodian practitioners. Based on the conceptual framework, I addressed the research question through exploring the nature of and reasons for the observed disparity between what practitioners say and what they do. I also compared these to what practitioners identified as constitutive elements of a good life. The study is underpinned by the understandings that firstly, values influence attitudes and behaviour and vice-versa (see section 3.1) and secondly, development is a moral endeavour which reflects what we consider to be good and right and how things ought to be.

The research is limited by the focus on values in preference to other influential variables on an individual's practice, such as economic and political factors. So too the focus on practitioners' values and not those of other stakeholders in community based practice, particularly those of the villagers. While it is not possible to state that the three NGOs who participated in Phases 1 and 2 of the research are representative, my experience of working with a wide range of Cambodian development NGOs leads me to argue that they have many characteristics in common. That the issues they have to address are typical of many NGOs is supported both by the 40 focus group discussion members in Phase 3 who were drawn from over 30 NGOs working in Cambodia, as well as by the literature review. Despite these and other limitations mentioned in the introduction and methodology, this exploratory study does reveal a range of ways in which values influence the expectations, actions and responses of Cambodian development practitioners.

### **9.2 Conclusions**

While development theories have evolved to express more inclusive, holistic understandings of human development, my reading of the literature suggests that many of the early assumptions and values of development work persist, largely as a result of our collective inability or unwillingness to address issues of power and inequality (see section 3.2). However, the lack of attention given to understanding and examining the values that underlie these theories and current practice has also allowed them to remain unchallenged.

The work of development practitioners is physically and emotionally demanding. The enmeshing of personal, organisational, social, cultural, economic and political values and expectations means

that development practice is far from being merely the application of technical skills to achieve pre-determined outputs. Yet, as this research and the development studies literature show, this remains the prevalent conceptualisation of development practice.

The current paradigm of development practice simplifies what is otherwise uncontrollably complex. A reductionist analysis and the project cycle approach to development prevail despite the body of literature that highlights their inadequacy. This research reveals the uncertainties and complexities that confront practitioners in different and ever changing situations. These are incompatible with a linear, time-bound, blueprint model for human development. Projects typically focus on an aspect of peoples' situation without recourse to their past, spiritual beliefs or socio-cultural concerns and the fact that the local is constantly impacted by macro- and global-level trends and events. Through this process of simplification the development sector subverts its own value system which purports to respect and promote diversity and people's self-determination.

Within this current framework practitioners are challenged to envisage aided development as interventions into what is a continuous development process. Practitioners must embrace the complexity and ambiguities without being paralysed by them, and resist the desire for simplification in order to make the complex appear manageable.

This thesis shows that the disparity between what practitioners espouse and what they actually do derives from a number of overlapping and interrelated factors. The literature review establishes that this gap between theory and practice is clearly not limited to Cambodian practitioners. The findings of this research show that, while the activities conducted by the research participants are not inconsistent with their espoused objectives, the way in which these activities are implemented is often not conducive to participatory, empowering and gender equitable outcomes. Practitioners' values-in-use comprise a different order of priority to their espoused values. For example, practitioners espouse the value of participation but in practice give higher priority to "getting the job done". A practitioner's desire to attain 'success' by achieving the outputs outlined in their work plan, and thereby fulfilling what is required of them by their NGO, is given precedence. This often results in practice that is more directive and hierarchical than participatory and empowering.

Two factors emerge from the above. Given the prevailing project based notion of development, with its outputs oriented ethos and the expectations of and relationships with donors, the organisational imperatives of NGOs are a significant factor in inhibiting participatory, empowering practices in the field. Organisations are concerned with both their own survival and facilitating

improvements in the lives of people they serve, but the attainment of one often works against the attainment of the other. Another observation is that internal ways of workings within NGOs often do not exemplify the processes that practitioners are expected to follow in the field (see section 3.3).

The second factor relates to socio-cultural and political factors which may be at odds with participatory, empowering and gender equitable behaviours and practices. The socially constructed hierarchy in Cambodia effectively determines the nature of relationships and interpersonal interactions. However, fundamental development concepts and approaches such as human rights, participation, empowerment, gender equity and social justice are premised on equality and the belief that an individual has dignity and worth by virtue of her or his humanity. While the values of equality and hierarchy appear to be incompatible the latter does not deny the right of each person to participate in the decisions which affect their lives or their right to a decent life, albeit within their station.

I believe that the value of equality of human beings is of critical importance in shaping the relationships and interactions through which development can be facilitated. The relevance of this value to Cambodian development practice requires further exploration. As the research demonstrates this is not a common understanding of Cambodian participants who stated, from their experience, that no one is equal and that equality is a measure of something. In reality, relationships, be they between and within funding and implementing agencies, or between development practitioners and villagers, tend to be more hierarchical than egalitarian.

Socio-cultural norms create mutually expected behaviours on the part of practitioners and villagers. These can take the form of patron-client-type interactions. Dependency and gratitude may be regarded positively in Cambodia in a situation where the patron provides protection and benefits. From my perspective, this dynamic is incompatible with the aims and means of empowerment. Top-down approaches which assume the “upper” knows and has the solutions to make life better for the “lower” are incongruent with the development values of individual agency and self-determination. Yet practitioners may see this approach as necessary to establish their credibility and earn the respect of villagers. Listening to villagers’ ideas is complicated further by notions of individual responsibility for poverty, the perception that people would not be poor if they had ideas, and the equating of formal education with more valuable knowledge.

A shift from the belief that we, the practitioners, bring development, know what is best and can decide for others rests on a profound realisation that our 'having' is only a matter of circumstance and is not a reflection of the worth or dignity of the 'other'. Consistent with findings elsewhere what appears to be common to both Cambodian and international practitioners is the notion that 'we' (practitioners) know and 'they' (villagers) do not; that we have and they do not. Even within the prevailing rights based paradigm, development is still perceived as a transfer of resources; in this case, knowledge and information. Conceiving of development as giving and bringing has profound implications for how we do things. The shift in rhetoric and developmental thinking is being constantly undermined in practice by the intractability of practitioners' beliefs and values.

Development aid and much development practice are founded on notions of discretionary giving or benevolence and are fundamentally incompatible with the affirmation of the rights of global citizens to live a decent life. A fundamental challenge confronting development practice/practitioners is to genuinely accept that people develop themselves and to acknowledge mutuality in the development relationship. That is, to believe that our development is profoundly related to the development of others. Otherwise, the overwhelming vision of helping the other — out of our goodness and munificence — will perpetuate hierarchical relations which do not embody the fundamental belief in equality conducive to forming respectful, egalitarian relationships. The appropriateness of this belief for Cambodian development practice requires further exploration.

Development relationships are considered by Cambodian development practitioners to be primarily of instrumental value, whereby a relationship of trust and confidence is required in order to enlist villagers' participation in project activities. A challenge to current practice is to reconceptualise the development relationship and see in this the actual work or facilitation of development.

As mentioned above, practitioners conduct activities that are compatible with the values in the espoused objectives but the way they are enacted and the values they embody may be inconsistent with the espoused values and the achievement of developmental outcomes. Practitioners hold a range of often competing values whose priority can vary with the situation. Not only do these hierarchies of values differ between practitioners, but they shift for a single practitioner between situations. For example, participation can range from the enlistment, even coercion, of villagers into pre-determined activities to a genuine facilitation of villagers in making decisions and designing activities themselves. Practitioners are not locked into certain values but shift along the

participatory spectrum according to particular circumstances and what they deem necessary at the time. Similarly, practitioners do not practise either hierarchical or egalitarian values but both/and.

Another dilemma facing some practitioners is their role as an agent of change, and their felt need to maintain Cambodian culture and traditions in order to safeguard Khmer identity. The transformational aims of development practice — such as the empowerment of women and poor people — are inherently political and potentially destabilising for society as they challenge traditional views of how women and people who are poor and of lower status are to behave, as well as the existing role and behaviour of men and those of higher status. The research found that some practitioners considered development and development interventions as quite distinct from, and therefore having no impact on, Cambodian culture and traditions. This is achieved by perceiving interventions in terms of functional change whereby societal values and structures are left intact. An example of this is the introduction of activities with women or poor families that do not address issues of power relations within society. It may also reflect a conceptualisation which compartmentalises the goals of development work from the personal goals of practitioners.

The challenge for practitioners is to become clearer about what constitutes positive change in society and how this engages with Cambodian culture and spirituality. This includes clarifying which aspects of Cambodian culture and tradition are barriers to justice and should be changed, and which should be preserved and nurtured as important to the society Cambodians wish to engender. This requires an analysis of what development — as human rights — means in the Cambodian context and what the claiming of these rights would mean for the existing social order. It requires a conscious decision as to whether practice is pursuing functional or transformational change.

