



CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

There is a growing consciousness that the poor are vulnerable to risks and constantly pre-occupied with risk-averse and coping strategies to avoid sinking further into poverty amidst the backdrop of globalization (Ortiz, 2007). People infected with HIV-AIDS (Human Immunodeficiency Virus - Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) are no exception. Juxtaposed further on a poverty landscape wherein half the world – over three billion – live on less than \$2.50 a day (Chen , 2008), these are chronically sick people who are equally chronically poor in developing countries with less investment on social and health allocations and economic priorities. HIV-AIDS is not a life-style choice (Ward, 1999) and like all chronic diseases can affect their livelihood prospects (Ezzy, De Visser, & Bartos, 1999) and thus reinforcing poverty inequality (Piot, Bartos, Ghys, & Walker, 2001). Food security is strongly inter-related to the disease because of its strong links to nutrition and health. Implementation of antiretroviral (ART) drugs, complemented by simultaneous efforts to ensure proper nutrition are essential components to an effective response against HIV-AIDS but in resource-limited setting, there are factors such as malnutrition, poverty, opportunistic infections and consequently food insecurity to consider which can lead to drug resistance and further increased vulnerability (Anabwani & Navario, 2005; Slater, 2004). Yet food security is also intimately linked to empowerment of those living with HIV-AIDS because the issue connects to the broader structural concerns of a country's political economy influenced by its policy priorities. In addition, food security is a political tool and thus often subject to a neoliberal agenda of the state.

The examination of the state in this case, Cambodia, is within the context of how it has used neoliberalism towards its own means by giving attention to the example of marginalized groups such as those with HIV-AIDS and their food security needs. One has to bear in mind that the issues of the land crisis that has impacted on food insecurity, its weak health system, the high prevalence of HIV-AIDS during the 1990s and its heavy reliance on donor support has also played a part in this context.

The clamor for social protection policies recommends that access to treatment is ensured for those living with HIV-AIDS. However, there have been challenges in the implementation of these policies with less emphasis on the rights-based approach and empowerment and looking only at feeding the dependency of vulnerable groups.

Neoliberalism – the doctrine that states the market exchange is an ethic in itself and capable of acting as a guide for all human action without any interference from the state – has become the hegemonic thought and practice throughout the world since the 1970s. Its spread has relied on the intertwined elements of reconstitution of state powers e.g. privatization, finance and market processes while its impact has been the weakening in the obligations of the state to provide for the welfare of its citizens (Kotz, September 1, 2009).

However this presupposes that the state is a “victim” of outside neoliberal forces – if one takes a look at how neoliberal forces are subsumed under state sovereignty, one finds the fluid relationship that the state consciously imposes between its citizens and external institutions. Truly, the neoliberal logic has shaped the economic externality of countries – particularly developing countries – but how this has affected the relationship of social welfare towards its citizens and its relationships with international development agencies is a matter of exploration. This is specifically true when you consider that the rise of the Asian tiger economies in the 1990s were accomplished by subordinating themselves to the demands of neoliberal structures and at the same time creating their own spaces, possibilities and control in governing the rights of their own citizens (Ong, 2006).

1.1 Statement of the Problem

This thesis discusses the role of the state which has created a hybridized form neoliberalism to fit their own context and how this has impacted on the social rights of its citizens, especially looking at vulnerable groups such as those with HIV-AIDS and their food needs. It proposes for social transformation, an aspect of social protection as a form of resistance towards empowering those with HIV-AIDS using food security as the entry-point.

1.2 Research Questions

- i. What is the nexus between food insecurity and HIV-AIDS in Cambodia?
- ii. What is the role of the state in terms of social protection based on food needs for people living with HIV-AIDS in Cambodia?
- iii. How can social transformation be a role towards the empowerment of people living with HIV-AIDS?
- iv. How will social transformation be applied against a neoliberal state?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

- i. To investigate the relationship between food security and HIV-AIDS
- ii. To assess social protection mechanisms of people living with HIV-AIDS
- iii. To propose for how social transformation should work against a neoliberal state.

1.4 Hypothesis

The *hypothesis* is that very low income countries focused on economic growth rooted in neoliberal economic policies are less able to invest in sustained social protection systems for its citizens, increasing the vulnerability and risks towards the poor and near poor.

