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Livelihood Adaptation of the Khmer People in An Bình Commune, Phú Giáo district, Bình Dương province, Vietnam: From Subsistence Economy to Market Economy

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Abstract

An Binh Commune, Phú Giáo District, Bình Dương Province, home to the Khmer people, is characterized by a blend of various ethnic groups. Historically, the Khmer lived primarily in the dense forests and stream valleys of Bình Phước Province. However, since 1959, amid the context of war, they migrated to An Bình and began integrating with other ethnic groups. In response to fluctuating production environments and unstable markets, the Khmer in An Bình have developed adaptive strategies to sustain their livelihoods. Traditional subsistence activities such as agriculture, animal husbandry, and natural resource exploitation have been adjusted to fit the new environment. Notably, since 1998, the transition from cultivating food crops to industrial crops such as rubber and cashew has

marked a significant shift in the Khmer livelihood, moving from a subsistence economy to a market economy. This transformation has allowed the Khmer to accumulate capital, expand production, and stabilize their living conditions, although challenges related to price volatility and weather conditions persist. Traditional activities have been replaced or converted to market-oriented activities such as rubber and cashew cultivation and wage labor. This study, through in-depth interviews and participant observation, will analyze the livelihood adaptation of the Khmer in An Binh within the context of current integration and propose solutions for sustainable livelihood development in the future.

Keywords: Khmer People, Livelihood, Adaptation, Subsistence, Market Economy

1. Introduction

Phú Giáo District, Bình Dương Province, Vietnam, is home to a diverse range of ethnic groups, including the Kinh, Hoa, Khmer, Nùng, Tày, Chăm, Mường, S'Tiêng, Châu Ro, Thái, Sán Dìu, Sán Chay, Dao, and Thổ. These groups do not reside in concentrated villages but are dispersed among the Kinh people in various hamlets, communes, towns, or neighborhoods. The economy in Phú Giáo is primarily based on agriculture, livestock, and industrial crops such as rubber and pepper. According to the 2020 report from the Commune Ethnic Minority Management Board, An Bình Commune has a total of 926 households, with the Khmer constituting 260 households and over 1,000 individuals. The Khmer are mainly concentrated in Tân Thịnh hamlet with 164 households and Nước Vàng hamlet with 46 households, while the remaining Khmer population is sparsely distributed across other hamlets in the commune.

Although the Khmer are primarily located in these two hamlets, the infiltration of the Kinh community has significantly impacted all aspects of their lives, leading to similarities in daily activities and economic production between the two communities. The Khmer in An Bình have a history of migration; An Bình Commune was established during the French colonial period around 1959-1960. At its inception, the population was limited, with approximately 30 Khmer households in the entire commune. These households had migrated during wartime, mostly from what is now Bình Phước Province. After the 1975 liberation, the number of Khmer households had increased to 50. According to Tran Hanh Minh Phuong (2019) ^[23] regarding migration origins, the Khmer in An Bình are considered a part of the Khmer population in Southeast Vietnam. Some sources suggest they migrated from Cambodia to Southern Vietnam, then moved to Southeast Vietnam. Other sources claim that the Khmer in Southeast Vietnam are directly descended from those who moved from Cambodia (p. 43). Before migrating to Phú Giáo, the Khmer in An Bình were known for residing deep in forests, along streams, swamps, and rice fields. It is evident that from early on, the Khmer recognized the significant impact of the environment on their livelihoods, which

influenced their choice of settlement areas near rivers and streams, conducive to agriculture and water sourcing. In new clearing areas, the Khmer typically stayed for around 10 years before moving further into the forest, unlike many other ethnic groups who moved towards the plains (Do Thanh, 2017, p. 4)^[6].