Theories of action and cognitive dissonance suggest that individuals strive for consistency between what they espouse and what they do, and that greater congruence leads to greater effectiveness. There is little literature on the application of these theories in non-western cultures, although several authors have found greater cognitive tolerance in some cultures which enables people to hold a number of views that are seemingly incompatible from a western perspective. My research finding that in different circumstances practitioners do whatever they need to do in order to get the job done seems to fit with the idea of cognitive tolerance. However, this behaviour was acknowledged by both Cambodian and expatriate participants. If enhanced effectiveness results from greater congruity between values and actions, then the challenge for development practitioners is to articulate its non-negotiable core values and behaviours.



In considering the application of development knowledge, skills and values to development practice in Cambodia a number of key findings emerge. One is the importance of identifying Khmer words and phrases which convey the intended meanings for concepts such as values, attitude, behaviour and empowerment. It is also important to recognise the danger in assuming that using the same words means a shared understanding. Practitioners need technical knowledge and skills, as well as the knowledge of how to operationalise them to facilitate participatory, empowering and gender equitable practice. The individual is central to what, when, if and how development knowledge is applied in the enactment of specific skills and the embodiment of values.

If practitioners are to translate their espoused values into practice then self-awareness is crucial. While practitioners remain motivated by unconscious and unacknowledged values and priorities their effectiveness is compromised. Values need to be established as a constitutive element of practice, along with skills and knowledge. In other 'helping professions' supervision by skilled practitioners is an important strategy in developing practitioners' practice expertise. Ideally such supervision and the use of other processes such as analysis of significant incidents, encourage reflection on one's actions, links practice to theory, and develops theory and greater knowledge of self.

The notion of the practitioner as an agent of change, with the development relationship at the centre of community based development, elevates the primacy of the person. Self-awareness, including the interaction between personal and development values, is an essential competence of development practitioners.

## APPENDICES

### Appendix A. Phase one: In-depth interview guides and field visits

#### INTERVIEW ONE

##### Introduction

As I discussed with you earlier, I would like to meet with you for a series of three interviews and also to accompany you to the field for two days. I hope we will be able to arrange the field visits after the second interview and that we can go to the field before the third interview takes place. The interviews with yourself and seven other NGO workers is the first stage in the work I am doing in Cambodia. The second stage is a workshop with your NGO in a few weeks' time, along with separate workshops with two other NGOs. I will then meet with groups of development practitioners involved in capacity building/training with Cambodian practitioners. At the end of the research, I hope to understand more about the influence of values on development practice, and to explore the implications of this for capacity building.

Today I would like to discuss a range of issues with you. There is no right or wrong answer as the questions are drawing on your experience. In this first interview I would like to firstly focus on your aspirations or hopes for yourself and your family. What you think is of value, or desirable, for a good life for yourself and your family. (That is, what you think is important so that your life can be good.) The second part of the interview will explore your hopes for Cambodian society.

I would like to check what we discussed previously. Is it still OK with you if I tape record the discussion? Do you still agree that the interpreter can be present to assist with communication? Your comments are confidential. If you are quoted in my thesis or report you will not be personally identified.

If at any time you would like to ask me questions please don't hesitate to do so. If I say something confusing please ask me to clarify. If there is something you do not want to talk about you do not have to.

#### A. Family values

In the following questions I want you to think specifically about yourself and your own family.

1. What is most important to you in your life? It means, what are the most important components of your life that are necessary for your wellbeing?
2. Are you satisfied with your current standard of living? (For example, housing, food, water)
3. How satisfied are you with your job? What do you most like about your job? What job would you like to be doing in say five or ten years and why?
4. How important do you think that ongoing learning (education/training) is to your achieving your aspirations?
5. Do you feel safe and secure?
6. Is having free time important to you? (Why/why not?)
7. Is where you live, the community that you belong to? Do you feel part of your local community?
8. What involvement do you or your family have with people in your community?

- Are you involved in any associations or groups in your local community? Why/why not?
9. Are you involved in the decision-making process or organising in the place where you live?
  10. I now want to talk about your family. Who makes up or is part of the family group to whom you have duties and obligations, and on whom you can rely when you are in need because they have duties and obligations to you?
  11. Are relationships with people outside your family important to you? What do you most value/want from these relationships? What do you think that others want in their relationships with you? How would you like people to treat you?
  12. When you meet a bad situation or a crisis in your life, what is it that gives you hope or helps you to keep going? It means, what gives meaning to your life? Do you have any philosophies or beliefs that sustain you or you feel explain more about the type of person you are?
  13. Are you concerned about the environment in the local area where you live? What specific issues concern you? Who is responsible to solve these problems?
  14. If you compare Cambodian society now to the past, do you think that the changes in Cambodian society are generally good/desirable or bad/undesirable, and why? Can you give examples?
  15. What are some of the important beliefs/behaviours that you, as a parent, try to convey to your children so they can be good people?
  16. What is most important for your children's future?
  17. How would you like society to treat your children?
  18. What are your hopes for your a) son(s) and b) daughter(s) and how will their lives differ from yours? What sort of person do you want your a) son(s) and b) daughter(s) to marry?

## **B. Exploring personal values**

1. You said for the first question that (e.g. knowledge, family...) is important for you to have a good life. What is it about ... that you give value to? (Go through each point from question 1, one by one.)
2. Where do your values come from? Are they the same as your parents held and, if not, where are they different?
3. Apart from your parents, who else or what experiences have helped form the sort of person you are and the beliefs you have?
4. Are there spiritual or religious beliefs that guide you?
5. Are your beliefs about what is right or wrong, or good or bad fixed or are they still changing?
6. How do you deal with information or experience that seems to contradict what you believe in?
7. Does your sense of what is right or wrong, good or bad, come from within you or is it determined by what society expects of you?
8. Is it better to do what you think is right even when this is considered wrong by society or is it better to comply to society's expectations?
9. Are your beliefs/values the same as most people in Cambodia and, if not, where are they different?

## INTERVIEW TWO

Review the first interview

- a. Have you had any further thoughts about any of the topics we discussed in the first interview?
- b. Is there anything you would like to add to your responses to the questions in the first interview?

I would now like to ask you some questions about Cambodian society and the values you think are important in society.

### A. Societal values

1. What do you like best about Cambodian society now?
2. Where is Cambodian society failing your expectations or preferences? Where is it exceeding your expectations?
3. Try to imagine a Cambodia where things are as you believe they should be (for example, where there is no ... see response to question 2). What would things be like in the ideal Cambodia of the future?
4. In your ideal Cambodian society would there still be poverty? Do you think that is poverty inevitable? Is poverty the result of fate (*vishnar*?) Do you think that poverty is related to a person's sin in their previous life? Can a person overcome their fate? What do village people think about poverty?
5. How would poverty be addressed in your ideal society?
6. Should groups and individuals in the your community be active in influencing government policies or is this the work of the government?
7. What is needed to enable all Cambodians to live together in harmony?
8. Is the attachment (bond) a person has to his or her family more or less than in the past? If this has changed, why do you think so? (What does it depend on e.g. age, sex?)
9. What behaviour is expected of men and women in traditional culture? Does this behaviour still apply to women and men, girls and boys in Cambodia today? What is your ideal? Is the relationship between men and women any different today compared to the past, and in what way(s)?
10. What is distinctive about Cambodian culture and traditions? (compared to other countries)
11. I now want to explore what it means to be "Khmer". What is it the people identify as being "Khmer"? What is necessary to maintain Khmer identity?
12. Some people say that Cambodia is losing its traditional culture (culture and traditions). Do you agree with this? What do you think is being lost? Is this good or bad? Is it important for Cambodia to retain all/some of its culture and traditions in the future?
13. If the culture were to change, what would that mean for Khmer identity?
14. Are culture and traditions barriers to progress and development?
15. In your ideal Cambodia (where there is no ...) what is the role of Buddhism? If you compare community development workers to village people, do you think Buddhism is more or less important to the village people?

*Questions to reflect on barriers to or responsibilities for achieving the ideal Cambodia described.*

16. What is stopping Cambodia from achieving your "ideal" society?
17. What needs to happen to achieve this society? Who is responsible for achieving this ideal society?
18. What is your role in achieving this ideal society?

## **B. Integration of societal, personal and family values**

*Think back to the first interview when you described your hopes for yourself and your family.*

19. Are your hopes or what you value for your family different to what you hope for society? Why?
20. Can you achieve your personal aspirations without your ideal society?
21. Do you think that your social values would be very similar or different to those of Cambodians in rural areas?

## **C. Development work**

I would now like to ask you about your thoughts on your work in development. First, I will ask you about your beliefs regarding the desirable outcomes of practice, or what it is you hope can be achieved through development work.

22. What are the most important/desirable development outcomes you are trying to achieve through your work?

Unprompted, then provide a list (translated in Khmer) of commonly stated outcomes and ask the practitioner to rank them in terms of importance and which they are trying to achieve.

- Reduce poverty
- Empower people to solve their own problems
- Increase food production and improve health
- Improve people's living standards
- Sustainable development
- Improvements in the position and status of women
- Rebuilding of trust and strengthening relationships in the communities

23. Why do you consider the first two development outcomes to be most important?
24. Are the development outcomes which you consider to be most important, the same or different to the stated priorities of your NGO?
25. Are you able to achieve these desired development outcomes in your own practice? (If not, why do you think this is the case?)

