



AMRC

Australian Mekong Resource Centre

Annual Report Jan-Dec 2003



The University of Sydney

This report has been prepared by AMRC staff.
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FOREWORD

REPORT OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE OF THE AMRC

2003 saw the AMRC undertaking continued outreach work, dissemination of information and analysis, and growing its partnership base. This was a year marked not by the high profile hosting of conferences or dialogues as in previous years, but in cementing relationships and developing new alliances and associations – in the Mekong region, Australia and beyond.

With the establishment of staff positions in Vietnam and Thailand, the AMRC has taken important steps towards a more regular and consistent regional presence – which should mean that the AMRC builds on its relationship strengths and regional experience in developing its analysis and policy critique. Combining this approach with the diversity of associates, from across the Mekong countries, should deliver real and tangible benefits to future collaborations; ensuring dynamic connections to Mekong needs and interests.

While AMRC staff and associates have been active in international conferences, workshops and other fora there has also been an active, yet low profile, aspect to AMRC activities. The continued research, publication, presentations and networking have laid a strong foundation for future collaborations with other academic institutions, NGOs and Government partners. The ‘academic face’ of the Centre continues to be an essential part of the work, and the resources generated through research activities, such as databases, reference library, online information and publications, are all important contributions for others working on Mekong issues.

In recommending this report to the readership, the Steering Committee would like to recognise the important contribution of individuals behind the scenes. The extent of administrative and organisational development that goes into keeping the Centre running is all too easy to take for granted. Ensuring information is accessible - especially the research and case studies – to Australian and international audiences is a huge task. The consistent high quality of the website and AMRC publications is an asset to the Centre and its staff.

As the AMRC continues to build its core programs and cement new staff and associates into its work program we foresee that 2004 will be a successful year. In looking back over the past year, the AMRC presents a strong face and maintains a diversity of initiatives that we believe make an important contribution to progressive change in the Mekong region.

Michael Simon & Fiona Miller (on behalf of the Steering Committee)

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

A NOTE FROM THE AMRC DIRECTOR

As anticipated at the beginning of the year, 2003 was very much a year of consolidation for AMRC. Following the extremely demanding Dialogue activities of the previous year, we have embarked on a number of smaller scale ventures. These included the production of a CD-ROM from the Dialogue meetings, a condensed version of which is also available on the AMRC website, and production of CD-ROM materials for schools. New research includes a project on the political ecology of risk in river basin development associated with water resource infrastructure in the Mekong.

Our founding Centre administrator, Fiona Miller, achieved a significant milestone in 2003 with the completion of her PhD on water management in the Mekong Delta. Fiona has gone on to a lecturing position in Human Geography at Macquarie University and will be moving to Stockholm to take up a research fellowship at the Stockholm Environment Institute. Fiona has been a formative influence at AMRC, and while we will miss her immediate presence we very much look forward to her continued involvement through joint research and through her new AMRC role on our Steering Committee.

Our increased regional presence, as AMRC Research Program Manager Andrew Wyatt has moved to Ho Chi Minh City / Can Tho as his home base and as we have appointed Nattaya Tubtim as Regional Research Program officer based in Chiangmai, will at once facilitate new openings and challenge us to work in multi-location mode. Our role in helping facilitate the new Mekong Curriculum initiative reported on in the following pages is an example of the kind of activity that has become possible through this presence in the region. Another example was our coordination support for the Politics of the Commons conference at Chiangmai University in July, at which about a dozen current and former AMRC Associates were present.

All too easy in moving partly "offshore" is to forget the real powerhouse of AMRC, which is the day-to-day work carried out by our administrator, Doug Bailey and others who beaver away in our office. Doug's continued development of the website, assisted by part-time players including Alanna Linn and Ryan van den Nouwelant, is in many ways our most public face, yet those directly responsible for this profile ironically remain hidden behind the scenes.

An encouraging aspect of our work during 2003 was that AMRC has become increasingly visible and noted within the University. Ultimately our role is directly related to our University location. As Sydney University continues to internationalise, our presence is both noted and supported within the School of Geosciences (we got a very favourable mention in the Geosciences Review toward the end of the year), the Faculty of Science and the College of Sciences and Technology of which we are a part. This moral support is just as important as the facilities afforded to us by our host institution, for which we remain grateful.

Finally, we appreciate the continued material support and collaboration from our partners including the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, Oxfam America and Oxfam Community Aid Abroad. It goes without saying that the continued confidence shown in our activities provides not only the means but also the stamina to keep us moving forward.

Phil Hirsch

INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND TO THE AMRC

THE AMRC: ITS RATIONALE AND OBJECTIVES

The Australian Mekong Resource Centre was established at the University of Sydney in November 1997. The Centre was set up to provide a forum and a focus for research, debate, data collection, information dissemination and support for individuals and organisations similarly concerned about the implications of the development agenda in the Mekong Region for local livelihoods and ecosystems.

THE MEKONG REGION IN 2003

The Mekong Basin is at the heart of the wider Mekong Region. Both are the key areas of geographical interest for the AMRC as the focus of environmental and developmental debates over the region's future. The basin is a natural unit defined by the land area draining into the Mekong River directly and via the river's myriad tributaries. This area of 795,000 square kilometres is home to 65 million people from diverse ethnic groups, most of whom continue to live in rural areas and depend more or less directly on the natural environment for significant parts of their livelihoods. This naturally defined area overlaps with six countries (Vietnam, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, Burma and Yunnan Province of southern China), so that management of the system as a whole requires international cooperation.