Over time, besides the initial Khmer settlers in An Binh, industrialization and modernization have attracted many Khmer and Kinh people from the Southwestern provinces to work in various industrial zones in Binh Duong. Although this population is substantial, they do not live in separate villages but intermingle with the Kinh and other ethnic groups. In An Binh, due to the large Kinh population and economic policies, most Khmer households now have a lifestyle similar to that of the Kinh. Thus, it can be concluded that the Khmer community in An Binh has undergone various migration phases, mostly from Binh Phước and a few from the Mekong Delta provinces. They have maintained their cultural practices, following Theravada Buddhism. Recently, a Khmer pagoda was built in An Binh to connect the local Khmer community and revive their cultural identity.

Previously, the Khmer in An Binh primarily engaged in shifting cultivation, clearing forests for farming. However, since 1998, with new government policies prohibiting forest clearing and supporting agricultural development, they have shifted to settled farming, focusing on industrial crops such as rubber, cashew, and pepper. Along with industrialization and modernization, the Khmer community in An Binh has seen significant changes in their economic lives. Transitioning from a subsistence economy, they have increasingly participated in market-based activities, including trade, wage labor, and other non-agricultural work. This transformation is driven not only by supportive policies but also by the Khmer's adaptation to globalization and influences from environmental and cultural exchanges. However, during this livelihood transition, the Khmer community in An Binh faces challenges such as economic disparities and difficulties compared to the Kinh community. This study aims to explore the livelihood transition of the Khmer from 1998 to the present, providing a comprehensive view of their livelihood activities, influencing factors, and current challenges, and proposing sustainable development directions for the Khmer community in An Binh.

Research on Khmer livelihoods has been extensively conducted across various fields such as history, ethnology, and cultural studies. These studies have provided rich insights into the economic and cultural life of the Khmer people. Focusing on agricultural livelihoods, works by Nguyen Manh Tuong (2002)^[20], Vu Quoc Khanh (2002)^[26], and Doan Thanh No (2002)^[4] have described the production characteristics and traditional crafts of the Khmer. Issues related to land and poverty, particularly rice cultivation, have attracted the attention of researchers such as Ngo Van Le (2003)^[19], Khoa Nhan hoc (2006)^[9], Phan An (2009)^[21], Ngo Thi Phuong Lan (2013)^[16] studied livelihood instability and labor migration, particularly the migration of Khmer to urban areas such as Ho Chi Minh City and Binh Duong. This research emphasized the role of kinship and fellow ethnic connections in supporting employment for migrant Khmer workers. Additionally, Ngo Thu Trang (2016)^[18] explored the livelihood adaptations of the Khmer in the suburban districts of Ho Chi Minh City, highlighting

changes in occupations and survival strategies to adapt to new living conditions. The work of Diep Thanh Tung (2017)^[2] and Lam Quang Lang (2017) analyzed factors such as low income and land disputes affecting Khmer livelihoods in the Mekong Delta region. Notably, Ngo Thi Phuong Lan (2019)^[17] in Trà Cú District, Trà Vinh Province, described the transformation of Khmer livelihoods in the context of economic integration and the application of new technologies. This research also indicated that livelihood changes led to shifts in cultural practices, from Buddhist practices to festivals and music.

To date, research on the Khmer in Binh Duong Province is still limited, though there have been some notable studies. Mac Duong (1985)^[14] in "Ethnic Issues in Sông Bé" provided an overview of the cultural, economic, and social characteristics of minority groups in the region, including the Khmer. Recently, Do Thanh (2014, 2017)^[6] focused on the migration process of the Khmer and their settlement in An Binh Commune, Phú Giáo District, comparing cultural and economic changes over time. Le Anh Vu (2017)^[11] outlined the life and expectations of newly migrated Khmer in Binh Duong, while Le Anh Vu and Le Thi Phuong Hai (2019)^[12] highlighted the employment situation of the Khmer, predominantly involving low-skilled jobs, and proposed solutions for employment support and vocational training. Tran Hanh Minh Phuong (2019)^[23] clarified migration factors and demographic distribution, cultural life, and socio-economic conditions of the Khmer, and suggested sustainable development solutions for Binh Duong Province. Recently, Tran Minh Duc (2022)^[24] investigated the impact of land allocation and settlement policies on Khmer livelihoods, affirming the validity of these policies. Tran Tan Dang Long (2022)^[25] analyzed the economic and cultural exchanges of the Khmer living with the Kinh, leading to adaptations to new environments and suggested measures for Khmer cultural preservation.