## **Process**

26. What do you believe are the key ways of working (which will be conducive to achieving the desired outcomes)?
27. Can you give some examples of what you do in a typical day/week that is contributing to achieving these outcomes?
28. Why do you think that these particular ways of working are important?
29. From your observation of good (effective) practitioners what are the characteristics that make their practice successful? [*Probe re their personality and/or their ways of relating.*]
30. What do you believe are the strong beliefs or values that underpin their work?
31. What is your personal definition of development? (write down)
32. Can you summarise the values that underpin what you consider to be the desirable outcomes and processes in development practice?

## **PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION — FIELD VISIT**

The following four particular aspects of practice were to be observed by me (the researcher) in the field and the observations verified or clarified in the course of discussion with the practitioner, or in interview three.

- (i) How does the practitioner relate and interact with villagers in general?
- (ii) To whom does the practitioner relate and with whom have relationships been established?
- (iii) What types of village activities are going on and who is involved in them?
- (iv) What is the role of the villagers in the development process?

## **INTERVIEW THREE**

**Personal details** (if not already recorded)

Age, marital status, children, educational level, work experience

In this third interview I would like to explore the field visit and your practice in the village. I would like to ask your thoughts on what happened during the visit and discuss some of the things which I observed. I will start by discussing a significant incident (see significant incident guide).

### **A. Significant incident**

See outline of process and questions on the guide (see next page).

### **B. Exploration of field visit**

I would like to explore further some of the issues we spoke about during the field visit. The purpose is not to evaluate what you did but to discuss what I observed so that I can understand how you perceived certain situations (how you framed the problem) and your rationale for responding as you did. Perhaps there are factors which influenced what you did which I could not see or am unaware of. The purpose of this is to clarify what you were thinking.

1. There are a number of activities that your NGO is involved with in the village. (Recall these.) How did these come about i.e. why is there a focus on these activities?
2. What are things that you think should be happening in the village but that are not? Are these all part of your NGO's project plan?
3. What are the factors that prevent these things from happening? Does it relate to your own knowledge, skills and/or interests — that is, in terms of what activities do take place or do not take place?
4. Going back to the field visit now, was there anything that happened during the field visit with me that you found to be significant? Why?
5. I will now raise three of my observations from the visit. In the first situation (describe) where I observed that you related/responded in this way (describe), can you explain what you understood the problem to be and your reasons for responding in the way you did?
  - a) What factors did you experience impinging upon your practice in this case? That is, what influenced the decisions which you made in this instance?
  - b) Can you identify the predominant strong beliefs/values that were influencing your practice in responding to the situation in this way? (Repeat for each of the observations.)

6. In conclusion, from this discussion of examples of your practice, can you summarise the values which you identify as underpinning your actions/behaviours in your practice?

**Depending on time** (*This was included in only one interview*)

7. In the second interview you identified ... as the desirable outcomes you are hoping to achieve. Can you identify the values or strong beliefs that underpin these?
8. You also described the key processes as ... Can you summarise the values that underpin these?
9. Do you think that what you hope/believe you should do is the same as what you are actually doing (able to do) in practice? Why do you think this is the case?
10. Do you have any questions or is there anything you would like to discuss further?

**SIGNIFICANT INCIDENT** (*translated into Khmer*)

Can you identify an incident in your village work, either during the field visit with me, or during the past few weeks, that you think was important — either for your learning, your thinking or for your practice? It is an incident where you were with people and you took some action as part of your work. (Action could be facilitating a discussion, giving advice, or doing something.) *The incident should have a beginning and an end. It is not the description of a general, ongoing situation.*

The criteria to select a significant incident is a situation:

- when things go very well,
- when things do not go as planned,
- which is typical,
- which was demanding,
- where the intervention really made a difference
- where the intervention raised conflicts or doubts

In the critical incident, you need to *describe the incident, its context and its significance, as well as your thoughts and your feelings*:

1. Describe the context of the incident (where, when, who was present at the time, your role)
2. Give a detailed description of what happened
3. Why was the incident significant for you? (i.e. why did you choose this incident and why is it important to you)?
4. What were your concerns at the time?
5. What were the factors which influenced the course of action you chose?
6. What were you thinking about as it was taking place?
7. What were you feeling during and after the incident?
8. What did you find most demanding about the incident?
9. What ideas do you have for your future intervention?

## **Appendix B. Phase two: NGDO focus group discussion guide**

### **Introduction**

This study seeks to understand how values influence the development practice of Cambodian development practitioners who are working in the field of rural community development. Development practitioners are in the front line in implementing development projects but there has been little research into how practitioners go about their work and what influences how they make decisions in the field.

I would like to discuss a range of issues with you. This is the second stage in the overall research project. The first stage involved a series of interviews and field visits with eight practitioners. From those discussions there are a number of issues I would like to explore further with you. Following this workshop I will meet with groups of development practitioners from a range of NGOs to explore how their thoughts and practice relate to yours. At the end of the research, I hope to understand more about the influence of values on development practice, and to explore the implications of this for capacity building.

There are no right or wrong answers as the questions are drawing on your experience and your beliefs about what you think is good or right for the development of Cambodia. The workshop is for the full day. For the most part the format will consist of my asking a question which I would then like you to think about in pairs or small groups. Each pair/group will then present their ideas back to the large group. If you are agreeable I would like to tape-record the large group discussion. The interpreter will be present to assist with communication if this is still OK with you. This tape will stay with me and the interpreter will transcribe it. Your comments are confidential. If you are quoted in my thesis or report you will not be personally identified. If at any time you would like to ask me questions please don't hesitate to do so. If I say something confusing please ask me to clarify. If there is something you do not want to talk about you do not have to.

The order of the exercises was flexible and not all were conducted with each NGO.

### **B.1 The good life**

A number of studies in other countries have looked at what people think is important or desirable for a good life. I would like to explore certain aspects of this with you.

Distribute translated questionnaire on the good life.<sup>145</sup>

#### **Rating**

With each of the following tables, consider each aspect according to the question, then decide whether you think that it is: very important, important, unimportant or undesirable.

Place a tick in the most appropriate box.

#### **Ranking**

Then rank (in order of importance) the possible aspect(s) that you consider to be most important. Repeat the exercise for the possible aspect(s) that you consider to be least important. For example, in the first table, the most important aspect is marked as 1 and the least important aspect as 8. The other aspects are then ranked.

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<sup>145</sup> Derived from Clark's (2002) study on human values



Repeat rating and ranking for each of the other tables. (Results are to be discussed only if participants raise issues.)

1. Food/water/housing

How important are the following aspects of your living situation?	Very important	Important	Unimportant	Undesirable	Rank
1. Reliable shelter from the elements?					
2. Secure ownership?					
3. Adequate living/sleeping space for everyone?					
4. Status and prestige?					
5. Adequate and nutritious food to eat?					
6. A happy environment?					
7. Reliable power supply?					
8. Easy access to water and sanitation?					

2. Welfare/social justice

In trying to eliminate poverty in Cambodia is it important for:	Very important	Important	Unimportant	Undesirable	Rank
1. Government to provide welfare services?					
2. Family/communities to support the needy?					
3. The poor to help themselves?					
4. Government policies and practices to be changed?					
5. Traditional forms of support from <i>wats</i> to be revived/strengthened?					
6. Greater adherence to Buddhist teachings by everyone in Cambodia?					
7. International trade policies and practices to be changed?					

### 3. Jobs/employment

How important are the following possible aspects of a good job?	Very important	Important	Unimportant	Undesirable	Rank
1. Good salary/able to support family's desired standard of living?					
2. Job security/regular work?					
3. Good/safe working conditions?					
4. Self-respect?					
5. Status and prestige?					
6. Power and influence?					
7. Reasonable working hours/ enough time for rest and recreation?					
8. Opportunities for advancement?					
9. Good relationships with director and work colleagues?					
10. Opportunity to live at home with family?					
11. Job satisfaction/enjoy going to work each day?					
12. Ability to accumulate money for future emergencies or purchases?					
13. Gives meaning and substance to life?					

### 4. Education

How important are the following reasons for seeking an education?	Very important	Important	Unimportant	Undesirable	Rank
1. Raising income?					
2. Acquiring knowledge, understanding and wisdom?					
3. Acquiring training and skills for promotion or better jobs?					
4. Being able to better serve the community?					
5. Learning to read, write and count?					
6. Improving your ability to plan life and make choices?					
7. Enhancing status, influence and power?					

### 5. Personal safety and physical security

Which aspects of personal safety and physical security concern you the most?	Very important	Important	Unimportant	Undesirable	Rank
1. Threat of violence?					
2. Law and order?					
3. Interference from the state?					
4. Accidental injury?					
5. Protection of personal property?					
6. Fear of war?					

### 6. Recreation/leisure

Do you find having free time is important for:	Very important	Important	Unimportant	Undesirable	Rank
1. Happiness/peaceful mind?					
2. Sleep and rest?					
3. Relaxation?					
4. Enhancing social life?					
5. Visiting friends and family?					
6. Travel/seeing new places?					

