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The Australian Mekong Resource Centre

was established at the University of Sydney in 1997 to promote research, discussion and debate on development and environment issues in the Mekong Region. The AMRC is a focal point for information, dialogue and activities in support of an equitable and sustainable development path for the Mekong Region.

The *Mekong Update & Dialogue* provides:

- lead article on the key topic of the issue
- responses to the lead article
- news of current developments in the region
- news from the AMRC
- information on Mekong-related conferences and events in Australia and the Mekong Region

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DARARAT KAEWKUNTEE AND POST-TSUNAMI THAILAND

Tragedy can be predictable and depressingly inevitable, or it can be sudden and bizarre. The death of Dararat Kaewkuntee at the age of 32 had an eerie resonance with her PhD thesis topic, the 26 December 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami. Both struck without warning. Neither was even remotely imaginable. At different levels and in different ways, the two tragedies affected people profoundly. Perhaps this was due to the frailty they revealed in places and in a person we had previously imagined resilient, invulnerable to such accidents of nature.

Professionally, Dararat was a PhD student, a government official in the Office of Natural Resources and Environmental Policy and Planning, a creative, critical and committed scholar of environment and society in southern Thailand. Personally she was an unassuming, smiling, deferential but determined member of an academic community of teachers, researchers and postgraduate students who shared her interest in people and environment.

The articles in this issue of *Mekong Update and Dialogue* depart somewhat from our usual format. We start with a taste of what was so exciting and important about Dararat's work. She shows how the tsunami, significant and devastating in its own right, revealed myriad problems below the surface in Thai society – and specifically in latent or actual conflicts over land tenure. But her article, and the responses by an anthropologist (Bob Fisher) and coastal geomorphologist (Andy Short) also go beyond mere critique to show how a deeper, contextually informed understanding of problems can improve responses to devastating events such as the tsunami.



There is no doubt that the tragedy of Dararat's early passing and the catastrophe that was the 26 December 2004 tsunami are intertwined in many ways. But perhaps the bluntest aspect of this convergence is that the insights hinted at in her embryonic work on the subject are left at that. Scholars, coastal zone managers and officials can all learn from her work and take up the mantle; it is highly unlikely, though, that good scholarship, integrated management and government position will ever be found in one and the same person in quite the same way.

READER CONTRIBUTIONS

The *Mekong Update & Dialogue* welcomes the comments of its readers on issues raised in the Feature article and in the Responses to the Feature. If you do wish to make comment please email us at mekong@mail.usyd.edu.au. Comments should be sent by early June and should be limited to 1-2 paragraphs.

FEATURE

Land tenure, land conflicts and post-tsunami relocation in Thailand

by *Dararat Kaewkuntee*

(edited by *Philip Hirsch*)

This article is adapted from a paper presented at the Australian National University on 2 February 2006, 16 days prior to Dararat's death.

Introduction

As in many other developing nations, land use patterns in Thailand are mixed and varied. This complexity has contributed to conflicting interests over land rights between state and people or community, and also between people and private companies or investors. In many cases, the conflicts lead to civil violence. The Tsunami catastrophe on 26 December 2004 unveiled long accumulated and hidden land rights problems, along with other issues (Rice, 2005).

This article is divided into four sections. First, it explores general circumstances of land tenure systems in Thailand. Second, it outlines the case of coastal communities in the south of Thailand and problems specific to this area. Third, it discusses how the communities manage conflicts and seek solutions. Finally, the paper concludes with preliminary lessons from the case studies.

Land Tenure Complexity in Thailand

In line with orthodoxy such as the World Bank Land Policy 1975, many nations in Southeast Asia have reformed their land administration systems in order to provide sufficient tenure security to support a land market (Dalrymple, Wallace & Williamson, 2004). In Thailand, the Land Titling Project was implemented by the Department of Lands (DoL) from 1984 and 'traditional tenure' (Leonard & Narintarakul Na Ayutthaya, 2003) or 'customary tenure' are no longer recognized (United Nations University, 2005). This program consolidated all registered land under the Land Code of 1954. However, there are several types of land documents recognized under the Land Code. These include: land titles (*NorSor 4*), certificates of utilization (*NorSor 3 or NorSor 3 Kor*), pre-emptive certificates (*NorSor 2*) and certain documents issued prior to the Land Code (DoL, 2001). Lands which are not owned by people have been classified as public lands under state administration.