Overall, these studies provide a clearer understanding of the Khmer in the South and Binh Duong. They focus on the economic and social activities of the Khmer, particularly livelihood issues, and offer numerous insights for our research. In the current context of rural industrialization, understanding the livelihood transformations of the Khmer community is essential to highlight their occupational characteristics, thus providing valuable data for policy formulation and implementation aimed at improving quality of life and developing sustainable livelihoods for the Khmer community. We hope these materials will contribute to research on the transformation of Khmer livelihoods.

2. Research methods and theoretical approaches

▪ Research Methods

This study employs qualitative research methods, combining data collection from secondary sources with ethnographic fieldwork within the Khmer community in An Binh Commune. Two primary tools are used: In-depth interviews and participant observation. The research was conducted in three phases (March 2021, April 2022, and January 2023) involving 30 households in the Nước Vàng and Tân Thịnh hamlets. The interviews focus on the livelihoods of the Khmer, both historically and presently, as well as the changes over time.

Additional interviews were conducted with retired and current district and commune officials to gain a deeper understanding of state policies and their implementation for

the Khmer. Comparative analysis, both synchronic and diachronic, was also applied, alongside data collection from statistical reports, research studies, and scientific journals. Interview data were recorded and quickly transcribed, then processed and finalized. This data plays a crucial role in drafting the report for this study.

▪ **Theoretical Approaches**

The study draws on two theoretical schools within economic anthropology: Substantivism and formalism. The substantivist school, as articulated by Karl Polanyi, emphasizes understanding economic behavior within its cultural and social context, focusing on livelihood strategies and mutual support within communities. In contrast, formalism concentrates on analyzing rational decision-making and profit maximization. Formalists argue that human behavior is inherently rational, aimed at maximizing profit under conditions of resource scarcity. Individuals make economic decisions based on cost-benefit considerations, with self-interested behavior and personal benefit maximization observable across all societies. Principles such as supply and demand and efficiency are considered universal, and formalists use economic models to study human behavior, viewing individuals as "economic man."

Research by James Scott and Pamela McElwee indicates that farmers often prioritize survival and ethical principles in their economic activities, while Samuel Popkin and other scholars suggest that farmers can also take risks and maximize profits when conditions allow. Ngô Thị Phương Lan and Charles Keyes approach from the perspective of risk acceptance and social action, showing the interaction between rationality and ethical values. Eric Wolf employs multilineal evolutionary theory and political economy to analyze farmers in terms of power relationships and social control.

In this paper, we integrate both theoretical schools to explain the economic behavior of the Khmer. We examine their livelihood activities within the current natural and social context and analyze the transition to a market economy, where the Khmer begin to calculate profits and accept risks in production and livestock management.

3. Research results

3.1 Traditional Economic Activities of the Khmer in An Bình

The traditional livelihood activities of the Khmer in An Bình Commune, Phú Giáo District, Bình Dương Province, have evolved and developed in response to the region's unique natural conditions. With a relatively elevated terrain and proximity to the southern Truong Son mountains, the Khmer have long depended on the forest and natural resources for their sustenance. Before 1998, the Khmer economy primarily relied on slash-and-burn agriculture, small-scale livestock and poultry farming, and supplementary food from hunting and gathering in the forest.