### 7. Relationships

How important is it to develop/maintain good relationships with:	Very important	Important	Unimportant	Undesirable	Rank
1. Family?					
2. Neighbours/community?					
3. Powerful people (politically, militarily, materially)?					
4. People of the other sex, other than family?					
5. Young people?					
6. Old and respected people?					
6. Religious leaders?					

### 8. Community/political life

Is involvement with your community important for:	Very important	Important	Unimportant	Undesirable	Rank
1. Awareness/knowning what is going on?					
2. Enhancing social life/making new friends?					
3. Contribution/feeling good about helping others?					
4. Being involved in decision-making/self-determination?					
5. Organising with others to lobby the government for improvements?					
6. Learning new skills?					

### 9. Culture/spirituality

Is it important to retain traditional beliefs and practices for:	Very important	Important	Unimportant	Undesirable	Rank
1. Maintaining Khmer culture and identity?					
2. Strengthening/sustaining Buddhism and a spiritual life?					
3. Advancing peace and harmony?					
4. Knowing how to behave and what to expect of others?					

### 10. Income and wealth

How important are the following reasons for having income and wealth?	Very important	Important	Unimportant	Undesirable	Rank
1. Improving standard of living/command over commodities?					
2. Acquiring food?					
3. Acquiring luxury goods/consumer durables?					
4. Enhancing social life/pursuing recreational activities?					
5. Achieving happiness?					
6. Acquiring status and prestige?					
7. Acquiring influence and power?					
8. Supporting family and friends?					
9. Working less hours/increasing rest and recreation?					
10. Accumulating/saving money for its own sake?					
11. Employing others/job creation?					

### 11. Environment

How important are the following aspects of the environment for the wellbeing of a community:	Very important	Important	Unimportant	Undesirable	Rank
1. Using the natural resources to meet basic needs of the residents?					
2. Improved technology/mechanisation to extract more from the land/water?					
3. Protecting/replacing resources for use by future generations?					
4. Reducing pollution to improve quality and quantity of resources?					
5. Protecting/improving environment to minimise natural disasters?					
6. Better technology to reduce damage caused by natural disasters?					

## B.2 Factors influencing decision making

The next part of the workshop aims to explore whether or not you consider a number of different factors to influence your practice in the village.

1. Rate how each of the following factors influences what, and how, you do your work in the village (extremely important, important, quite important, of little importance, no importance).
2. Rank these six factors from one (most influential) to six (least influential) in guiding your practice.

<b>I do what I believe I ought to do according to:</b>	<b>Very important</b>	<b>Important</b>	<b>Quite important</b>	<b>Little important</b>	<b>Not important</b>	<b>RANK</b>
My upbringing and religion						
What I have learnt about development						
What I believe the villagers expect me to do according to Cambodian culture and traditions						
What my NGO thinks I ought to do						
What the donors think my NGDO ought to do						
What the government authorities expect						

## Discussion

3. Do you agree that these different factors (e.g. your beliefs, your NGO's beliefs, the villagers' beliefs and expectations of you) influence the decisions you make?
4. Do all these factors lead you to behave in the same way or do you have to choose between them? Can you give examples? How do you decide what to do?
5. Are you aware of other factors which influence how you do your work?  
Prompt:           political circumstances  
                      economic circumstances
6. Thinking back over what you have learned about development in training, workshops and so on, do you think that the priorities expressed in training and your priorities are the same or different? In what regard? Have your priorities changed over time? Why do you think so?
7. Do you think what you believe is important is more similar to what the villagers believe or what you have been trained/learnt about development? In other words, is there compatibility between the your personal values (your view of the good life) and cultural values (those held by most Cambodians)? Do these fit with or clash with development values?
8. How do you reconcile the values and beliefs of development theory and practice with your own personal values?

### **Organisational values**

9. What does your NGDO deem to be desirable in terms of outcomes?
10. What do you identify are the strong beliefs or values of the organisation which underpin what it is wanting to achieve?
11. How does the donor's expectation(s) effect the work you do — and the way you do it?
12. What interaction do you have with other NGDOs/agencies operating in the villages where you work?
13. Are the outcomes you personally prioritise the same as, similar to, or different from what your organisation is trying to achieve?
  - If the same, or similar — how do you think the fit was achieved?
  - If different, how do you mediate these differences?
14. What do you think are the outcomes that villagers would prioritise?
  - Are these the same as, similar to or different from your personal/your organisation's desired outcomes?
  - If the same, or similar — how do you think the 'fit' was achieved?
  - If different, how do you mediate these differences?

### **B.3 Role play**

*Scenario:* One small child has died in the village and several others are very sick from dengue. A number of poor women are talking together and worrying about their children getting sick. One of them has had to borrow money to pay for the medical treatment.

*Practitioner role:* You come across this group as you are monitoring the activities of another project in the village. You join the group and ask what is going on.

*Villager role:* Worried parent roles are assigned to four-five participants.

At a certain point the role play is halted. Each of the participants in the role play is asked to reflect on the inner voices as follows:

Inner thoughts of the practitioner:

- what were your feelings?
- what do you think the villagers want you to do?
- what do you think you ought to do?
- what do you think the villager women think about you — the CD worker?

Inner thoughts of the village parents:

- what were your feelings?
- what do you want/expect the CD worker to do?
- what do you think the CD worker wants you to do?
- what do you think the CD worker thinks about you?

Discussion of issues arising.

#### **B.4. Cultural/social values** (Discussion questions)

1. Cambodia is a hierarchical society where people know their place in relation to everyone else. That is, one is aware whether another person has a lower or higher status than oneself. In this hierarchy there are expected and conditioned ways in which people of higher and lower status relate to each other. (For example, the person of lower status must show respect to someone higher — which that person expects as due course and need not reciprocate).

In your experience is this description of relationships in Cambodia accurate?

Can there be egalitarian relationships between people of unequal status?

Does this situation affect you in your work?

Does it affect how villagers relate to you, and what they expect of/from you?

How do you deal with it? Examples.

2. Throughout all levels of Cambodia society there is a common expectation or hope that a person who has power and control over resources will become a patron.

Do you agree this patron/client type of relationship exists and is common in Cambodia?

Does this situation affect you in your work?

Does it affect what the villagers expect of you?

How do you deal with it? Examples.

3. One interpretation of a Buddhist belief is that a person is poor because s/he has done something bad in a past life.

Do you think many people hold this view?

What is your understanding of this interpretation?

Does this understanding affect relationships? If so, how?

Does it affect your work? Explore the implications of this belief on the enactment of empowerment.

4. As a result of an NGO's work which encouraged people to stand up for their rights, the villagers who are marginalised protest and disagree with the powerful and conflict results. This threatens the harmony in the village.

What do you think about what this NGO has done?

Do you think that conflict is inevitable if the situation for the poor is to change or do you think that conflict should be avoided at all cost?

What are the implications for your practice?

How do you reconcile interventions or approaches that are at odds with the prevailing cultural norms or expectations?



## **B.5 Case study**

*Scenario:* Imagine that when you arrive in the village where you work a group of people is waiting to meet you. The previous night a 13-year-old girl was raped by the 25-year-old son of a wealthy family from the neighbouring village. The girl was returning to her parent's house after visiting her married sister in another area of the village. The parents and family members of the girl and a few neighbours want to discuss the problem with you as they do not know what they should do.

You know the family of the man who raped the girl as their large house is on the road you travel to reach the village. The family owns a lot of rice land and has a rice mill. They are well-connected to government officials in the district.

This is not the first rape to take place in this village. A few months ago there was a similar incident. Those present at the meeting are worried about the future safety of the young girls in their village.

Among the group there are a few people saying that the family should seek compensation from the parents of young man.

Participants first consider their response alone and then discuss together.  
Handout of questions (translated).

1. What do you think are the main points that are important in assessing this situation?
2. How would you rank these points in order of importance?
3. What would you do as the community development worker/community organiser involved?
4. Explain why you would take that particular course of action.
5. What aspects of the action would you feel confident in handling?
6. What aspects of the action would you find most demanding?
7. If you were just visiting a relative in this village (rather than in your role as a community development worker) and this was a friend of your relative, what would you do or what advice would you give?

## B.6 Traditional and development values

1. In the table below, for each pair of values,
  - which one do you think that most rural Cambodians would feel was more important?
  - which one do you personally think is more important?

Column one	Column two	Most Cambodians	Self
1A. respect for authority	1B. participation		
2A. empowerment	2B. harmony, gratitude,		
3A. egalitarian	3B. status, face		
4A. acceptance	4B. agency (able to bring about change)		
5A. collectivist, interdependence	5B. individualist, independence		
6A. spiritual (Buddhism/animist)	6B. secular		
7A. gender equity	7B. "Ideal" Khmer woman		

2. Which of the above values would be considered
  - (a) "traditional" Cambodian values?
  - (b) "development" values
3. Which, if any, of the above values, are important/necessary for Cambodian society and tradition?
4. In your opinion, should development work be trying to promote development values? Why/why not?
5. Are these development values compatible with or opposed to Cambodian culture?
6. Are there other values, not listed above, which you consider to be important in development practice?
7. Do you feel that you are able to bring about social change?
8. Are there aspects of Cambodian culture that you think are negative or prevent people from achieving a better life for themselves and their families? Can you give examples?
9. Are there aspects of Cambodian culture that you think are positive and help people to achieve a better life for themselves and their families? Can you give examples?