Two important events in the region were the APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation) summit in Bangkok, Thailand in October and the 6th meeting of ASEAN tourism ministers in Phnom Penh, Cambodia in January. It is recognized that a major recovery has occurred since the 1997 economic crisis and investment has accelerated significantly.

A number of hydropower projects continue to be debated in the region. The proposed Nam Theun 2 Dam in Laos is still on the agenda, despite setbacks. In 2002 Nam Theun 2 Power Company (NTPC) signed a concession agreement with the Laotian government to develop the Nam Theun 2 project on a build-own-operate-transfer (BOOT) basis. In July 2003 an agreement between Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand (EGAT) and the Nam Theun 2 Power Company (NTPC) was aborted. Then in November EGAT re-committed and an agreement was finally signed. Work on the project is forecast to begin early 2004, with full hydropower operations expected by 2009.

The Se San Basin continues to be a focus of concern because of forced resettlement, disruption to local livelihoods and environmental damage. In 2002 EVN (Electricity of Vietnam Corporation) began work on Se San 3 dam, downstream of the Yali Falls dam. Construction of the Plei Krong hydropower dam on the Se San River, upstream of Yali Falls dam in the central highlands of Vietnam, was due to start late last year. Other dams along the Se San River are still in the planning phase.

Development of transport infrastructure has been an important issue in the region. Debate continued in 2003 over the blasting of rapids in the Mekong River to clear a channel for commercial shipping. From December 2002-April 2003, major reefs and rapids on the Burma-Laos stretch of the river were blasted. This has allowed 150-tonne ships to sail between China and Chiang Saen in northern Thailand. In October 2003, ASEAN railway managers met in Hanoi to exchange views on the proposed Trans-Asia railway mega-project. The railway will stretch from Singapore to Kunming (Yunnan), cost some \$2.5 billion and take three years to build. In addition, India is considering building a railway connecting New Delhi with Hanoi, as part of an initiative to increase trade with ASEAN member countries.

During 2003 a campaign geared up to oppose plans by the ADB and World Bank for a regional power grid and electricity trading system for the six Mekong countries - China, Burma, Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, and Vietnam. It is feared that hydropower development will receive a new lease of life and spur on controversial projects such as the joint venture between EGAT (Thailand) and the Burmese government for the construction of two large dams on the Salween River in Burma. The Mekong power grid is a core component

of the ADB's Greater Mekong Subregion program. The proposal gained momentum in November 2002 when the six Mekong states signed an Inter-governmental Agreement on Regional Power Trade.

THE CENTRE AND ITS OBJECTIVES

The Australian Mekong Resource Centre was established to support organisations and individuals concerned with the social, economic and environmental implications of development in the Mekong Region, to undertake policy-relevant research, to assemble and make available data and information on developments within the region, and to serve as a focus for research on the Mekong Region within Australia. Working closely with groups and organisations within the Mekong Region, and with organisations elsewhere in Australia and in other countries with interests in the region, the Centre was established with aims to:

Contribute to:-

- the greater availability and accessibility of information on development issues in the Mekong Region through various activities including maintenance of databases, web site, and through our collaborative research initiatives and postgraduate research. These activities seek to assist with the provision of information at a local level, as well as draw upon local knowledge and experience, and to also provide alternative views of development.
- a more informed debate on Mekong issues both in Australia, the region and internationally, through the creation of a focal point of information and human resources with expertise on the Mekong Region in Australia.

Promote:-

- a stakeholder approach among diverse interest groups working in the Mekong Region, with a primary focus on the development/environment nexus, which seeks to support local livelihoods and ecologically sustainable development and the equitable pre-emption and resolution of resource based competition and conflicts.
- transparency, participation and accountability in decision making, particularly by external agencies which receive Australian (public) funding.
- a form of external involvement in the region that is more responsive to local people's needs and aspirations.

Provide:-

- a forum for dialogue, discussion and debate on Australian and other international actors' roles within the region.
- responses to and critiques of external actors in the region and analysis of the mainstream development agenda.

Support:-

- human resource development, grassroots initiatives and the sharing of information and experiences through networks and opportunities that bring people (researchers, activists and policy makers and local people) together within the region.
- research, policy and work in the region that addresses issues relating to poverty reduction, resource base enhancement and rehabilitation, and ecologically and economically sustainable development.

Educate:-

- external stakeholders and Australian policymakers, the public, academia and the media about the integrity, diversity and symbiosis of the local livelihoods, cultures and ecosystems of the Mekong Region.

ACTIVITIES OF THE AMRC DURING 2003

Throughout 2003 AMRC has continued to consolidate its position as a leading research and resource centre specializing in the Mekong Region. Through our partnerships with research institutes and NGOs working both in Australia and in the Mekong countries, we have been engaged in a number of training, research and dialogue activities while continuing to build our resource base within the University of Sydney.

1. CORE ACTIVITIES

The core funding we receive from our sponsors goes towards the maintenance of three basic activities that underpin the work of the AMRC.

Information Source and Dissemination

As a resource centre, our foremost task is to be a reliable source of information that builds upon the research that is central to the AMRC and to be an active participant in discussion and debate. The AMRC focuses on compiling contemporary information - field data, posters, maps, books, journals, magazines, newsletters, reports, web-based information, CD-ROMs and theses - on the Mekong Region which constructively critiques and challenges various aspects of development. The AMRC aims to serve as a means by which alternative perspectives and critiques can become more readily heard, developed and understood.