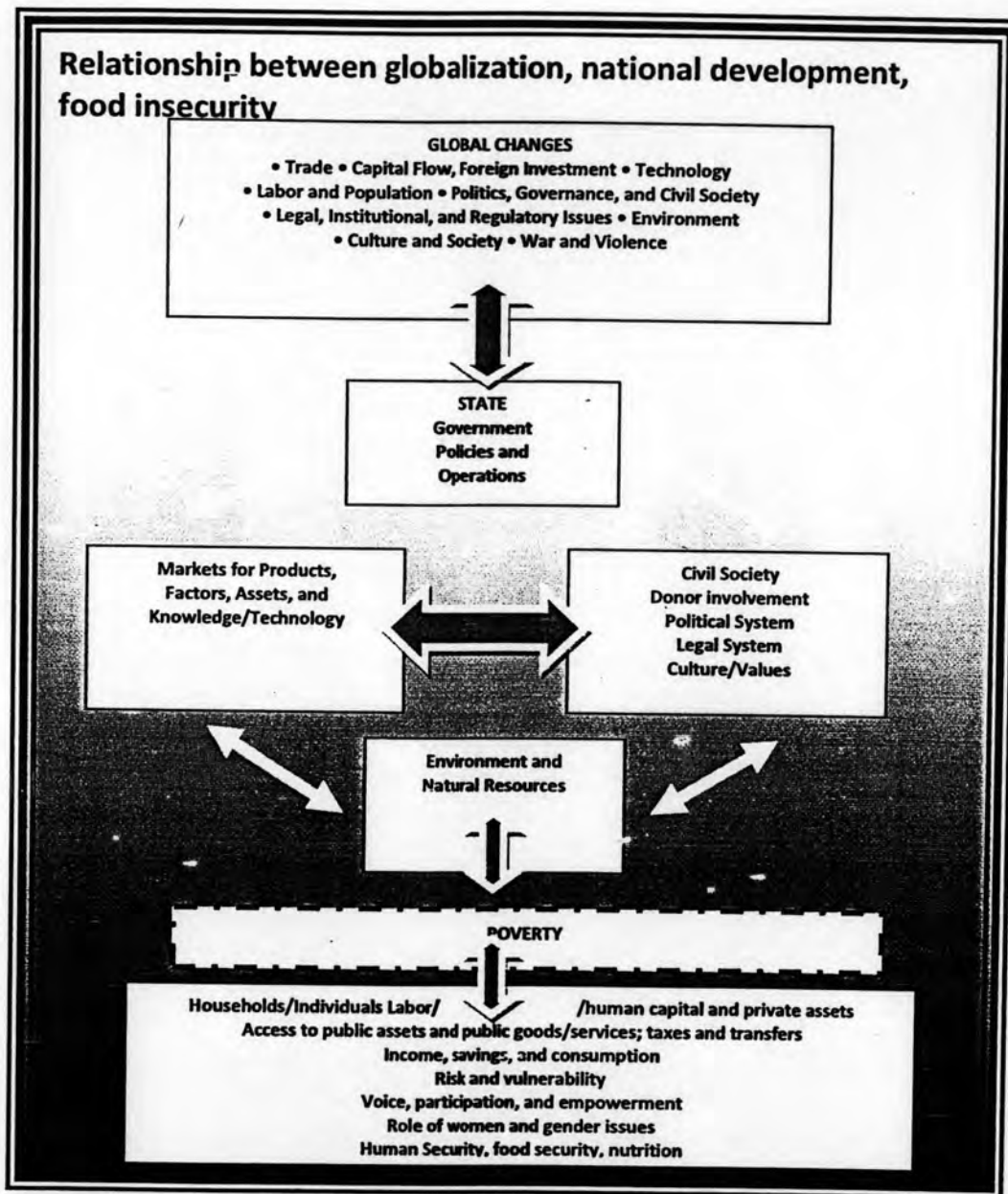
1.5 Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 presents a framework that I have liberally borrowed from Diaz-Bonilla and Robinson (2001) in explaining the links between food insecurity, globalisation and national development.

The diagram shows how various global changes at the head (first level) affect the government, civil society, markets, and environment in developing countries. For example, globalization may affect the autonomy of government policies and thus the

availability of public resources. This in turn may affect cultures and values which require new cross-country alliances in civil society. Furthermore, it may change actors in and the structure of, markets (both domestic and international) which may lead to larger environmental spillovers that can have implications for different sectors. In addition, these global changes affect globalization through their impact on economic and non-economic assets and capabilities affect poverty through their impact on economic and non-economic assets, capabilities, mechanisms for the redistribution of income and institutional factors (fourth level).