## **Appendix C. Phase three: Focus group discussion guides**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this discussion is:

1. To consider whether the main findings from phases one and two outlined in my presentation resonate with your experience and to check whether or not these are significant issues for development practice.
2. To explore further how these are to be understood from your perspective.
3. To explore the implications of these issues for development practice and capacity building in Cambodia.

If you are all agreeable I would like to take a tape recording of the discussion. This tape will stay with me and I will transcribe it. The tape will be stored securely and held at La Trobe University. Your comments are confidential. If you are quoted in my thesis or report you will not be personally identified. I cannot guarantee that confidentiality will be respected by the group members. You should therefore only contribute what you feel comfortable with. If at any time you would like to ask me questions please don't hesitate to do so. If I say something confusing please ask me to clarify. If there is something you do not want to talk about you do not have to.

### **A. Presentation**

### **B. Discussion**

Focus group discussion guide questions — Cambodian groups

1. Practitioners say that it is essential to understand and follow what the villagers want to do, that they cannot go against the villagers' beliefs. It is also commonly said that development has not happened in the village because the villagers lack ideas and information and cannot think. Villagers want their lives to be better. The practitioners believe they have studied and learned about the situation and development and they know what needs to be done. Often this includes changing the attitudes and beliefs of the villagers. The practitioners believe that what they plan is good and will help the villagers — so they are doing what the villagers want to do.
  - a) What is your experience of this issue?
  - b) Do you find these ideas/approaches to be compatible or competing?
  - c) How can the practitioner deal with both of these ideas?
2. Development practice is a set of beliefs and skills that need to be learned and followed carefully. Good practitioners concentrate on improving their knowledge and skills and do not allow their own personal beliefs and attitudes to influence the way they work with communities. What are your ideas about this?
3. Practitioners said they did not believe that poverty is caused by sin/fate/seed, or believe this only a little. However villagers are perceived to strongly hold these beliefs and link their situation to their fate. There is also a strong belief among practitioners that people must help themselves first, they have to try hard and struggle. There seems to be an underlying understanding that villagers rely on their fate and often do not try to help themselves.

It seems to me that these beliefs of the practitioners impact on their attitudes and on their optimism regarding whether it is possible to change the situation of the poor, and their understanding as to the extent that it can be changed. How practitioners respond to and work with the villagers' attitudes and beliefs and villagers' own optimism about whether it is possible to change their situation and to what extent it can be changed is also relevant to what happens in development practice.

  - a) What is your experience of this? That is, practitioners and villagers accepting how things are (and being passive) because there is a belief in the connection between

one's situation and fate. Do people believe in agency and the possibility of change? But maybe not completely?

- b) If people are poor there is an implication that they have not tried and struggled enough, which perhaps results in the poor being regarded as "lazy". Even though practitioners may understand something about the structural causes of poverty there is still quite a strong tendency to think that poor villagers are lazy. What is your view on this?
- c) Does this view engage with Buddhism? How?

- 4. Practitioners believe that for development work to be effective it is necessary to have a close relationship with the villagers. One aspect of this was to be equal with the villagers. However, there are various understandings and perceptions about the meaning of equality and whether it is possible or desirable.

It seems to me that equality of all people before the law is generally accepted, i.e. equal rights/human rights as a concept. However, equality in terms of the equal worth of human beings regardless of their status is not a typical understanding in Cambodia. The more common perception is that people have got different skills and abilities and therefore different worth. (It is often said that status differentials in society are perceived to be the result of the person's sin in their previous life and this influences how individuals regard those above and below them in status.)

- a) Would you say that typically Cambodians, including practitioners, regard people as being of equal worth?
  - b) In the light of the previous question, is equality important or necessary for effective development outcomes in development?
  - c) If the equal worth of human beings is not a general understanding of Cambodians at all levels how does this impact on the value of respect?
- 5. Many practitioners said that development work does not relate to, or impact on Cambodian culture and tradition. Nor does development work relate to, or impact on religion (Buddhism). Development is perceived as something separate to these. It is about change, generally conceived as "from less to more". The focus is on providing things to the villagers, such as education and information. The practitioners have specific tasks they need to do in order to achieve what is in the project plan.

It seems to me that practitioners perceive development work as being value free. It provides new ideas and resources but does not impact significantly on culture, traditions or religious beliefs.

- a) What is your experience of this? That is, is this how development is typically perceived?
  - b) Should there be efforts to integrate these? That is, to try to raise workers' consciousness of the interconnectedness between development ideas, Buddhist beliefs, and cultural and traditional beliefs/behaviours, or, in your assessment, are there more important issues to focus on?
  - c) If integration is desired, how can this be approached?
- 6. In the analysis of the system, or the power dynamics and relationships in the community — the practitioner and the NGO are seen as being outside and are not included as an integral part of the analysis. It is assumed the practitioner will be objective and impartial. I observed that in their practice, practitioners use their discretion. Each individual prioritises things differently — according to their personal values or understanding of the work. For example, women workers are more active in promoting women's leadership and rights while male workers often leave women on the periphery.

- a) What is your experience of this exercise of power and discretion of workers?
  - b) How does the power relationship between the practitioner and the villagers impact on what work is undertaken and how?
7. It was stated that Cambodians do not have the habit of thinking. That training was not useful unless people know 'how to think' so we should give attention to teaching and learning 'how to think'.
- a) What is your response to this? Is this a real issue?
  - b) What does "learning to think" mean?
8. In Khmer, are the concepts for values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviour understood to be interchangeable, distinct, or are they understood to be related in terms of cause and effect? (For example, it was said that Khmer thinking has not changed, it is just that people's actions are different now.)
9. Are there other significant issues for practice?

## Focus group discussion guide — expatriates

1. Practitioners say that it is essential to understand and follow what the villagers want to do, that they cannot go against the villagers' beliefs. It is also commonly said that development has not happened in the village because the villagers lack ideas and information and cannot think. Villagers want their lives to be better. The practitioners believe they have studied and learned about the situation and development and they know what needs to be done. Often this includes changing the attitudes and beliefs of the villagers. The practitioners believe that what they plan is good and will help the villagers — so they are doing what the villagers want to do.

It seems to me that these ideas/approaches are competing. I think Cambodian practitioners do not necessarily perceive these as opposing ideas, and even if perceived to be so, it does not appear to be regarded as problematic. The concept of “cognitive dissonance” suggests that people tend to need to eliminate inconsistent beliefs or ideas. However, there are studies which indicate that this is culturally based.

What is your experience of this issue?

2. Practitioners said they did not believe that poverty is caused by sin/fate/seed, or believe this only a little. However villagers are perceived to strongly hold these beliefs and link their situation to their fate. There is also a strong belief among practitioners that people must help themselves first, they have to try hard and struggle.

It seems to me that these beliefs of the practitioners impact on their attitudes and on their optimism regarding whether it is possible to change the situation of the poor, and their understanding as to the extent that it can be changed. How practitioners respond to and work with the villagers' attitudes and beliefs and villagers' own optimism about whether it is possible to change their situation and to what extent it can be changed is also relevant to what happens in development practice.

- a) What is your experience of this issue?
  - b) If people are poor there is an implication that they have not tried and struggled enough, and perhaps results in the poor being regarded as “lazy”. Even though practitioners may understand something about the structural causes of poverty there is still quite a strong tendency to think that poor villagers are lazy. What is your experience of this?
  - c) This thinking seems to be related to Cambodian interpretations of Buddhism. Should/how could this be addressed in relation to development practice?
3. Practitioners believe that for development work to be effective it is necessary to have a close relationship with the villagers. One aspect of this was to be equal with the villagers. However, there are various understandings and perceptions about the meaning of equality and whether is it possible or desirable.

It seems to me that equality of all people before the law is generally accepted, i.e. equal rights/human rights as a concept. However, equality in terms of the equal worth of human beings regardless of their status is not a typical understanding in Cambodia. The more common perception is that people have got different skills and abilities and therefore different worth. (It is often said that status differentials in society are perceived to be the result of the person's sin in their previous life and this influences how individuals regard those above and below them in status.)

- a) Would you say that typically Cambodians, including practitioners, regard people as being of equal worth?
- b) Do you think the notion of equality is important or necessary for effective development outcomes in development?

- c) If the equal worth of human beings is not a general understanding of Cambodians at all levels, how do you think this impacts on the value of respect?
- 4. Many practitioners said that development work does not relate to, or impact on, Cambodian culture and tradition. Nor does development work relate to, or impact on, religion (Buddhism). Development is perceived as something separate to these. It is about change, generally conceived as “from less to more”. The focus is on providing things to the villagers, such as education and information. The practitioners have specific tasks they need to do in order to achieve what is in the project plan.