We have continued to develop the AMRC website, making use of its potential as our most current and widespread means of communicating with others working in the Mekong Region. The AMRC has also continued to develop CD-ROM production as a mode of information dissemination. An ambitious CD-ROM - entitled *Negotiating River Basin Management: Lessons from the Mekong* - was produced in December 2003, and a Mekong Quest CD-ROM for schools is to be produced in early 2004.

The AMRC Visitors Room (Room 467, Madsen Building, University of Sydney), which was established in 1999, was well used throughout the year by visiting scholar, Caroline Garaway, AMRC Research Program Manager, Andrew Wyatt, and various other researchers and students.

Reference Library

The AMRC reference library is an expanding resource. In addition to hard copy material, it contains a small but growing collection of CD-ROMs, including those produced by the Centre itself. Another gradual but steady change has been the setting up the AMRC library and website as complementary sources of information. This has increased the accessibility of information held by the AMRC. It is also a response to the limited space available for continued physical expansion of the library. Some of the library collection now resides in the Visitors Room to avoid congestion in the AMRC office. The library continues to accumulate resources not found in the University's collection covering mainland Southeast Asian environment and development issues. The library is made up of contemporary materials such as newsletters, governmental and non-governmental material, journals, reports, newspapers and magazines. In addition the AMRC website 'Mekong News' page contains various listserv items addressing key topics related to environmental and livelihood issues in the region.

During the year the AMRC library continued to provide a useful reference source for undergraduate and postgraduate students, visiting researchers, NGO advocacy workers and AMRC Associates. Researchers are welcome to use the reference library during the weekdays opening hours but are advised to call Doug Bailey on (02) 9351 7796 before visiting.

Website

The AMRC website is popular with a wide range of users, with many information requests and enquiries to the Centre made from initial web contact. It attracts up to 2,000 hits per month. The website presents

information on the Mekong Region, as well as information on the publications, projects, activities and people associated with the Centre. One of the most useful features of the website is the provision of news about issues confronting the region. It is now possible to get a sense of the evolution of these issues by reading items covering an extended period of time. There are four case studies on the website: three providing a multi-scale analysis of natural resource management in Laos; and a fourth multi-scale case study of the social and environmental effects, and governance, associated with hydropower development in the Se San River Watershed. Two other case studies envisaged for the future are: an analysis of local livelihood impacts of water-control related infrastructure development in the Mekong Delta; and water resource issues in the Lancang Basin. In early 2004 a new section - Laos Resource Tenure Studies Project - was linked to the projects section of the website.

Newsletter

AMRC's quarterly newsletter, *Mekong Update & Dialogue*, is available on the AMRC website in pdf format. Printed copies are also available free of charge on request. The structure of *Mekong Update & Dialogue* is:

- Editorial
- Feature article on a topic of particular significance to the development of the Mekong Region
- Responses to the Feature
- News from the Region
- Australian Mekong News
- News from the Centre
- Upcoming Events
- Graphic representation of key issues

This format has been successful in generating dialogue and exchange between different authors and in providing the readership with greater breadth in analysis and perspectives.

CD-ROM Production

During 2003 the AMRC produced a CD-ROM entitled *Negotiating River Basin Management: Lessons from the Mekong*. This CD-ROM is based upon the outcomes of the whole River Dialogue process, both in Australia and in Ubonratchathani, Thailand during 2002. The CD-ROM contents include sections dealing with themes in river basin management (with case studies of the Se San Basin, blasting of Mekong rapids and Pak Mun dam), stakeholder dialogue and links between the Murray-Darling and Mekong river basins. Video clips taken at the Brisbane and Ubon conferences provide living illustrations of the diverse perspectives on river basin management. The CD-ROM has been supported by the Dialogue on Water, Food and Environment. Copies of the CD-ROM have been distributed to IWMI, TERRA, Oxfam CAA, Oxfam America and attendees at the 2002 *Dialogue on River Basin Development and Civil Society in the Mekong Region*.

In November 2003, work began in earnest on a CD-ROM for NSW secondary schools. Expanding on the widely used model of "WebQuest", the Mekong Quest CD-ROM incorporates video clips from the 2002 Geography Southeast Asia field school and other supplementary material to provide a series of case studies for early high school (year eight) students. Various sections will cover: general geography, history and politics of the Mekong Region; development agendas focusing on dams in Thailand; stakeholder processes in regional development; village life and changing rural livelihoods in Laos; environmental challenges of the Mekong Delta in Vietnam. It is hoped that by following the experiences of fellow Australian (albeit university) students in the Mekong Region, high school students will more easily relate to, and gain insight into, otherwise remote issues. The CD-ROM is due was completed in early 2004.

Databases

Reference Database

The AMRC reference database (using Endnote software) contains approximately 1900 entries and is a useful tool for visiting researchers and students searching for information on the wide range of topics and issues covered by the library. Divided into sub-groups, the database provides a quick and easy way to access topics of interest. It is also possible to generate bibliographies in a short space of time for later reference. Access to the database is possible by appointment, with a workstation in our Visitors Room assigned to this function.

Contacts Database

The AMRC contacts database contains approximately 700 records of Mekong Update & Dialogue subscribers, purchasers of AMRC Working Papers, conference attendees, AMRC Associates and regional partners. The continued development of this database will enable the strategic dissemination of information in the future, and so support a key function of the AMRC. None of the entries in our contacts database is passed on to any other organisations.

Maps Database

The AMRC maintains a database (using MapInfo software) of digital maps covering the Mekong Region. From time to time AMRC produces maps from its database which other organisations use. The AMRC can also draw upon the School of Geoscience's map collection containing over 80,000 hard copy maps.