Nevertheless, decrees issued by the Thai Cabinet in 1961 had set a policy that 50 percent of the land in the nation be reserved for forestry (Leonard & Narintarakul Na Ayutthaya, 2003). As noted above, land subject to classification as public or state land, cannot be issued certificates under the Land Code (United Nations University, 2005). This provision affects millions of people, mostly ordinary villagers, hill tribes and indigenous people, who have lived on such land continuously and have made use of those lands for generations (Puginier, 2002).

In reality, many people and communities have been living on and making use of public land both before and after the public land and national forest law promulgation and enforcement. This creates complexities and problems for the government

authorities to indicate land boundaries and enforce the laws, in part because of limited financial resources and manpower (Leonard & Narintarakul Na Ayutthaya, 2003). Also, following the compromising mentality in Thai society, the local authorities have been lenient in enforcing law and have avoided taking strong action to push people from public lands. As a result, land use problems have accumulated and have been left unresolved for a long time.

Some coastal community cases in the tsunami aftermath¹

In the capitalist economy, land is capital which appreciates in value with time. Land is not only for residential use or cultivation, but also for speculative buying and selling. While land value appreciates, more lands have changed hands from local owners to outside investors, particularly the beautiful coastal land that can be used in many ways (Leonard & Narintarakul Na Ayutthaya, 2003; Rice, 2005). Many hotels, resorts, and tourism related facilities have been developed. Local villagers have been tempted and encouraged to sell their high priced land and move to search for cheaper land somewhere else, or sometimes encroach and live on public land. Besides being motivated by the high land price, local villagers are also pressured by the changes in the communities as the number of hotels, resorts, tourists, and thus the living cost increases. Without land to make a living, many villagers have become low-wage labourers or employees in those hotel, resort, and tourism services (Prayooksil, 2005). In effect, the local communities have lost their fishing industry and their traditional way of life. The incursion of capitalism and the retreat of local communities have put some of those fishing communities at risk of losing their culture, pride, and self-identities (Leonard & Narintarakul Na Ayutthaya, 2003).

As discussed, land rights issues in pre-tsunami communities were already complex. The tsunami created dramatic new circumstances in these communities, in which many actors are involved. The communities chosen for this survey are located in Phang-Nga province, which has a 240 kilometer-long coast on the Andaman Sea. This province was the worst affected by the tsunami in Thailand. 4,224 people died, 5,597 people were injured, and 1,733 people were listed as "missing" (GISTDA, 2005). The affected areas cover Taguapa, Taguatung, Taimuang, Kuraburi, Koh Yao and Maung districts. Taguapa district lost the most in both lives and properties (ONEP, 2005).

Emergency relief measures from both domestic and international agencies were put in place to deal with the victims' immediate needs, the construction of buildings and to repair residences, replace assets, and equipment for occupational support that followed in order to provide immediate shelter and work (Weber, 2005). Yet land rights remained a key issue to the security of the affected communities, who historically have not registered land claims with the government (ACHR, 2005; Petchmak, 2005). Most people went back to the devastated places to search for their lost relatives' bodies and to retrieve some of their assets. Some who still have land documents and can identify the land boundaries built their new houses with help from government, military and volunteers, assisted by both domestic and international agencies.

Despite this assistance, and despite having lived in their previous areas of residence for a long time, some people were

prevented from entering their old areas as they were identified post-tsunami as “public land” or “private area” claimed by other owners. The cases described below exemplify the complexity, the inequality, and the conflicts of the land use problems in Thailand as they were exacerbated by post-tsunami events.

Baan Namkem Community is a community located in Tambon Bangmuang, Taguapa district, Pang-Nga province. It is a large fishing community that occupies an area of 350 rai (~56 ha) (LDD, 2005), with over 1,600 families and approximately 4,720 people. Additionally, over 1,500 are transient migrants who come to live with their relatives or come to work in the community (Petchmark, 2005). It is the worst affected community by the Tsunami, as over 410 people died and remained missing (data from Bangmuang temporary camp on January 10th, 2005). After the devastation, many people went back to inspect their properties and reported the damage to the Bangmuang victim information center. Many people who have proper and proven documents have received help and resources from the state in re-building their houses. Many victims who did not have proper documents were unable to go back to live in their old areas (Petchmak, 2005).