Figure 1. Source Shaping Globalisation for Poverty Alleviation and Food Security, Diaz-Bonilla & Robinson (2001)



The factors indicated in the fourth level mostly determine what Amartya Sen (Sen, 1981) calls “entitlements and capabilities of the poor”. Food security is a subset of this general framework because it is recognized that the main problem is lack of access due to poverty.

1.6 Significance

The area of social protection, food security and HIV-AIDS within a context of neoliberalism is a relatively under-researched area in Southeast Asia. I have indicated the significance of this research as follows:

- To shed light on the social protection mechanisms towards HIV-AIDS and their food security needs in Southeast Asia; and
- To underscore that HIV-AIDS is not primarily a bio-medical and health issue but one that is heavily impacted on by structural issues of the state and its policies.

1.6 Scope and Limitation

The following limitations have been noted:

- Time constraints. Because of time constraints regarding the field research, a rapid field appraisal is done on-site; key informant interviews (KIIs) were limited to policy-makers and NGO implementers and there is only one focus group discussion with a maximum of 5 respondents. The research proper is seen as **obtaining the representative voices of selected key stakeholders** supplemented and validated by the results of the desk review but it acknowledges that only one sector of vulnerable group is showcased here – those faced by evictions. Groups located along the border, entertainment workers are not included here, nor is gender a specific focus. Thus the respondents can be categorised by the following (a) First Tier: Policy makers and Donors; (b) Second Tier: International NGOs; (c) Third Tier: Local NGOs; and (d) Fourth Tier: Community;
- Respondents from the first tier were limited to the National Aids Authority (a policy-making body) and the Council for Agriculture and Rural Development (a policy making body) together with large donors on food support towards HIV-AIDS such as the United States Agency on International Development

(USAID), World Food Programme (WFP) and the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) which plays a pivotal role on agriculture and food security. Efforts were made to gain contact with the Ministry of Social Welfare, Ministry of Rural Development however due to the specific issue, the researcher was directed towards the NAA and CARD; respondents from the second tier consisted of international non-government organisations (NGOs) that are involved in working with HIV-AIDS groups either as funding local NGOs or directly implementing with collaboration with the state; respondents from Local NGOs who form part of the service delivery mechanisms; and respondents from the Borei Keila/Toul Sambo – HIV-infected community;

- Natural challenges with the language regarding nuances;
- Security and sensitivity of the case-study. At present, the high profile case of the community in Borei Keila/Toul Sambo warranted security and sensitivity in terms of how the information was handled since respondents were reluctant to discuss state corruption and involvement of other municipal officers in the issue; and
- Limiting the issue of social protection towards social transformation.

1.7 Methodology

The methodology can be seen from two aspects: data collection and how the thesis was analyzed.

- **Data collection:** The research was based qualitative data and thus the tools used heavily reliant on were focus group discussions (FGD), key informant interviews (KII) supplemented by direct observation of selected sites and desk review. Appendix A: Unstructured Interview Guideline for Field Research
- **Data analysis:** The data was framed using analysis from the following body of work:
- **Food Security:** Amartya Sen on entitlements and social choice (Sen, 1981);

- **Social Protection:** Under the body of work of the Overseas Development Institute in particular Rachel Sabates Wheeler and Stephen Devereux (Devereux, 2004); and
- **Neoliberalism:** Following the work of David Harvey (Harvey, 2006) “theory of uneven geographical development” leading to an “accumulation by dispossession” and Aihwa Ong’s theory of “graduated sovereignty” (Ong, 2006) wherein neoliberalism is used by the state to reconfigure the territory of citizenship.

1.8 Ethical Considerations

HIV infected respondents in this study have not been asked about how they contracted the disease unless they willingly disclosed the fact as this is seen as confidential and their names were not revealed unless they state otherwise.

Moreover, local NGOs have consistently requested for relevant information to be placed “off record” due to its sensitivity and fear of reprisals from the government – rather suggesting that information be acquired from the sources themselves.

2 Basic Concepts

The basic concepts that figure in this thesis are neoliberalism, social protection, food security and HIV-AIDS.