It seems to me that practitioners perceive development work as being value free. It provides new ideas and resources but does not impact significantly on culture, traditions or religious beliefs.

- a) What is your experience of this? That is, is this how development is typically perceived?
  - b) Should there be efforts to integrate these? That is, to try to raise workers’ consciousness of the interconnectedness between development ideas, Buddhist beliefs, and cultural and traditional beliefs/behaviours, or, in your assessment, are there more important issues to focus on?
  - c) If integration is desired, how can this be approached?
- 5. In the analysis of the system — of the power dynamics and relationships in the community — the practitioner and the NGO are seen as being outside and are not included as an integral part of the analysis. It is assumed the practitioner will be objective and impartial. I observed that in their practice, practitioners use their discretion. Each individual prioritises things differently according to their personal values or understanding of the work. For example, women workers are more active in promoting women’s leadership and rights while male workers often leave women on the periphery.  
What is your experience of the exercise of power and discretion of workers?
- 6. It was stated that Cambodians do not have the habit of thinking. That training was not useful unless people know “how to think” so we should give attention to teaching and learning how to think.
  - a. What is your response to this? Is this a real issue?
  - b. What does “learning to think” mean?
- 7. In Khmer, are the concepts for values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviour understood to be interchangeable, distinct, or are they understood to be related in terms of cause and effect?
- 8. There is an absence of the concept of supervision of the actual practice of development work, as compared say to social work. That is, in terms of looking at the way in which the practitioner is able to use her/himself, their knowledge and skills in their relationships and development work in the village. The absence of supervision also means there is no structured method to stimulate practitioner to reflect on what they do and how they do this.  
What are your thoughts about this?
- 9. Are there other significant issues for practice?

## **Appendix D. Phase four: Semi-structured interview guides**

The eight semi-structured interviews with key informants each addressed specific areas of interest. These are briefly outlined.

1. Khmer terms used for values, attitudes and behaviour. Whether values are socially mandated or personally chosen. Whether visible actions are more important than adherence to principles in Cambodian society.
2. Social work in the Cambodian context. The interplay between social work skills and the practice of values such as respect for the “client”. Workers’ belief and optimism that clients can change — that they have agency. Trauma and its effect on practitioners, their practice and the society in general.
3. How learning takes place within a culture; the impact of trauma on learning; appropriateness of the learner-centred approach in Cambodia; the impact of hierarchy, homogeneity and harmony.
4. Links between Buddhism and development practice; Buddhism and the notions of equality agency, and compassion.
5. The development sector’s engagement with Buddhism and attitudes towards Buddhism, indigenous practices and existing civil society structures. Cambodian lay people’s interpretation of Buddhism. Morality: personally chosen or socially mandated..
6. Khmer words for values, morality, attitudes. Cambodian understandings of the differences and connections between these.
- 7 and 8. The practice context and changes in the situation between 2001 and 2005, including: trends in NGO practices; trends in donor policies; and NGO-government relations.



When field research commenced in September 2003 I was enrolled to do a Master's of Social Work by research. This was upgraded to PhD status in November 2003.

## **Appendix E. NGDO information letter and consent statement**

Title of Project:

THE INFLUENCE OF VALUES ON DEVELOPMENT PRACTICE IN CAMBODIA

Investigator:

Moirá O’Leary, School of Social Work, La Trobe University, Bundoora, Australia, 3068. The research is being conducted for a Masters of Social Work.

Supervisors:

Margarita Frederico and Cliff Picton, School of Social Work, La Trobe University.

The goal of this study is to gain a better understanding of the influence of values (strong beliefs) in development work. The study seeks to explore the beliefs and values which underpin, and the meaning which Cambodian development practitioners give to development, and to their practice. It will explore how practitioners’ values fit with, or match, the values which underpin the theories and approaches to development, Cambodian cultural values and Cambodian NGO values.

Research into development interventions has rarely considered the factors that influence how practitioners make decisions in the field. Practitioners have to decide between what they think is good and what they ought to do, what their organisation thinks is good, what the villagers think is good and what development theories and donors think is good. The aim of the research is to understand how practitioners are influenced by these various factors as they carry out their work.

It is hoped that analysis of the findings will provide information about how advisors/trainers/managers involved in strengthening the capacity of Cambodian development practitioners can better work with and train practitioners so that practice will be more effective. You may find the discussions about your work a useful reflection on what guides your practice.

As an experienced Cambodian NGO working in rural community development I would like to invite you to participate in the research. The following is requested of a participating organisation:

- participation of two or three experienced staff members in a series of three individual interviews, each of one to two hours. I would also like to accompany these staff members when they go to the field to conduct their regular activities, each for two days.
- a one day workshop with all the project staff members of the organisation

The interviews and the workshop will take place in Khmer so it is not necessary for the participants to speak English. A Cambodian interpreter will be present to assist with interpretation and to help record the discussions, if you agree to this.

The involvement of your organisation in the research is voluntary and it is up to you whether or not you want to participate. The purpose of the study is to learn from your experience and to gain an understanding of your beliefs about your work, what you are hoping to achieve and what influences practice decisions within the organisation. It is not an evaluation and the researcher will not be judging the organisation's work.

Selection of the two or three staff for the interviews/field visit will require a collaborative decision. The requirement is that practitioners have at least five years' experience in community development work — preferably one man and one woman. Selection would depend on staff availability according to the organisation's work demands. Participation of the potential candidates depends on their willingness to participate and ultimately this will be their decision as participation is voluntary. If the leadership agrees to staff participation in principle, I would like to address a meeting of the staff to present the research, and inform them of the requirements of the case study. Interested candidates could then approach the researcher after that meeting. At that time, more detail of what will be involved will be provided to the potential participants.

The one-day workshop will extend over a normal working day of seven or eight hours and will focus on issues concerned with the influence of values on how practitioners carry out their practice in the village. All project staff would be invited to join, as agreed with the leadership of the organisation. The format would be a series of questions which staff will reflect on and discuss in pairs or small groups before presenting back to the large group. One aim of the workshop is to provide the opportunity for the organisation to consider together some of the factors affecting practice which may lead to a better understanding. If the staff present agree, the large group discussion would be audio-taped but this is not essential.

If you, as an organisation, agree to participate you can withdraw at any time and request that the record of your involvement be destroyed. You may request a summary of the notes from the workshop however, these will only be available in English due to time and funding constraints.

The data from the workshop will be recorded in a notebook or on audio-tape and this will be transcribed onto computer and floppy disks. The organisation's name will not appear in the material which will be securely stored by the researcher, who will have sole access to the data. After analysis these materials will be stored at La Trobe University for five years and will then be destroyed.

The material from the workshop and interviews will be analysed and will be presented in summary in a thesis. It may also be used for a report and other publications so that the findings from the research are available to others, particularly development workers in Cambodia. Neither your name nor any other identifying data will be published.

Any questions regarding this project may be directed to the investigator, Moira O'Leary, of the School of Social Work, La Trobe University. In Cambodia you can contact me at Krom Akphiwat Phum's office, on telephone number: 012 856 303, or email:

moira.mal@bigpond.com. If you have any complaints or queries that the investigator has not been able to answer to your satisfaction, you may contact the research supervisor, Margarita Frederico, at the School of Social Work, La Trobe University, on telephone number: + 66 (0)3 94792407, or email: m.frederico@latrobe.edu.au. If there are questions the supervisor cannot answer you may contact the Ethics Liaison Officer, Human Ethics Committee, La Trobe University, Victoria, 3086 (ph: + 66 (0)3 9479 1443 or e-mail: humanethics@latrobe.edu.au.

#### STATEMENT OF AGREEMENT TO PARTICIPATE

I ..... (representative of the participating organisation) have read (or, where appropriate, have had read to me) and understood the information above, and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in the project, realising that the organisation may withdraw at any time. I agree that research data provided by the organisation or with my permission during the project may be included in a thesis, presented at conferences and published in journals on the condition that neither the organisation's name nor any other identifying information is used.

In the statements below, please circle the option you want. Representative's initial

I agree/do not agree to staff volunteering to participate .....  
in interviews/field visits with the researcher

I agree/do not agree to the large group sessions in the .....  
workshop being audio-taped.

I agree/do not agree to an interpreter being present at the workshop. ....

**Name of organisational representative (block letters):**

Signature:

Date:

**Name of investigator (block letters): MOIRA O'LEARY**

Signature:

Date

**Name of student supervisor: MARGARITA FREDERICO**

## **Appendix F. In-depth interview key informant information statement and consent statement**

Title of Project:

THE INFLUENCE OF VALUES ON DEVELOPMENT PRACTICE IN CAMBODIA

Investigator:

Moirá O'Leary, School of Social Work, La Trobe University, Bundoora, Australia, 3068. The research is being conducted for a Masters of Social Work

Supervisors:

Margarita Frederico and Cliff Picton, School of Social Work, La Trobe University.