Images Database

The AMRC maintains a digital database of photographs and other images using ACDSee software program. These images, mostly of the Mekong Region, have been provided by AMRC associates and friends. A properly functioning images database is crucial to the on-going production of AMRC publications and expansion of the AMRC website. Images are filed according to category (e.g. agriculture/acid sulphate soils). Each image entry in the database will eventually be accompanied by description, author, date and keywords for ease of retrieval. Purchase of a more website-friendly software package is under consideration.

Networking Activities

As the name of the AMRC has become better known to individuals and organisations in Australia, the Mekong Region and internationally, so the participation of the AMRC in networking activities is increasing. For example, in 2003 the AMRC has been working closely with IWMI (International Water Management Institute) in Colombo, Sri Lanka, and its partners in the Dialogue for Water, Food and Environment, on the production of the River Dialogue CD-ROM.

The AMRC works with Australian organisations such as the Research Institute for Asia and the Pacific (RIAP), AusAID, Oxfam Community Aid Abroad, The Australian Council for Overseas Aid (ACFOA), ACT Mekong Group and AID/WATCH, Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF), Inland Rivers Network (IRN) and Nature Conservation Council of NSW Inc (NCCNSW).

Within the region the AMRC works with such organisations as Ubon Ratchathani University (Thailand), Khon Kaen University (Thailand), Yunnan University (China), Royal University of Phnom Penh (Cambodia), National University of Laos (NUOL), Living Aquatic Resources Research Centre (LARReC), National Economic Research Institute (Laos), PADETC (Laos), Can Tho University (Vietnam), NISTPASS (Vietnam), Regional Centre for Social Sciences and Sustainable Development at Chiang Mai University (Thailand), TERRA (Thailand), Oxfam Mekong Initiative (OMI), Focus on the Global South (Thailand), Nan Civil Society Coordination Centre, Asian International Rivers Centre (Yunnan, China) and World Fish Centre (based in Penang).

Mekong Discussion Group

The AMRC hosts a fortnightly seminar series, known as the Mekong Discussion Group, during the University semester. Students, researchers and others are invited to present seminars on contemporary issues related to the Mekong Region. The group provides participants with the opportunity to meet and network with researchers and groups involved in a wide range of initiatives in the Mekong Region and Australia. Notable highlights in 2003 have been IRN Southeast Asia Program Director, Aviva Imhof's update of Mekong hydropower developments, especially Nam Theun 2, and a paper entitled "Security developments in the Thai-Burma borderlands" by Professor Des Ball from the Strategic & Defence Studies Centre, RSPAS, ANU. Professor Ball's paper has been published by the AMRC as Working Paper #9.

The 2003 program is displayed in the table overleaf. For details of the 2004 program please visit the AMRC website.



Professor Des Ball about to give his presentation to the Mekong Discussion Group on 26 September 2003.

Topical Talks

Starting second semester 2003, AMRC has hosted a weekly informal discussion session at lunchtime on Fridays in the Geography tea room (Madsen Room 472). The main aim is to keep Associates and interested others up to date with significant events and issues in the region, and also to provide an opportunity to report back on recent visits or other relevant activities. The structure is very open, but each week a discussion leader helps get conversation started. A list of topics discussed in 2003 is given overleaf.

Conference & Seminar Participation and Conference Presentations

February Phil Hirsch participated in The Politics of Fisheries Knowledge in the Mekong River Basin, Second Large Rivers Symposium, Phnom Penh

11-14 February Simon Bush presented paper 'Comparing what matters with what is done: fisheries and aquaculture in the Lao PDR' at the Second Large Rivers Symposium, Phnom Penh

- March* Phil Hirsch attended the 3rd World Water Forum in Kyoto
- April* Phil Hirsch attended Both-Ends-Gomukh project workshop in South Africa
- 2 May* Bob Fisher presented paper on 'Community Forestry in the Mekong Region', Mekong Research Group Seminar, Division of Geography, University of Sydney
- June* Phil Hirsch attended Both-Ends-Gomukh project workshop in India
- 4-5 June* Simon Bush represented the AMRC at the MRC Fisheries Programme for Fisheries Management and Development Cooperation, Udon Thani
- 9 July* Bob Fisher was guest lecturer at 'Community-Based Forest Management and Community Forestry', Asian Institute of Technology, Bangkok
- 11-14 July* Phil Hirsch attended Politics of the Commons conference in Chiang Mai
- 11-14 July* Andrew Wyatt presented paper *Trans-nationalizing the commons in a post-socialist country: The case of privatised Lao hydropower* for the conference on Politics of the Commons conference in Chiang Mai
- 11-14 July* Bob Fisher presented paper on 'Community Forestry in Southeast Asia and South Asia: Devolution or Persistence of State Control.' "Politics of the Commons" Conference, Chiang Mai
- July* Kate Lloyd presented a paper "To market or to a socialist market economy? A case study of foreign tour operators in Vietnam" to the Asia Pacific Tourism Association Conference, Sydney.
- August* Phil Hirsch attended seminar on agrarian transitions in Montreal
- 19-20 August* Fiona Miller was panel discussant at Water, Governance and the Political Economy - International Symposium, Australian National University, Canberra
- 8-17 September* Bob Fisher presented paper on 'Within Boundaries: Implementing Pro-poor Conservation in Protected Areas', as member of Panel on Poverty and Protected Areas, World Parks Conference, Durban
- 1-3 October* Bob Fisher presented paper on 'What Can Applied Anthropology Offer to Anthropological Theory? The Case of Community-based Forest Management', Australian Anthropological Society Conference, University of Sydney
- 13 October* Fiona miller presented paper "Risks, responses and rights: Gender Dimensions of Water Excess and Water Scarcity in the Mekong Delta, Viet Nam", at Fluid Bonds: Gender in Water Resources Management - Workshop, Australian National University, Canberra
- November* Simon Bush organised a Lao fisheries seminar - attended by Caroline Garaway, Aloun Phonvisay, Mr. Kaviphone and Phil Hirsch - at Sydney University
- 3 December* Phil Hirsch Gave Keynote Paper on "Development assistance in a transboundary river basin setting: The role of institutional mechanisms in safeguarding poor people's livelihoods and rights to land and water in the Mekong Region", Conference on *From water 'wars' to water 'riots'? The role of the poor and implications for water management institutions in future water related conflicts*, Copenhagen, Danish Institute for International Affairs
- December* Phil Hirsch attended inception workshop for new Mekong Curriculum Initiative in Can Tho, Vietnam