Tungwa Community is a Sea Gypsy community, better known as Moken people or “new Thai” people, located in Tambon Kuk-kuck, Taguapa district, Pang-Nga province. 42 out of 327 people died and remained missing after the tsunami. (Data from Kuk-kuck temporary camp on March 17th, 2005). Before the tsunami, the community was comprised of 71 families living in a 26 rai area (~4.15 ha), which later was announced by the Government as a public area. The Moken are known to have lived nomadically in the sea, but have been settled permanently on this land for about one hundred years. They have no sense of ownership of land but treat land as a shared space for all. They understand neither the Thai language nor Thai law, so they understand nothing about land title and could present nothing to show their occupation of land in the early 1980s (Tungwa villager, pers. comm. 5 January 2006).

Tubtawan Community is another Moken community in Tambon Kuk-kuck, Taguapa district. Out of 314 people in 74 households, the Tubtawan community lost 13 residences, and 12 are missing. (Data from Tubtawan temporary camp on March 16th, 2005). They suffered a more critical problem when a private company claimed to have ownership rights over the land they lived on for over three generations. An area of 24 rai (~3.84 ha) in the community was claimed by this company, resulting in 37 families being unable to access the land and legally forced to abandon the land (Tubtawan villager, pers. comm. 6 January 2006).

Laem-Pom Community is a small 50 household community in Baan Namkem, located in the area of 82 rai (~13.12 ha). It is where the land conflicts are most severe and has a longer history of fighting. Originally, the land here was a tin mining area. The mining brought people from many other places to live and work here. Housing and community facilities were established for over 30 years. Later on, as the tin was depleted, people have turned themselves to be fishermen, carpenters, and general labourers, but still lived in the area. Living in one place for over 10 years would entitle them to own the land automatically, so many of the villagers have done nothing to register their ownership. About three years before the tsunami a private company started claiming its right to their land. The

company built a fence and tried to force people out by threats and taking legal action against those who resisted (Laem-pom villager, pers. comm. 28 December 2005).

After the community was devastated by the tsunami, the private investor used police and soldiers to enclose the area and prevent people from accessing their devastated community. This has led to public protest for rights and justice. As the tsunami was a catastrophe which received great attention worldwide, many foreign journalists were on site and have reported the incident of the land conflict to the outside world. Many organizations have come to be the medium for people to ask for justice. People have asked the Government to handle the land conflict directly, and through both domestic and international media have asked the private investor to give access to people to search for dead bodies and remaining assets.

Ways out and conflict management: lessons learnt from the community

Pathways to resolve the land conflict issues for these communities vary as the antagonists are different in each case. In some cases it is the state, in others it is private investors who are in conflict with affected people. The private counterparts are also varied in their power. However, there is a common desire to seek ways out. Each community has gathered people together to solve the problems (Petchmak, 2005). Besides, linkages among victim communities in six provinces were formed to facilitate exchanges, learning, and mutual assistance. The coordinating effort has brought extra power to push forward the communities’ proposals and requirements to further the chance of success.

In the Baan Namkem case, people with proper and provable land certificates received assistance in building their new permanent houses. For people without proper land rights documents, through collective negotiation with the government, they will get subsidized rental land for building their houses from the government. Through the Treasury department the government agreed to allot 30 rai (~4.80 ha) of public land in Tambon Banmuang to form a new community for this group of people. The people will have to pay a cheap monthly rental fee to the government. This agreement was accepted, and Pruteiw permanent residential project, around 10 KM from Ban Namkem, has been created. The victims are exempted from the first year rental fee (Pruteaw relocated villager, pers. comm. 23 December 2005).

At Tungwa community, the land problems were solved quickly. People requested the government to check their settlement records. It was obvious from the aerial photos that settlement of people happened before the public land decree was enforced. Nevertheless, the community land was reduced from 26 rai (~4.15 ha) to 16 rai (~2.56 ha). The government has taken back 10 rai (~1.6) for public use with full cooperation from the community (Petchmak, 2005). People in Tungwa have made further requests to the Government to allocate land rights, not to any individual, but to the community as a whole. This is aimed to make their land common property of the community and also to prevent the buying and selling of land. This would in turn prevent the community from the incursion of outsiders and thus prevent the loss of land to the community in the future

(Tungwa villager, pers. comm. 5 January 2006).