The goal of this study is to gain a better understanding of the influence of values (strong beliefs) in development work. The study seeks to explore the beliefs and values which underpin, and the meaning which Cambodian development practitioners give to development, and to their practice. It will explore how practitioners' values fit with, or match, the values which underpin the theories and approaches to development, Cambodian cultural values and Cambodian NGO values.

Research into development interventions has rarely considered the factors that influence how practitioners make decisions in the field. Practitioners have to decide between what they think is good and what they ought to do, what their organisation thinks is good, what the villagers think is good and what development theories and donors think is good. The aim of the research is to understand how practitioners are influenced by these various factors as they carry out their work.

It is hoped that analysis of the findings will provide information about how advisors/trainers/managers involved in strengthening the capacity of Cambodian development practitioners can better work with and train practitioners so that practice will be more effective. You may find the discussions about your work a useful reflection on what guides your practice.

As an experienced Cambodian development practitioner working in rural community development I would like to invite you to participate in the research. Your involvement would consist of a series of three interviews, each of up to two hours' duration. The interviews would involve yourself, myself, the researcher and an interpreter. However, if you would prefer the interpreter not to be present this is not essential. The interviews would be conducted in Khmer. The interviews will draw on your experience and the purpose of the interviews is to gain an understanding of your beliefs about your work, what you are hoping to achieve, and what influences your practice decisions.

I would also like to accompany you when you go to the field, for two days. During the field visits I would like to observe you as you conduct your regular activities in the village. No special meetings or change to your planned activities would be required. The purpose of the field visit is to observe your work and afterwards discuss your observed strategies and decisions with you. The purpose is not to evaluate your work but to learn about what you do. Your organisation is willing for staff to participate but it is up to you to decide as this is voluntary. If you do agree you can withdraw at any time and request that the record of your involvement be destroyed. You may request a copy of the notes from your interviews; however, these will only be available in English due to time and funding constraints. If you agree, the interviews will be audio-taped but this is not essential.

The data from your interview will be recorded in a notebook or on audio-tape and this will be transcribed onto computer and floppy disks. Your name will not appear in these materials which will be securely stored by the researcher, who will have sole access to the data. After analysis these materials will be stored at La Trobe University for five years and will then be destroyed.

The material from the interviews with yourself and others will be analysed and will be presented in summary in a thesis. It may also be used for a report and other publications so that the findings from the research are available to others, particularly development workers in Cambodia. Neither your name nor any other identifying data will be published.

Any questions regarding this project may be directed to the investigator, Moira O'Leary, of the School of Social Work, La Trobe University. In Cambodia you can contact me at Krom Akphiwat Phum's office, on telephone number: 012 856 303, or email: [moira.mal@bigpond.com](mailto:moira.mal@bigpond.com). If you have any complaints or queries that the investigator has not been able to answer to your satisfaction, you may contact the research supervisor, Margarita Frederico, at the School of Social Work, La Trobe University, on telephone number: + 66 (0)3 94792407, or email: [m.frederico@latrobe.edu.au](mailto:m.frederico@latrobe.edu.au). If there are questions the supervisor cannot answer you may contact the Ethics Liaison Officer, Human Ethics Committee, La Trobe University, Victoria, 3086, (ph: + 66 (0)3 9479 1443 or e-mail: [humanethics@latrobe.edu.au](mailto:humanethics@latrobe.edu.au)).

## STATEMENT OF AGREEMENT TO PARTICIPATE

I ..... (the participant) have read (or, where appropriate, have had read to me) and understood the information above, and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in the project, realising that I may withdraw at any time. I agree that research data provided by me or with my permission during the project may be included in a thesis, presented at conferences and published in journals on the condition that neither my name nor any other identifying information is used.

<u>In the statements below, please circle the option you want</u>	<u>Participant's initial</u>
I agree/do not agree to participate in the interviews	.....
I agree/do not agree to the researcher accompanying me to the field to observe my work.	.....
I agree/do not agree to an interpreter being present during the interviews and field visit:	.....
I agree/do not agree to the interviews being audio-taped.	.....

**Name of participant (block letters):**

Signature:

Date

**Name of investigator (block letters): MOIRA O'LEARY**

Signature:

Date

**Name of student supervisor: MARGARITA FREDERICO**

## **Appendix G. Focus groups information statement and consent statements**

### **Information statement for focus group discussions**

The purpose of this research is to understand more about how values influence the development practice of Cambodian development practitioners who are working in the field of rural community development. Development workers are in the front line in implementing development projects but there has been little research into how workers go about their work and what influences how they make decisions in the field.

This is the third stage in the overall research project. Phase one consisted of a series of three interviews and field visits with eight Cambodian community development workers who are actively involved in village work. Phase two consisted of a one-day workshop with each of three Cambodian NGOs. Phases one and two were conducted in Battambang from September to November in 2003.

The study explored the values of Cambodian development workers — what they believe are the elements of the “good life” for themselves, their family and Cambodian society. It looked at what they consider desirable in their development work (espoused values), and through observation and discussion of their practice, the beliefs and priorities guiding their actual practice (values-in-action). The research also explored what practitioners feel villagers expect of them, the values of the social and cultural situation in which they are working, and the beliefs of their NGO and what it is trying to achieve through its work. It also looked, indirectly, at the beliefs and values underpinning development theories and approaches which the practitioners have learned about in training courses and workshops.

All of these factors and the underlying values and beliefs about what is good or desirable, impact on the practitioner when she or he is conducting their work in the village and making decisions about what ought to be done — in terms of the desirable ways of behaving and the desirable outcomes being sought. The issues are complex and different participants held different views, which also varied according to the specific context or situation they were engaging with.

The purpose of the focus group discussion is

1. To consider whether the main findings from phases one and two resonate with your experience, and to ascertain whether these are significant issues for development practice.
2. To explore further how these are to be understood from the Cambodian perspective.  
*(Included in the statement to Cambodian participants only)*
3. To explore the implications of these issues for development practice and capacity building in Cambodia.

The group discussion will be approximately 2.5 hours. I will first present a summary of the main research findings and then raise some issues for discussion.

Your contribution to the discussion would be greatly appreciated.

Moirá O’Leary  
Ph: 012 389810



## **Cambodian focus group participant consent form**

Title of Project:

THE INFLUENCE OF VALUES ON DEVELOPMENT PRACTICE  
IN CAMBODIA

Investigator:

Moira O'Leary, School of Social Work, La Trobe University, Bundoora, Australia, 3068. The research is being conducted for a Doctor of Philosophy degree.

Supervisors:

Margarita Frederico and Cliff Picton, School of Social Work, La Trobe University.

The goal of this study is to gain a better understanding of the influence of values in development work. The study seeks to explore the beliefs and values which underpin, and the meaning which Cambodian development practitioners give to development, and to their practice. It will explore how practitioners' values fit with, or match, the values which underpin the theories and approaches to development, Cambodian cultural values and Cambodian NGO values.

Research into development interventions has rarely considered the factors that influence how practitioners make decisions in the field. Practitioners have to decide between what they think is good and what they ought to do, what their organisation thinks is good, what the villagers think is good and what development theories and donors think is good. The aim of the research is to understand how practitioners are influenced by these various factors as they carry out their work.

It is hoped that analysis of the findings will provide information about how advisors/trainers/managers involved in strengthening the capacity of Cambodian development practitioners can better work with and train practitioners so that practice will be more effective.

As a Cambodian practitioner who has experience in capacity building with Cambodian development practitioners I would like to invite you to participate in the research. Your involvement would consist of participation in a focus group discussion of approximately two and a half hours' duration. The focus group will be conducted in English. It is expected that the group will comprise five to six participants. The discussion will draw on your experience, and will explore the implications of the findings from the earlier stages of the research (conducted in Battambang from September to November 2003). I will provide a short presentation of the main themes and issues which have emerged from the research to date at the start of the discussion.

If you do agree to participate you can withdraw at any time and request that the record of your involvement be destroyed. You may request a copy of the summary notes from the focus group. If the group members agree the discussion will be audio-taped but this is not essential.

The data from the focus group discussion will be recorded in a notebook or on audio-tape and this will be transcribed onto computer and floppy disks. Your name will not appear on the material which will be securely stored by the researcher, who will have sole access to the data. After analysis these materials will be stored at La Trobe University for five years and will then be destroyed.

The material from the focus group discussion will be analysed and will be presented in summary in a thesis. It may also be used for a report and other publications so that the findings from the research are available to others, particularly development workers in Cambodia. Neither your name nor any other identifying data will be published.

Any questions regarding this project may be directed to the investigator, Moira O'Leary, of the School of Social Work, La Trobe University. In Cambodia you can contact me on telephone number: 012 389810, or email: [moira.mal@bigpond.com](mailto:moira.mal@bigpond.com) If you have any complaints or queries that the investigator has not been able to answer to your satisfaction, you may contact the research supervisor, Margarita Frederico, at the School of Social Work, La Trobe University, on telephone number: + 66 (0)3 94792407, or email: [m.frederico@latrobe.edu.au](mailto:m.frederico@latrobe.edu.au) If there are questions the supervisor cannot answer you may contact the Ethics Liaison Officer, Human Ethics Committee, La Trobe University, Victoria, 3086 (ph: + 66 (0)3 9479 1443 or e-mail: [humanethics@latrobe.edu.au](mailto:humanethics@latrobe.edu.au)).