Mekong Discussion Group 2003

Date	Topic	Presenter(s)
28 March	Negotiating river basin management in Nan	Phil Hirsch & Alanna Linn, Division of Geography, School of Geosciences, University of Sydney
11 April	Bottom-up approaches to negotiating river basin development: the case of the Sesan River Basin in Vietnam and Cambodia	Andrew Wyatt, Division of Geography, School of Geosciences, University of Sydney
2 May	Community forestry in the Mekong	Bob Fisher, Sen. Researcher, AMRC
16 May	Indigenous issues in river basin development in Australia	Liz McNiven, Indigenous Policy Officer, MDBC
30 May	Gender impacts of the state budget in Vietnam	Melanie Beresford, A/Prof. Department of Economics, Macquarie University
13 June	Natural disasters, opium and conservation in Laos: understanding living aquatic resources in rural development policy	Simon Bush, Division of Geography, School of Geosciences, University of Sydney
1 August	The NikeWatch Campaign in the Mekong	Tim Connor, Coordinator, The NikeWatch Campaign, Oxfam CAA
15 August	The World Heritage site proposal in Yunnan	Tim Wong, AMRC Associate
29 August	Update on Mekong hydropower developments especially Nam Theun 2	Aviva Imhof, Director, Southeast Asia Program, IRN
12 September	Hmong culture across borders	Nick Tapp, Sen. Fellow, Dept. of Anthropology, RSPAS, ANU
26 September	Security developments in the Thai-Burma borderlands	Prof. Des Ball, Strategic & Defence Studies Centre, RSPAS, ANU
10 October	Political ecology of the Lanping mine, Yunnan	Yusheng Zhang, AMRC Associate
24 October	Adaptive learning in fisheries in Lao PDR	Caroline Garaway, AMRC Visiting Scholar

Topical Talks 2003

Date	Topic	Presenter(s)
1 August	The Hmong and the CIA	Viliam Phraxayavong
8 August	Update on issues in the Se San Basin and the Mekong Delta	Andrew Wyatt
15 August	Notions of "centre" in Arnhem Land and the Mekong	Cameron McAuliffe
22 August	Agrarian transitions revisited project	Phil Hirsch
5 September	Maoist insurgents in Nepal	Krishna Shrestha
12 September	What is ecology? Exploring the divergent meanings of the term "ecology"	Simon Bush
19 September	The 5th WTO Ministerial Conference, Cancun, September 2003	Phil Hirsch & Cameron McAuliffe
10 October	The 5th IUCN World Parks Congress in Durban.	Bob Fisher
19 October	Nan (Thailand) and the APEC workshop in Hanoi	Phil Hirsch

2. AFFILIATED ACTIVITIES

Where the interests and aims of the AMRC are shared with other organisations we have come to cooperate on a number of initiatives. One such activity is:

AusAID-ADB NGO Roundtable - The AMRC continued to participate in the Roundtable in 2003, during which two meetings were held. The first was held in Canberra at the Dept. of Treasury on 2 April. The AMRC hosted and chaired the second meeting at the School of Geosciences, University of Sydney, on 29 August. The meeting continued discussions about ADF 8 mid-term review. It also raised concerns over information disclosure by the ADB in the context of ADF 9 replenishment. Also discussed was the role of the ADB in the Greater Mekong Sub-region power grid and the roles of the ADB and World Bank in development of the Se San Basin and the Nam Theun 2 hydropower dam. Philip Hirsch, Andrew Wyatt, Doug Bailey, Viliam Phraxayavong and Kevin Prakoonheang represented AMRC at the Roundtables.

3. PROJECT ACTIVITIES 2003

Mekong Curriculum

The Mekong River Basin and the Mekong Region have increasingly become the focus for a number of regional initiatives and development agendas. However, lecturers and students in the six countries of the Mekong have relatively few opportunities for interaction, and the tertiary level curricula in each country make use of relatively little material from regional Mekong neighbours. Vietnamese, Lao, Cambodian, Thai and Chinese students studying history, geography or other social and environmental science subjects are much more likely to make use of examples from North America or Europe than from each other's respective countries, in particular from the Mekong section of those countries. A consequence is that the new generation of professionals and intellectuals have only a very limited collective sense of being "Mekong citizens", despite the trans-boundary implications of current developments in the region and the potentials of comparative and collaborative work in fields such as natural resource management. Indeed, to the extent that regional work is being carried out, it tends to be by university researchers and teachers from outside the region altogether. Likewise, the emergence of a "regional civil society" is significantly curtailed by the continued fragmentation of the regional intelligentsia.