Tubtawan is the only community that still has no solution to end the land problems. Though the conflicts are still in court, people have moved to build their new houses on their old lands. The unresolved status of the conflicts has prevented people from getting any help from the government. However, they did receive help from students (manpower), foreign volunteers (manpower) and private organizations (finance). The villagers refused to accede to a proposal made by the private investor to give up and condense the 37 households from the area of 24 rai (~3.84) into 7 rai (~1.12 ha) (Prachathai News, 2006). Instead, the villagers demanded that the government investigate and validate the land rights of the said private company. Until now, there is no indication of how the problems will be resolved.

The land conflict cases of Laem-Pom community have received attention widely from both domestic and international media. This helped influence the private company to withdraw the enclosure and people from 35 families have moved into the area. Nevertheless, Laem-Pom people did not receive any help from the government to build their houses for the same reasons as Tubtawan community. They lived in temporary tents for several months before the funds (mostly from abroad) were adequate to build houses. They received assistance from students and volunteers. Though they have houses now, they still do not have access to water supply and electricity (all households had both water supply and electricity before the Tsunami). They still have to pay a high price for water, while some households have to pay to generate their own electricity.

The construction of new houses for Laem-Pom people was completed while they were being sued in court as land encroachers. The scrutiny in court has found irregularities in the issuance of the land entitlements to the private company. However, the legal process is still ongoing and may take some time to bring justice to people. Laem-Pom community and the victims' network with the support of private organizations has tried to file the request to the relevant agencies. However, in the negotiation process, Laem-Pom people agreed to abandon part of the land and return it to that private company. The community asked the authorities to issue the land rights for only 51 rai (~8.16 ha) currently in use, out of 82 rai (~13.12 ha) originally (Laem-pom villager, pers. comm. 28 December 2006).

Conclusions

Land conflicts in Thailand do not only occur in the tsunami affected area, but are widespread and have accumulated over a long period of time. The Tsunami occurrence simply unveiled the long-covered problems. Several new land problems have surfaced in communities along the coast, right after the Tsunami wave receded. The problem has multiple aspects, complications, and has different degrees of severity. To solve the problems and to find a common way out, cooperation among all parties including the government, private companies or investors, and community is necessary. The coordination and linkage of the communities with academic and legal support from non-government organizations has increased their strength and power in dealing with the government and the problems in a shorter time than would otherwise have been the case. Communities gain greater bargaining power in dealing with their counterparts. Baan Namkem and Tungwa cases are good examples, and similar success is expected soon for the Laem-

Pom problem.

A committee to resolve the land problems in the catastrophically affected area in six provinces was established by the government. The problems were also brought to the Thai National Human Rights Committee. Light started to appear at the end of the tunnel after the committee gave a verdict to allow people to live in their old lands and proposed withdrawal of overlapping land rights in which the circumstances of issuance are in doubt. The verdict was forwarded to the Public Land Invasion Problem Committee (*Gor Bor Ror*) for further execution.

A further lesson from the tsunami is that the affected communities have created opportunities in the midst of their plight. People have built up their community's map and information bank together. This made them see through their community's problems and find common solutions. They even created proposals, plans, and options for dealing with their problems. The chance of working together has encouraged understanding and unity, which are a solid foundation for a stronger and a more sustainable community. '*Prasop Pai, Prasopkarn, Prasan Phenan*' (facing danger, suffering hardship, fostering friendship) (Chumchonchai Foundation, 2005) are words that best describe what the affected communities have gone through.

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¹ Part of the information in this section was obtained from a site survey and discussion with people in the area between 23 December 2005 and 7 January 2006.

RESPONSES TO FEATURE

The social and economic impacts of post-tsunami reconstruction

by *Bob Fisher*

The destruction and human misery caused by the physical impacts of the December-2004 tsunami were enormous and have been well-reported. Some of the difficulties faced by aid agencies implementing emergency relief operations immediately after the tsunami and some of the problems faced in longer term reconstruction activities have also been recorded. Often these difficulties have been attributed to the sheer scale of the task. Less attention has been paid to the unintended negative impacts of the post-tsunami reconstruction activities themselves.