My sincere thanks for your time. I believe your contribution to the discussion is important and I hope that the result of the research will benefit development practice in Cambodia.

## STATEMENT OF AGREEMENT TO PARTICIPATE

I ..... (the participant) have read and understood the information above, and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in the project, realising that I may withdraw at any time. I agree that research data provided by me or with my permission during the project may be included in a thesis, presented at conferences and published in journals on the condition that neither my name nor any other identifying information is used.

In the statement below, please circle the option you want

Participant's initial

I agree/do not agree to the group discussion  
being audio-taped.

.....

**Name of participant (block letters):**

Signature:

Date

**Name of investigator (block letters): MOIRA O'LEARY**

Signature:

Date

**Name of student supervisor: MARGARITA FREDERICO**

## **Expatriate focus group participant consent form**

Title of Project:

THE INFLUENCE OF VALUES ON DEVELOPMENT PRACTICE  
IN CAMBODIA

Investigator:

Moirira O'Leary, School of Social Work, La Trobe University, Bundoora, Australia, 3068. The research is being conducted for a Doctor of Philosophy degree.

Supervisors:

Margarita Frederico and Cliff Picton, School of Social Work, La Trobe University.

The goal of this study is to gain a better understanding of the influence of values in development work. The study seeks to explore the beliefs and values which underpin, and the meaning which Cambodian development practitioners give to development, and to their practice. It will explore how practitioners' values fit with, or match, the values which underpin the theories and approaches to development, Cambodian cultural values and Cambodian NGO values.

Research into development interventions has rarely considered the factors that influence how practitioners make decisions in the field. Practitioners have to decide between what they think is good and what they ought to do, what their organisation thinks is good, what the villagers think is good and what development theories and donors think is good. The aim of the research is to understand how practitioners are influenced by these various factors as they carry out their work.

It is hoped that analysis of the findings will provide information about how advisors/trainers/managers involved in strengthening the capacity of Cambodian development practitioners can better work with and train practitioners so that practice will be more effective.

As a practitioner who has experience in capacity building with Cambodian development practitioners I would like to invite you to participate in the research. Your involvement would consist of participation in a focus group discussion of approximately two and a half hours' duration. The focus group will be conducted in English. It is expected that the group will comprise six to eight participants. The discussion will draw on your experience, and will explore the implications of the findings from the earlier stages of the research (conducted in Battambang from September to November 2003). I will provide a short presentation of the main themes and issues which have emerged from the research to date at the start of the discussion.

If you do agree to participate you can withdraw at any time and request that the record of your involvement be destroyed. You may request a copy of the summary notes from the focus group. If the group members agree the discussion will be audio-taped but this is not essential.

The data from the focus group discussion will be recorded in a notebook or on audio-tape and this will be transcribed onto computer and floppy disks. Your name will not appear on the material which will be securely stored by the researcher, who will have sole access to the data. After analysis these materials will be stored at La Trobe University for five years and will then be destroyed.

The material from the focus group discussion will be analysed and will be presented in summary in a thesis. It may also be used for a report and other publications so that the findings from the research are available to others, particularly development workers in Cambodia. Neither your name nor any other identifying data will be published.

Any questions regarding this project may be directed to the investigator, Moira O'Leary, of the School of Social Work, La Trobe University. In Cambodia you can contact me on telephone number: 012 389810, or email: [moira.mal@bigpond.com](mailto:moira.mal@bigpond.com) If you have any complaints or queries that the investigator has not been able to answer to your satisfaction, you may contact the research supervisor, Margarita Frederico, at the School of Social Work, La Trobe University, on telephone number: + 66 (0)3 94792407, or email: [m.frederico@latrobe.edu.au](mailto:m.frederico@latrobe.edu.au) If there are questions the supervisor cannot answer you may contact the Ethics Liaison Officer, Human Ethics Committee, La Trobe University, Victoria, 3086 (ph: + 66 (0)3 9479 1443 or e-mail: [humanethics@latrobe.edu.au](mailto:humanethics@latrobe.edu.au)).

My sincere thanks for your time. I believe your contribution to the discussion is important and I hope that the result of the research will benefit development practice in Cambodia.

## STATEMENT OF AGREEMENT TO PARTICIPATE

I ..... (the participant) have read and understood the information above, and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in the project, realising that I may withdraw at any time. I agree that research data provided by me or with my permission during the project may be included in a thesis, presented at conferences and published in journals on the condition that neither my name nor any other identifying information is used.

In the statement below, please circle the option you want

Participant's initial

I agree/do not agree to the group discussion  
being audio-taped.

.....

**Name of participant (block letters):**

Signature:

Date

**Name of investigator (block letters): MOIRA O'LEARY**

Signature:

Date

**Name of student supervisor: MARGARITA FREDERICO**

## **Appendix H. Semi-structured interview key informant information statement and consent statement**

Title of Project:

THE INFLUENCE OF VALUES ON DEVELOPMENT PRACTICE IN CAMBODIA

Investigator:

Moirá O'Leary, School of Social Work, La Trobe University, Bundoora, Australia, 3068. The research is being conducted for a Doctor of Philosophy degree.

Supervisors:

Margarita Frederico and Cliff Picton, School of Social Work, La Trobe University.

The goal of this study is to gain a better understanding of the influence of values in development work. The study seeks to explore the beliefs and values which underpin, and the meaning which Cambodian development practitioners give to development, and to their practice. It will explore how practitioners' values fit with, or match, the values which underpin the theories and approaches to development, Cambodian cultural values and Cambodian NGO values.

Research into development interventions has rarely considered the factors that influence how practitioners make decisions in the field. Practitioners have to decide between what they think is good and what they ought to do, what their organisation thinks is good, what the villagers think is good and what development theories and donors think is good. The aim of the research is to understand how practitioners are influenced by these various factors as they carry out their work.

It is hoped that analysis of the findings will provide information about how advisors/trainers/managers involved in strengthening the capacity of Cambodian development practitioners can better work with and train practitioners so that practice will be more effective.

As a practitioner who has experience in capacity building with Cambodian development practitioners I would like to invite you to participate in the research. Your involvement would consist of an interview of up to two hours' duration. The interview will be conducted in English. The discussion will draw on your experience of development practice in Cambodia.

If you do agree to participate you can withdraw at any time and request that the record of your involvement be destroyed. You may request a copy of the summary notes from the interview. If you are agreeable I would like to audio-tape the discussion but this is not essential.

The data from the interview will be recorded in a notebook or on audio-tape and this will be transcribed onto computer and floppy disks. Your name will not appear on the material which will be securely stored by the researcher, who will have sole access to the data. After analysis these materials will be stored at La Trobe University for five years and will then be destroyed.

The material from the interview will be analysed and will be presented in summary in a thesis. It may also be used for a report and other publications so that the findings from the research are available to others, particularly development workers in Cambodia. Neither your name nor any other identifying data will be published.

Any questions regarding this project may be directed to the investigator, Moira O'Leary, of the School of Social Work, La Trobe University. In Cambodia you can contact me on telephone number: 012 389810, or email: moira.mal@bigpond.com If you have any complaints or queries that the investigator has not been able to answer to your satisfaction, you may contact the research supervisor, Margarita Frederico, at the School of Social Work, La Trobe University, on telephone number: + 66 (0)3 94792407, or email: m.frederico@latrobe.edu.au If there are questions the supervisor cannot answer you may contact the Ethics Liaison Officer, Human Ethics Committee, La Trobe University, Victoria, 3086 (ph: + 66 (0)3 9479 1443 or e-mail: humanethics@latrobe.edu.au).

My sincere thanks for your time. I believe your contribution to the discussion is important and I hope that the result of the research will benefit development practice in Cambodia.

### **STATEMENT OF AGREEMENT TO PARTICIPATE**

I ..... (the participant) have read and understood the information above, and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in the project, realising that I may withdraw at any time. I agree that research data provided by me or with my permission during the project may be included in a thesis, presented at conferences and published in journals on the condition that neither my name nor any other identifying information is used.

In the statement below, please circle the option you want

Participant's initial

I agree/do not agree to the group discussion  
being audio-taped.

.....

**Name of participant (block letters):**

Signature:

Date

**Name of investigator (block letters): MOIRA O'LEARY**

Signature:

Date

**Name of student supervisor: MARGARITA FREDERICO**



## **Appendix I. Abbreviations of field research sources**

<b>P 1-8</b>	In-depth interview participants
<b>WS 1-3</b>	NGO focus groups
<b>CFG 1-4</b>	Cambodian focus groups
<b>FFG 1-2</b>	Foreign focus groups
<b>CFGF</b>	Cambodian/Foreign focus groups
<b>KI</b>	Key informants in semi-structured interviews

The source given for each quotation also includes the line number from the interview/focus group transcript.

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