▪ **Slash-and-Burn Agriculture**

Unlike the Khmer in the Mekong Delta who traditionally cultivate rice paddies, the primary livelihood activity of the Khmer in An Bình is shifting cultivation. The land in their area is divided into two types: Shifting cultivation land, also known as upland fields, and paddy fields, referred to as sloping land. The staple crops planted during this period include upland rice, cassava, and beans. Among these, upland fields cover the largest area in An Bình, mostly

comprising forest land that had not yet been allocated by the state. Consequently, the Khmer's livelihood used to rely entirely on the forest, shifting cultivation, and exploitation of natural products. Elders recall that prior to the 1980s, the forest in the Khmer inhabited area was not regulated by the state, allowing people to clear forest for cultivation and plant rice according to their ability. The traditional farming techniques of the Khmer involved clearing trees, burning, preparing the land, weeding, thinning rice, harvesting, and threshing rice using basic tools such as axes, knives, and hoes. A growing season typically lasted around six months, with one planting season per year during the rainy season, sowing seeds in April and harvesting rice in November. In addition to upland rice, the Khmer in An Bình also grew other annual crops such as corn, cassava, and melons. These crops were also significant for supplementing food supplies during the rice cultivation period. Upland rice cultivation relied entirely on natural conditions, with minimal care leading to low yields.

Historically, despite the sparse population, the Khmer in An Bình always supported one another during harvest time. For instance, during land clearing or harvest season, villagers would exchange labor. Over time, land rights were formalized with state-issued land use certificates. Wealthier families would assist those in need, a common practice among the Khmer in An Bình in the past. Due to the forest clearance ban for cultivation, the Khmer no longer burned forests for fields. They switched to fixed cultivation on their own land, converting old fields into rice paddies, and specializing in corn, cassava, and perennial industrial crops like cashew and rubber. Since 1990, the Khmer's forest clearing for cultivation has been limited due to the establishment of farms and forestry plantations in An Bình. It is said that although life was challenging in the past, people always supported each other during harvest. During this period, some Khmer continued to farm despite the state's forest clearance ban. However, due to local management laxity, some families still cleared forests. Since 1998, as production structures shifted from shifting cultivation to fixed cultivation, traditional Khmer farming methods transitioned to modern production practices. With the forest clearance ban, the Khmer no longer burned forests for fields. Gradually, all land was formalized with state-issued land use certificates. They engaged in fixed cultivation on their own land, converting old fields into rice paddies and focusing on corn, cassava, and perennial industrial crops such as cashew and rubber.

▪ **Natural Resource Exploitation**

Historically, the Khmer lived by shifting cultivation, moving to new locations after one year of cultivation. When not farming, they would exploit available natural resources for sustenance. They hunted wild animals such as wild boar, pheasants, porcupines, squirrels, birds, or caught stream fish, collected honey, and foraged for roots. The Khmer in the mountains have long had a tradition of hunting. In this economic activity, there was also a division of labor by gender: Men hunted wild animals and caught fish, while women stayed home to weave cloth or collect latex from rubber trees to sell to Westerners as raw material. However, the Khmer in An Bình now have no forest to exploit, as the natural forests have been converted into rubber and cashew plantations, leading them to gradually switch to cultivating long-term industrial crops and adapt to the market economy.

▪ **Livestock Farming**

Previously, the Khmer in An Binh only raised small livestock for daily consumption and for special occasions such as weddings, funerals, ceremonies, or community activities. Only wealthier households could afford to raise cattle. They typically raised cattle, pigs, and chickens. Cattle were fed on grass grown in their gardens. Some households raised up to 7-10 cattle, while others had 2-3 cattle and earned stable income. Today, the Khmer have begun raising livestock for sale. Since 2000, the government has supported livestock farming, and many Khmer households in An Binh have received cattle to raise and increase family income. However, some households receiving cattle from government programs have sold them to pay off debts or for family expenses.