It is important to note that the impacts might have been unintended, but they were not entirely unanticipated. Quite soon after the tsunami, there were warnings that tenure issues would be important to reconstruction efforts. Dararat Kaewkunttee's preliminary research efforts started to explore in greater detail how tenure affected efforts in Thailand. From her work and other reports, it seems clear that tenure issues had impacts throughout the affected region, not just in Thailand. The types of factors involved included lack of clear tenure or titles before the tsunami, loss of title documents in the tsunami, destruction of landmarks and other buildings that allowed property to be identified and, sadly, deliberate and opportunistic land grabs by powerful and wealthy interests.

It was easy to predict that zoning and relocation, in the cause of removing people from risks of future disasters, would lead to problems where alternative land was not available. In practice this has not been the main problem. New zoning regulations seem to have been employed discriminately, with exceptions made for business interests. Following a survey of 95 villages in India, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, the Maldives and Thailand, a report by ActionAid and other organisations (Anon 2006) concludes that coastlines were cleared of people under the excuse of safety and subsequently used for tourism. Another report (Rice 2005) specifically looks at the role of tourism in reconstruction. It finds that thousands of survivors were, ten months after the tsunami, "still trying to survive in temporary camps".

Many of them are being refused permission to return home. Governments and big businesses have plans for the beaches – and the plans don't include the people who used to live and work there.

The problem with tenure has not only been about tourism and not only about the rhetoric of safety. In Thailand the Far East Trading and Construction Company claimed land in Laem Pom village after the tsunami on the basis that it legally owned the land which had been encroached by villagers for many years (Bangkok Post 26 May 2005). The Prime Minister spoke in support of the company, saying that the people expected too much.

Also in Thailand, aid agencies working on Koh Pratong on the Andaman Coast have been unable to use money available for construction of houses for people who had no tenure. As most of the affected people, although long term residents, had no title, they were not entitled to have new houses built. (Fortunately, some local NGOs ignored policy and built houses.) Interestingly, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment had been trying to establish a protected area on the island for some time. It had abandoned its efforts prior to the tsunami, but has since attempted to reopen the issue. This is being done, of course, in the name of protecting the environment and would have further negative livelihood impacts.

It has been fairly well established that natural disasters tend to impact particularly heavily on the poor. It is clear in the case of the tsunami that factors such as inadequate tenure and the greed and opportunism of wealthy and powerful interests means that the process of post-disaster reconstruction itself can make things worse and block well-intentioned aid efforts.

One of the most important aspects of this diversion of good intentions is the use of the rhetoric of "security" and "safety". I have already discussed the way safety is used to justify relocation. The notion of "sustainability" has also had negative effects. There has been considerable discussion of the need for new livelihood systems to be sustainable. Some post-tsunami policy documents even stressed the need to avoid rebuilding livelihood systems that were not previously sustainable anyhow. It would be interesting to explore how this rhetoric has impacted on the poor affected by the tsunami.

The work of Dararat Kaewkunttee was only at an early stage, but she had already begun to explore some of the factors by which the livelihoods of tsunami victims can be affected by reconstruction. It is clear now that reconstruction often did have negative impacts. Hopefully it has also had positive impacts. The sort of research in which Dararat was engaged makes an important contribution to our understanding of disasters and reconstruction and especially of the institutional and political factors involved. The lessons from this sort of research may be able to inform aid efforts following future disasters.

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The Boxing Day tsunami and its implications for integrated coastal zone management in Thailand

by *Andy Short*

Introduction

The 2004 Boxing Day tsunami was a low frequency, high magnitude natural event. Minor earthquakes and small tsunamis are a regular feature of the Indonesian archipelago, with moderate earthquakes and associated tsunamis occurring about every 10 to 20 years, and major earthquakes of a scale greater than 8 on the Richter scale occurring about every 100 years. The Boxing Day earthquake and associated tsunami was predictable in scale and impact, what however could not be predicted was the timing. Also because of the low frequency of occurrence none of the affected coasts and nations was prepared for such a natural disaster. Thailand like all the affected countries suffered large loss of life, massive destruction of coastal communities, infrastructure and natural resources, and then faced the daunting task of rebuilding in a tsunami prone area. Also as Dararat Kaewkuntee noted, the tsunami “unveiled long accumulated and hidden land right problems, along with other issues”.