There is great potential for academic institutes to be supported in reviewing and building knowledge from within the region, and to responding creatively and in a progressive, pro-active manner to development challenges faced in the context of rapid social and environmental change. Support can be achieved by fostering collaboration between a group of Mekong academics in compiling resources and materials relating to the Mekong Basin; sharing resources and experiences; expanding curricula to make them more regionally and river-basin relevant; and conducting relevant research together. In principle, this could occur in a host of subjects that rely on empirical knowledge, including history, geography, literature, agriculture, forestry, environmental science, languages and so on. Initially, though, the priority is in the field where there are essential linkages not only in a comparative knowledge sense but also in terms of systemic inter-relationships - that is, in the environmental sciences, with a focus on the environmental management/social science side of the relevant disciplines. These are also strategic areas for development of relevant civil society networks and knowledge bases. While we envisage early collaborative activity producing key curriculum resources, it is very much up to each member then to use this resource and develop it further, and to build on collaborations with regional partners for research, cross visits or other activity.

In December 2003 AMRC facilitated the inaugural workshop for the project at Can Tho University in Vietnam.

Duration: 2003 - 2005

Partners: Yunnan University (China); National University of Laos (Lao PDR); Chiang Mai University (Thailand); Khon Kaen University (Thailand); Ubon Ratchathani University (Thailand); Royal University of Phnom Penh (Cambodia); Can Tho (Vietnam)

Funding bodies: Oxfam America (Mekong Learning Initiative), Open Society Institute

River Basin Development: A Negotiated Approach

The overall purpose of this project is to document alternative strategies for effective river basin management, based on grassroots initiatives that have scaled up their activity from the local to the wider river basin context through key negotiation processes. The project involves cases in seven locations, two of which are being documented by AMRC. Coordinated by the NGOs Both Ends (Netherlands) and Gomukh (India), the project also includes partners in South Africa (AWARD), India (Gomukh), Bangladesh (CEGIS), Bolivia (Centro Agua) and Peru (AEGIS).



Phil Hirsch with the Nan team hosting Both Ends-Gomukh colleagues from South Africa, India and the Netherlands in February 2003.

For its contribution to this initiative, AMRC is working with partners in Cambodia (Se San Project) and Thailand (Nan Civil Society Coordination Centre) to document the upscaling of grassroots concerns in river basin management. In Cambodia, the key context is the strategic way in which isolated indigenous communities are networking, researching and documenting effects on their livelihoods from the Yali Falls Dam, as part of a protracted negotiation process to establish a river flows regime that more closely matches that which has been affected by the dam, with devastating

impacts on their livelihoods. In Thailand, the context is a combination of proposals for large scale river diversion, notably the Kok-Ing-Nan scheme, and the establishment of river basin committees, which worry local groups in the sense that they are not based on existing management and negotiation arrangements and may disenfranchise local communities from managing their own water and rivers.

Duration: 2002-2004

Partners: Both ENDS (Netherlands); Centro Agua, Bolivia; Save the Sand, South Africa; CEGIS, Bangladesh; AEDES, Peru; Gomukh, India; AMRC

Funding bodies: DGIS/Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Strategic Identification of Existing and Potential Research, Advocacy and Program Linkages on Water-related Issues

Environmental degradation and the modification of surface and groundwater resources, as well as governance structures on water use and access, and associated river basin management, have direct impacts on the livelihoods of people throughout the world. The experience of Oxfam Community Aid

Abroad (OCAA) and key partners working in the Mekong Region has identified river basin management as cutting across a diverse range of critical issues affecting the rights of communities. Decision making on river basin management affects not only the access to and use of water, fish, forests and other resources by communities, but also has implications for the future development paths communities wish to follow and their right to a voice on matters concerning their livelihoods. Strengthening the links and opportunities to learn from experience gained at the program level and research conducted on these issues, can ensure advocacy initiatives on water and river basin management are successful in supporting the rights of communities. This project aims to identify what linkages currently exist between program, research and advocacy issues on water-related issues and identify how these linkages could be potentially strengthened in the Mekong Region and elsewhere.

Duration: June-August 2003

Funding bodies: Oxfam Community Aid Abroad

Partners: Oxfam Community Aid Abroad

Toward a Political Ecology of Risk in River Basin Development: the case of the Mekong

The objective of this project is to examine the multi-scaled social construction, and more specifically mediation of risk associated with environmental change and large scale development interventions in the Mekong Region. The research aims to make a theoretical contribution to the rapidly emerging field of political ecology, by moving beyond an analysis of winners and losers based on certainty and post-facto impacts. It moves beyond the actuarial notions of risk of the environmental risk assessment professional and works toward an analysis driven by the inherent uncertainties that underlie the individual construction; and the institutional and process responses, and social distribution of environmental risk. The specific aims of this project are to:

- Examine the typology of risks that appear in the public record such as in ESIA's, CBAs, technical studies and reports, and the media
- Determine the correspondence or lack thereof between different actor/stakeholder groups in the typologies of perceived risk and determine the epistemological significance of such a differentiation among different groups in the Mekong River Basin
- Determine the manner and extent to which the political and ethical/moral rationalities of different stakeholder groups have played in mediating particular risk typologies onto the public record including ESIA's, CBAs, technical studies and reports, and the media in the Mekong River Basin and how these have been distributed.

Duration: 2003 - 2005

Partners: Nan Civil Society Coordination Centre; University of Can Tho, Green Watershed

Funding bodies: Australian Research Council (ARC)

4. ACTIVITIES OF AMRC ASSOCIATES AND POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH

Alanna Linn (AMRC Associate)

In 2002 Alanna completed her geography honours thesis at the University of Sydney, looking at the contestation of water management in Northern Thailand. She has also previously undertaken research in Thailand, Vietnam, and Laos as part of the third year geography field school. In 2002, Alanna assisted in coordination of the Dialogue on River Basin Development and Civil Society and co-authored an AMRC working paper looking at the transfer of water management models between the Murray-Darling and Mekong river basins. For the first half and last part of 2003 Alanna worked on developing a CD-ROM based upon the outcomes of the Dialogue process.