▪ **Rice Paddy Cultivation**

From our research, An Binh Commune, despite having a large land area, mostly consists of upland fields with water scarcity, low nutrients, and hardness. Therefore, the people faced many difficulties in rice paddy cultivation, resulting in low yields. The land is more suitable for growing long-term crops such as fruit trees, medicinal plants, and tuber crops. Consequently, rice paddy cultivation has not been a strong suit for the Khmer in An Binh. For the Khmer, paddy fields offer higher yields compared to upland rice, are easier to cultivate, and allow for irrigation. However, not every household owns paddy fields. This type of land allows for two crop seasons per year. The first season begins in February when seedlings are sown and ends in mid-May with the harvest. The land is then left to rest before the second season begins. Overall, rice cultivation for the Khmer has been challenging due to the terrain and soil conditions not being ideal for rice cultivation. Nonetheless, due to subsistence needs, the Khmer in An Binh continue to maintain this livelihood despite low yields and occasional food shortages. On the same land, different tasks are assigned to men and women. All Khmer people cultivate rice, but paddy fields involve more steps: From sowing seedlings, plowing, transplanting, to harvesting. Today, the natural environment has changed significantly, land is shrinking, and the population is growing. The Khmer have adapted their cultivation methods to suit their living conditions. They no longer cultivate rice paddies as before but have switched to growing rubber, cashew, and other fruit crops. The Khmer in An Binh have thus adapted to changes in their livelihood activities.

3.2 Current Status of Livelihood Activities of the Khmer People

Since the Đổi Mới (Renovation) period of 1986, the resettlement program has been uniformly implemented among ethnic minorities, and logging bans have also been enforced. Since then, there has been increasing diversification in the livelihood activities of the people. The Khmer people in An Binh commune have gradually adopted scientific and technological methods in production, engaged in market-oriented agriculture, and participated in non-agricultural activities. In addition to rubber and cashew cultivation, some Khmer individuals have taken up various jobs such as manual labor, masonry, and factory work to increase their income and stabilize their lives.

▪ **Perennial Crop Cultivation**

The Khmer people in An Binh commune began cultivating cashew and rubber in the 1980s and have gradually expanded their area of perennial crops due to the economic benefits. In 2004, the government implemented a land support policy for ethnic minority households in Binh Duong province, granting 1 hectare of land to each of 112 Khmer households in An Binh. Since then, the Khmer people in An Binh primarily cultivate rubber and cashew.

In Phú Giáo district, there are about 6,000 hectares of industrial crops, half of which are in the An Binh and Đồng Sen plantations, with the remaining land belonging to local residents. In An Binh commune, the Kinh people planted rubber after the liberation, whereas the Khmer only began cultivating rubber and cashew in the 1980s. After 1995, due to the lack of wasteland, the Khmer shifted entirely to perennial crop cultivation. In the subsequent decade, they converted all their crop and swidden land to rubber and cashew plantations. During this transition, the Khmer engaged in other jobs such as factory work, manual labor, or seasonal work. The government also provided low-interest loans and land and seedling support for resettled households. This assistance enabled people to cover production costs and meet essential needs while waiting for their crops to mature. The lives of the local people have improved and been enhanced through the sale of cashew and rubber.

Cashew Cultivation: To achieve high yields in cashew cultivation, the Khmer need to master planting and care techniques. The Khmer believe their cashew cultivation techniques are quite simple. According to local people, the initial step involves digging holes and planting seedlings, followed by care and fertilization. For the first year, fertilization is done about three times to help the trees develop. At the end of the season, harvesting begins. Due to market volatility and fluctuating prices impacting their economy, they have gradually shifted to rubber cultivation. In practice, while cashew is a primary source of income for some households, high cultivation costs and declining prices have led Khmer families in An Binh to seek additional labor to support their livelihoods.

Rubber Cultivation: From May to September, the focus is on weeding, fertilizing, and maintaining the rubber trees, and opening up tapping cuts. By October, harvesting rubber begins. During this period, people often take up additional work to support their families. Rubber trees do not tolerate direct sunlight well. The Khmer report facing challenges such as pests and diseases. When signs of disease appear, they consult agricultural engineers or local suppliers for advice and suitable treatments. The amount of inputs varies with the hectare and tree density; some households spray themselves while others hire help. Prices for collected materials fluctuate yearly, depending on weather conditions and market demand.