The tsunami

The Boxing Day tsunami was generated by the Indian Ocean oceanic plate pressing against the South East Asia continental plate resulting in an 8.9 scale earthquake located along a 1000 km long section of seafloor west of Sumatra. The entire seabed was suddenly uplifted 20-30 m, which in turn uplifted the overlying ocean surface by the same elevation, thereby initiating the most devastating Indian Ocean tsunami since Krakatoa in 1883. Once generated the tsunami radiated out at speeds between 600-800 km/hr, the speed of a jet airliner. Within minutes a wall of water over 10 m high has travelled up to 5 km inland at Banda Aceh destroying the city, and two hours later it had travelled rapidly across the deep Indian Ocean to hit Sri Lanka. At the same time it was refracting around the northern coast of Sumatra and travelled east, slowing in the shallower Strait of Malacca, toward the western coast of Thailand arriving about 2 hours after the earthquake.

In all locations in Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Thailand and even far off east Africa, the first tsunami arrived unannounced, despite numerous calls from the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center in Honolulu, whose warning system had been regarded as unnecessary by Indian Ocean countries. In most locations the sea receded as the trough arrived several minutes before the crest. The crest slowed by the shallow coastal zone then arrived moving inland at 40 km/hr, overtaking people as they fled the wall of water several meters high. The wave then receded again exposing the sea floor before the next and in places biggest wave arrived about 15 minutes later, followed by a series of increasingly smaller waves every 15 minutes.

The impact

The impact of the tsunami was immediate and devastating as several metres of fast flowing turbulent, debris-laden seawater moved inland, the drained seaward, only to be repeated again

and again. It destroyed most structures, it carried all buoyant material including people landward, and it deposited a mass of broken debris and bodies, some of which it then carried seaward. It essentially erased the low-lying coastal regions of all affected areas.

Dararat Kaewkuntee and post-tsunami coastal management in Thailand

The tsunami sparked a massive international relief effort in all affected areas. This relief was initially aimed at saving lives, clearing debris and bodies and beginning the rebuilding of the destroyed communities and economies. However as Dararat had stated above, the tsunami had also uncovered a wide range of additional problems, particularly to do with land tenure. In her paper she presents the issues through four case studies, each with its own set of land related problems. While some of these issues have been or are being resolved, the whole issue of post-tsunami coastal zone management needs to be addressed for the long-term sustainability of the Thai coast.

In Dararat's own words what is needed in Thailand is a “common way out, cooperation from all parties including the government, private companies and community’ together with ‘coordination and linkages ... with academic and legal support’ . She stressed the need for communities to work together to increase their bargaining power. What she is saying and what she intended to pursue was a way of bringing an integrated coastal zone management (ICZM) approach to dealing with the issues associated with managing Thai's extensive coastline, and in particular to use the raft of issues raised by the tsunami as a catalyst for advancing the debate on how best to manage Thailand's coastal zone.

In Australia ICZM is enshrined as a policy at the Commonwealth and State/Territory level. The policy is designed to achieve the following:

- Ensure coastal management is comprehensive, coordinated and effective
- Ensure coastal resources are available for ecologically sustainable development and activity
- Conserve natural and cultural resources of the coast

How and how effectively this policy is enacted at the State/Territory level varies considerably in response to the regional coastal environments, social, political and development pressures. Whereas NSW has a very rigorous approach to enforcement and protection of the coast, other states are more relaxed about expanding coastal development. The variation in its utilisation in a well-developed country like Australia, where land tenure is a given, highlights three issues with regard to Thailand and other similarly affected countries.

First, if ICZM is to be pursued in Thailand then it must be adapted to be acceptable to Thai society, its politicians, its environment and its economy. Secondly, this will be made all the more difficult because of the land tenure and related issues raised by Dararat in her paper; and thirdly, in the tsunami-affected areas, there is the additional issue of how this low frequency but highly devastating hazard with be accommodated. How much space will people be prepared to give the tsunami prone area? How much of the community, the

economy, and their livelihood will people be prepared to forego for a 1:100 year event?

These are questions which need to be raised and addressed by Thai society. Dararat was so ideally place to raise and investigate these questions, and to provide possible answers and solutions.