Andrew Wyatt (AMRC Associate & Research Program Manager)

Andrew moved to Vietnam in April 2003 to begin preparatory work on the AMRC's three year ARC funded project on the 'Political Ecology of Risk in River Basin Development: The case of the Mekong'. He is now based at the Department of Environment and Natural Resource Management, Can Tho University, as a resident foreign scholar. Preparatory work for this project during 2003 has involved site selection and consultations with local partners in the lower Mekong Delta, Sesan River Basin in Cambodia, and Nan River Basin in Thailand. He also continued, as Research Program Manager, with other AMRC duties such as the final stage of documentation of the Sesan Protection Network initiative for the BothEnds/Gomukh supported project, 'River Basin Development: A Negotiated Approach', and in mid-December he jointly coordinated and supported the start-up workshop at Can Tho University for the Mekong Curriculum project, a joint AMRC initiative with 8 Mekong based universities and the Oxfam America Mekong Learning Initiative project. During the year, he presented a paper at the 'Politics of the Commons' conference at Chiang Mai University, prepared submission papers to AusAID and Treasury regarding the myriad institutional failures facing the Sesan River communities in Cambodia, and submitted a paper on the Theun Hinboun hydropower dam in Laos to a Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) supported Technical Assistance review of lessons learnt from hydropower developments in Vietnam and the Mekong Region for Vietnamese dam building agencies. He also chaired the NGO-Australian Government Roundtable on Multilateral Development Banks held in Sydney in August, jointly delivered a 2 day workshop on EIA and Risk to the Nan Civil Society Coordination Centre in October, and he was a participant in the final JBIC workshop to review lessons learnt from hydropower development in Vietnam and the Mekong Region in Hanoi in November.

Anucha Leksakundilok (AMRC Associate)

Anucha graduated as an Architect and Regional Planner from Chulalongkorn University, Thailand before working at the Thailand Institute of Scientific and Technological Research (TISTR) where he was responsible for research and design of environmental and natural resource management plans for both the government and private organisations. Anucha also has experience in physical planning and project management, particularly in the area of tourism development. The major projects he did before coming to University of Sydney were "Operational Study Project to Determine Ecotourism Policy", "A Study to determine the Pattern of Marine Ecotourism Management" and "A Master Plan for Tourism Development of Lung Phra Bang Province, Laos PDR". Anucha is currently completing his Ph.D. on "Local Participation in Environmental Management for Ecotourism in Thailand". Languages: Thai.

Bob Fisher (AMRC Associate)

Bob Fisher is an anthropologist. His PhD research was a study of human ecology, focusing on strategies for adapting to drought in the Thar Desert in Rajasthan. He specialises in social and political ecological aspects of natural resource management, particularly involving community forestry. After working in Nepal with the then Nepal-Australia Forestry Project in the late 1980s, he taught at the University of Western Sydney, Hawkesbury, before becoming Deputy Director of the Regional Community Forestry Training Center in Bangkok from 1997 to 2001. He has done research or consultancies in a wide variety of

countries, including Mozambique, Iran, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal, India, Pakistan, Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia. Among other writing projects, he is currently working on a book on livelihoods and conservation for IUCN The World Conservation Union and another on Adaptive Collaborative Management of forests for the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR). He aims to combine theoretical and applied interests and has a strong interest in action research and documentary video production. Languages: Hindi, Nepali

Doug Bailey (AMRC Associate & Program Officer)

Prior to joining AMRC worked as Administrator with two small overseas aid NGOs with conservation and permaculture projects in Vietnam and Cambodia. PhD in Anthropology from the University of Sydney with a research focus on rural west Java, Indonesia. Lived and worked in Indonesia. Ongoing involvement with the permaculture movement including publication of a newsletter. In November 2000 took part in Mekong Initiative Partners' Consultation Workshop in Phnom Penh, hosted by Oxfam America and JVC Cambodia. In November 2002 attended the Dialogue on River Basin Development and Civil Society in Ubon, doing videoing for the AMRC. Languages: Indonesian, elementary Sundanese.

Fiona Miller (AMRC Associate)

Fiona was awarded her PhD in 2003 for her thesis entitled: "Society-Water Relations in the Mekong Delta, Viet Nam: A Political Ecology of Risk". Her thesis analyses the changing nature of society-water relations in the Mekong Delta, Viet Nam and explores the political ecology of water at multiple scales through an analysis of the discourse and actions of various actors involved in water resources management. Fiona recently conducted a collaborative project with Oxfam CAA on the linkages between research, advocacy and program work on water-related matters (2003). She has also worked as a geography tutor, and was the Administrator of the AMRC (1997-1999). Fiona previously worked as an Australian volunteer in Vietnam (1995-1997), where she was involved in research on natural resource management for AusAID and Oxfam UK/I whilst based at a Vietnamese university. Fiona worked at RIAP (1994-95) following the completion of her honours research on aid and the environment (1993). Fiona is now lecturing in resource management at the Department of Human Geography at Macquarie University. Languages: Vietnamese.