The Khmer in An Binh have learned crop care from personal experience and their community, and they participate in annual agricultural extension classes to acquire new knowledge. However, due to their advanced age and limited education, they often “forget” much of what they learn. Therefore, they rely heavily on their own experience. They also respect agricultural engineers and seek their advice when purchasing pesticides and fertilizers. The

Khmer have invested in land improvement and purchasing seedlings, often borrowing money from government policies to do so. Resettled and poor households also receive land and seedlings to stabilize their lives. However, some families, facing living difficulties, have sold parts of their land to raise money and shift to wage labor. Although initial challenges were significant, rubber cultivation has since become economically beneficial. Since transitioning to this new livelihood, the people of An Binh have seen positive changes. Their housing has improved to sturdy concrete or four-wall houses. Compared to their traditional livelihoods, cultivating industrial crops represents significant progress for the Khmer in An Binh.

▪ **Non-Agricultural Activities**

Since the 2000s, non-agricultural activities among the Khmer in An Binh commune have become increasingly prevalent and diverse. This shift is primarily due to changes in the labor market and the need to increase income to meet living expenses. Non-agricultural activities, such as factory work, rubber tapping, and various casual labor jobs, have become important sources of livelihood for households with limited or no agricultural land. Due to a lack of professional skills and qualifications, most Khmer people engage in manual labor. Previously, they mostly worked within their households, but now an increasing number are involved in industry and wage labor locally and in neighboring provinces. These jobs include factory work, rubber tapping, and other employment.

Factory Work: With the need to increase income, many people have opted to work in factories and enterprises. Surveys indicate that over 30 Khmer individuals in An Binh commune are employed in industrial zones in Binh Duong, Binh Phuoc, and Ho Chi Minh City. The majority are married women and young adults. They typically work from early morning until late afternoon, Monday through Saturday, with Sundays off. Most of these workers come from financially struggling backgrounds. Some households have cashew or rubber plantations but still need additional income. Families without land rely entirely on income from factory work. The average monthly wage ranges from 5 to 6 million VND, potentially rising to 7 to 8 million VND with overtime. Despite its impact on family life, many accept this job due to its more stable income compared to other options.

Rubber Tapping: In addition to cultivating industrial crops, rubber tapping is a common activity among the Khmer community. This job does not require specific age limits and is relatively light, making it a popular choice. Since rubber companies have emerged in An Binh, the number of Khmer individuals engaging in this work has increased. Currently, dozens of Khmer households participate in rubber tapping, especially those with limited land or young households.

Rubber tapping often attracts many women due to the job's demands for diligence and dexterity, while men typically work as factory workers or masons. This work helps people address employment issues and provides income for household expenses. However, the job is quite demanding, unstable, and dependent on rubber prices. Recently, the price of rubber has decreased, affecting workers' income, but many remain in the job due to its minimal educational requirements and the ability to work in the early morning.

▪ **Other Livelihood Activities**

In addition to primary activities such as industrial crop cultivation, factory work, and rubber tapping, the people of An Binh also engage in other non-agricultural activities like

mowing grass, spraying pesticides, harvesting cashew, masonry, stone quarrying, running small eateries, and cafes. However, participation in these activities is limited. Some Khmer households also run businesses along the national highway passing through the commune, selling items like furniture, tiles, groceries, and food. Although some Khmer people hold positions as commune officials, teachers, engineers, or office staff, the number working in these roles remains limited.

3.3 Livelihood Adaptation of the Khmer People in An Binh Commune in the Context of the Market

The traditional livelihoods of the Khmer people in An Binh Commune, Binh Duong Province, have undergone significant changes to adapt to market conditions and economic development. Previously, the Khmer primarily relied on natural resources, with a subsistence economy that included shifting cultivation, small-scale animal husbandry, and forest resource exploitation. However, the market transformation has led to notable changes in their livelihood strategies.