Andy Short is Professor in the School of Geosciences, University of Sydney.

NEWS FROM THE REGION

ADB urges greater private sector investment in Mekong

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) and government officials from the Mekong region have urged greater private sector investment in the Mekong region. One ADB estimate of infrastructure needs - such as power plants, transmission lines, roads, telecommunications networks - of the Mekong basin is \$US10-15 billion over the next 5-10 years. So far the private sector has been reluctant to invest because of concerns over investment returns. Poor regulatory and legal frameworks and a shortage of skilled labour are seen as hindrances to private sector investment. To counter these concerns the ADB is offering political risk guarantees or partial credit cover.

-- 2006 "Asian Development Bank urges bigger private sector role in Mekong basin", AFX - Asia, 8 March 2006

Mekong Delta infrastructure development

Vietnam is planning to further develop the southern Mekong Delta. Deputy Prime Minister, Nguyen Tan Dung, stated that there is a need to construct and upgrade national roads, two international airports in Can Tho City and Kien Giang province, seaports and river-ways leading to Ho Chi Minh City. A new irrigation plan has been proposed by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development with expenditures of VND23.3 trillion for 150 irrigation and flood control works, breakwaters and aquaculture works in the Mekong Delta.

-- 2005 "Vietnam to further develop southern Mekong delta", Xinhua General News Service, 20 October 2005

-- 2006 "Vietnam major delta irrigation network planned", Thai Press Reports, 14 April 2006

UPCOMING EVENTS

The Eleventh Biennial Global Conference of the International Association for the Study of Common Property (IASCP): "Survival of the Commons - Mounting Challenges & New Realities"

19-23 June, 2006, Bali, Indonesia

Contact: IASCP2006 Conference Committee

Email: Iascp06@indiana.edu

Website: <http://www.iascp.org>

Conference: Angkor - Landscape, City and Temple

18-23 July, 2006, University of Sydney, Australia

Website: <http://conferences.arts.usyd.edu.au/index.php?cf=9>

International Conference. The Greening of Agro-Industries and Networks in Asia: Challenges and Opportunities

27-28 October, 2006, Bangkok, Thailand

Contact: Dr. Somporn Kamolsiripichaiporn, National Research Center for Environmental and Hazardous Waste Management (NRC-EHWM), Chulalongkorn University, Pathumwan, Bangkok 10330, Thailand

Tel: 2218 3952

Fax: 2219 2251

Email: somporn.k@chula.ac.th

<http://www.nrc-ehwm.chula.ac.th/AGITSconference/>

Vietnam Update 2006. Dilemmas in Difference: New Approaches to Ethnic Minorities in Vietnam

23-24 November, 2006, Australian National University, Canberra

Contact: Li Tana, Division of Pacific and Asian History, RSPAS, Australian National University

Email: tana.li@anu.edu.au

DevNet: The Aotearoa New Zealand International Development Studies Network Conference 2006. Southern Perspectives on Development: Dialogue or Division?

30 November - 2 December, 2006, Dunedin, New Zealand

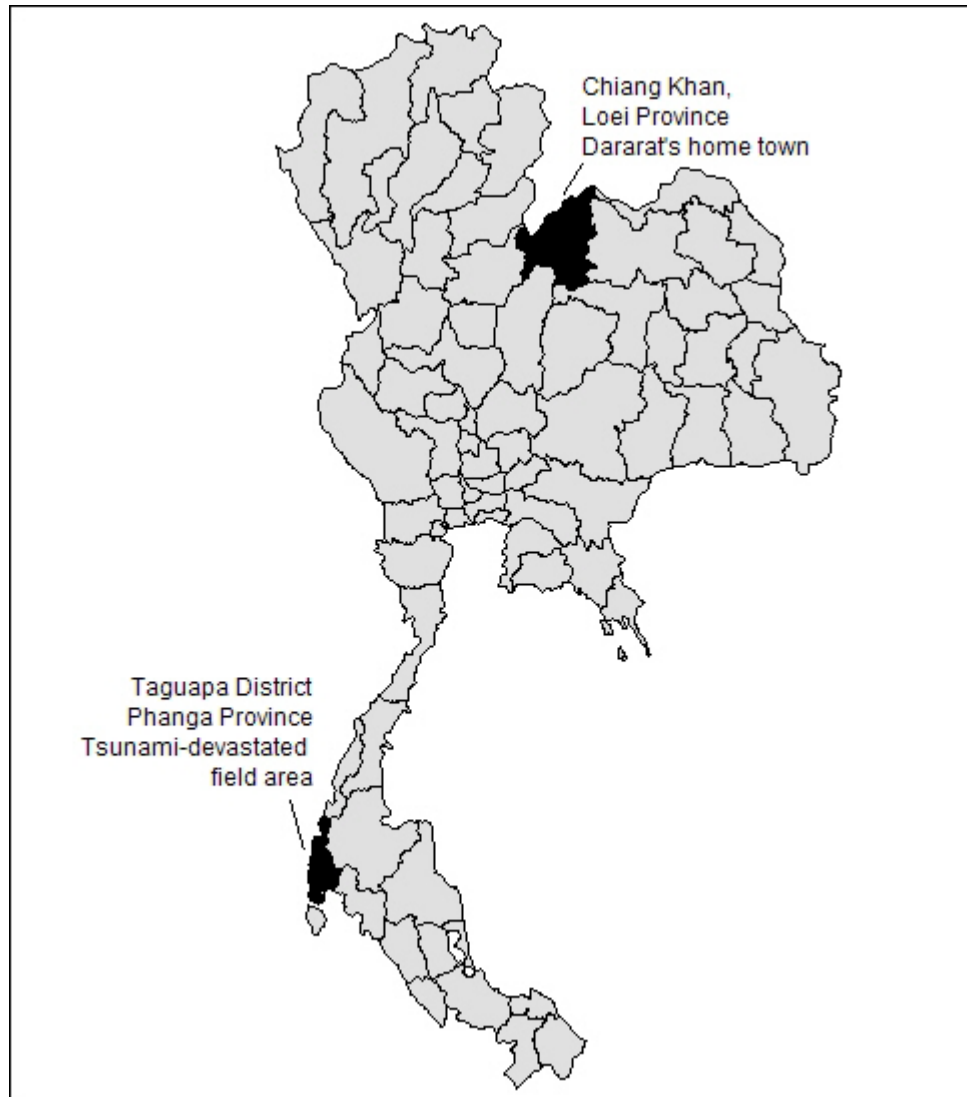
Contact: Dr Andrew McGregor, Department of Geography / Te Ihowhenua, University of Otago / Te Whare Wananga o Otago, PO Box 56, Dunedin, New Zealand / AOTEAROA

Email: devnet2006@geography.otago.ac.nz

<http://www.devnet.org.nz/>

The events listed above are changed with each issue of Mekong Update & Dialogue. For a complete list of upcoming events please go to our website at www.mekong.es.usyd.edu.au. For submission of new events please contact the AMRC Administrator at mekong@mail.usyd.edu.au

Dararat Kaewkuntee was born in Chiang Khan, Loei Province, on the Mekong River in Northeast Thailand on 25 August 1973. She graduated with a BSc majoring in Agricultural Extension (Fisheries) from Maejo University in Chiangmai in 1995. In 1996 she joined what is now the Office of Natural Resources and Environmental Policy and Planning in the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment in 1996. In 2004 she took up a Thai government scholarship to study for masters and PhD degrees in Coastal Zone Management. She completed a Masters in Environmental Management at Macquarie University in 2005, submitting a thesis entitled "Local and Coastal Environmental Management: The Case of Don Hoilod, Thailand." In the second half of 2005 she commenced study towards a PhD in the School of Geosciences, University of Sydney. Her interest in coastal management and the impacts of the December 2004 tsunami inspired her to develop a project to explore "Post-tsunami Coastal Zone Management in Thailand and Livelihood Impacts from Rezoning and Relocation". In December 2005 and January 2006 she was in Thailand on a scoping visit to allow her to develop this project. She returned to Australia full of excitement and with some very promising insights, some of which were presented at a seminar at ANU on 2 February 2006. Totally without warning she had a stroke on the way home from university on 17 February 2006 and died the following day without regaining consciousness. In the short time she was at the University of Sydney she became very popular with her colleagues (fellow students and staff) for her gentleness and friendliness.



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