Before the 1990s, the Khmer in An Binh mainly depended on shifting cultivation and growing short-term crops, using rudimentary tools and achieving low productivity. They cleared forest land for farming, raised cattle and pigs, and gathered vegetables from the forest and hunted to supplement their diet. This subsistence livelihood was fraught with difficulties due to natural disasters and droughts. Particularly, rice cultivation faced many challenges due to unsuitable land conditions, limiting economic development.

From the 1990s onwards, policy changes and government incentives encouraged the Khmer to shift from traditional livelihoods to commodity production. People began transitioning from growing rice and short-term crops to cultivating long-term industrial crops such as cashew and rubber. The "Rubber and Cashew Promotion" policy was implemented to encourage the planting of these crops to replace traditional shifting cultivation activities.

The initial transition period faced numerous challenges as the community lacked experience in industrial crop cultivation and new farming techniques. However, as industrial crops started to yield, the living standards of the Khmer improved markedly. The cultivation of rubber and cashew not only enhanced income but also reduced labor compared to traditional livelihoods. For instance, rubber trees provided more stable income with higher yields and less effort compared to shifting cultivation.

The shift from traditional livelihoods to industrial crop production has brought considerable economic benefits to the Khmer. The number of poor households has significantly decreased, with many households improving their economic status, building better homes, and investing in their children's education. Rubber and cashew cultivation has not only increased income but also improved local infrastructure, contributing to poverty reduction and enhancing the quality of life. Nonetheless, the transition process has encountered some challenges. The Khmer still face difficulties in accessing modern production techniques and markets. The fluctuating prices of industrial crops, along with factors such as disease outbreaks and market volatility, have affected income. Households with more land and financial resources tend to specialize and take on risks, while those with limited land often diversify their livelihood

activities.

Despite the successes in livelihood transformation, the Khmer in An Binh still face sustainability challenges in their production model. Issues related to pricing, product quality, and market fluctuations need to be addressed to maintain and develop sustainable livelihoods. Support from the government and non-governmental organizations in providing technical assistance, training, and market opportunities is crucial to help the Khmer continue to adapt and grow.

Overall, the transition of the Khmer livelihoods in An Binh from traditional methods to industrial crop production has led to significant economic and social improvements. However, sustainable adaptation depends on addressing market challenges and receiving support from stakeholders. The ongoing efforts of the Khmer community to improve livelihoods and enhance quality of life are crucial for achieving sustainable development in the future.

4. Conclusion

In the context of industrialization and modernization, the livelihoods of the Khmer people in An Binh Commune have undergone significant changes, reflecting the community's adaptation and transformation. Initially, the Khmer's livelihoods were primarily based on subsistence activities closely tied to the natural environment, such as agriculture, animal husbandry, hunting, and gathering. However, the economic shift and the emergence of industrial factories and industrial zones have opened up new opportunities, particularly for youth and working-age individuals. Livelihood diversification has enabled the Khmer in An Binh to access new forms of production and income, ranging from rubber cultivation and factory work to expanding small-scale businesses. This development has not only improved the material and spiritual well-being of the community but has also significantly reduced the poverty rate.

Nevertheless, the adaptation process has faced several challenges. Market price volatility, combined with limitations in technical skills and professional expertise among the Khmer, has impacted their ability to achieve sustainable development. Some households struggle to optimize land resources and effectively transition their livelihoods due to a lack of appropriate skills and vocational training. To achieve stable and sustainable development, specific economic policies and vocational training strategies tailored to real needs are required. The government and relevant organizations need to focus on enhancing the capabilities and skills of the Khmer, ensuring they can participate effectively and sustainably in the labor market. Evaluating and adjusting development and vocational training policies is also necessary to meet community needs, thereby promoting synchronized and humane economic growth and social development.

5. Ethical Approval Statement

This study was conducted within the Khmer community in An Binh Commune, Phú Giáo District, Bình Dương Province, Vietnam, from 2021 to 2023. Data collection was carried out in accordance with ethnographic fieldwork principles, with the consent of the community members and without conflict during the data collection process.

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7. Conflict of Interest and Data Availability Statement

The authors states no conflict of interest and there are no data associated with this article.

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