Georgina Houghton (AMRC Associate)

Georgina has been living and working in Vietnam for the past 7 years after finishing an MA in the Department of Geography at the University of Sydney. Based in Hanoi, she has some years experience working with international and local NGOs in various aspects of rural development and between 1996-1998 she also directed fieldwork for a rural microfinance research project for SOAS. Georgina's PhD research will focus on land issues in a rural community in the uplands of the central Vietnam province of Nghe An, and explore the role of local land tenure institutions in mediating the impacts of global processes currently redefining the relationship between national and individual development interests in Vietnam. Initial survey work has revealed that the land resources of local communities are at the hub of a cluster of competing interests including the internationally-driven expansion of bio-diversity conservation areas, state-owned forestry industries, ongoing border security issues, governmental programs to intensify food production and allocate land use-rights to forest land, and the local political-economic interests of illegal logging. Languages: Vietnamese.

Kate Lloyd (AMRC Associate)

Kate Lloyd is a lecturer in the Department of Human Geography at Macquarie University. She teaches in the fields of Asia-Pacific geography and development geography. Her research is focused on transitional countries in Asia particularly on Vietnam's transition from a command economy to a socialist market economy. Her other main interest involves international tourism as a development strategy and its role in informing socio-economic change in developing countries. Languages: elementary Vietnamese

Olivia Dun (AMRC Associate)

Olivia completed her Honours Degree in Environmental Science (Geography) in November 2000, with an honours thesis entitled "Community Forestry Discourses in Northern Thailand" following two months fieldwork in Thailand. In 2001 Olivia worked in Laos as a Youth Ambassador under the AusAID Youth Ambassadors for Development Program. There she worked at the National University of Laos as a support for a Natural Resource Management Documentation Centre located within the Faculty of Forestry. Olivia spent the beginning of 2002 touring Vietnam, Thailand and Laos in her role as course tutor for the 2002 Southeast Asian Field School. She then assisted in the teaching of the Mekong eSim component of the Field School course in Australia. In April 2002 she returned to Laos to continue work on the AMRC-supported "Resource Tenure in Community Based Natural Resource Management Project" at the National University of Laos. The project was in its final phase of training local teachers in academic level research. Olivia's work involved conference preparations, assisting researchers with language editing and literature reviews, and training local staff in database applications and multimedia presentation development. In 2003 Olivia took up a graduate position with the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs in Canberra.

Phil Hirsch (AMRC Associate & Director)

During 2003, Phil Hirsch attended a number of field workshops for the Both Ends-Gomukh project on negotiated approaches to river basin management. In February he helped organise an exchange visit to Nan, Thailand and Ratanakiri, Cambodia for South African, Indian and Dutch colleagues, and he attended return workshops in South Africa and India in April and June respectively. He also attended a number of international meetings, including the 2nd Large Rivers Symposium in Phnom Penh the 3rd World Water Forum in Kyoto in March, the Politics of the Commons conference in Chiangmai in June, a seminar on agrarian transitions in Montreal in August, a conference on water conflicts in Copenhagen in December, and an inception workshop for a new Mekong Curriculum Initiative at Can Tho in December. Together with Andrew Wyatt, Phil has commenced a new ARC funded research initiative on *Political Ecology of Risk in River Basin Development: a case study of the Mekong*, and collaborative fieldwork has commenced at several sites. Phil was also active in getting the second phase of a research-training initiative at National University of Laos (NUOL) up and running. Phil supervised five Honours students to completion during 2003, four of whom were working on Mekong projects. His teaching has become entirely thematic, rather than regional, so that his undergraduate units on *catchment management*, *environmental management* and *globalisation and regions in transition* have drawn on Mekong work to illustrate more universalistic themes rather than be taught within an area studies framework. The same applies to two new Masters level courses on *social science of environment* and *resources and regional development*. In 2004, Phil will work with colleagues at a number of Mekong universities on developing common curriculum materials, and he will continue to work on the risk research project, the NUOL program and the Both Ends-Gomukh initiative. Languages: Thai, Lao, Vietnamese

Simon Bush (AMRC Associate)

Simon joined the AMRC in 1999 as a research assistant before commencing his PhD within the Division of Geography in 2000. His research is focused on the politics of living aquatic resources management and development in Savannakhet province, Lao PDR. This work is investigating the role of capture and culture fisheries in rural, lowland Lao communities and comparing this with the development directions of 'fisheries' by government and non-government organisations in the Mekong basin. Simon returned from Laos after a two year stay in 2003 to finalise his thesis. During his time in Laos he was involved with the Mekong River Commission Assessment of Mekong Fisheries Component, the Living Aquatic Resource Research Centre (LARReC), the OXFAM America Mekong Learning Initiative and the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF Lao) investigating livelihood issues of rural communities dependent on living aquatic resources. He was also involved in setting up a GIS for the Department of Agriculture and Forestry in Savannakhet province. He is currently based in Sydney and has ongoing involvement with the AMRC. Languages: Lao

Tamerlaine Beasley (AMRC Associate)

Tamerlaine manages her own intercultural training and consultancy company Beasley Intercultural. Specialising in Thailand, Tamerlaine assists clients to operate more effectively in different cultural environments. Key clients include the United Nations, the Australian Embassy in Bangkok, Universities and leading corporations in the region. An Asian Studies graduate from the ANU, Tamerlaine has also studied Thai at Chulalongkorn and Silpakorn Universities and International Business at Penn State University in the US. Her research thesis was on intercultural issues in the development of the Thai-Lao Friendship Bridge. Tamerlaine also facilitates AMRC planning meetings from time to time. Languages: Thai, Lao

Tim Wong (AMRC Associate)

With a background in protected area (PA) policy and management, Tim has been working for the last six years in both the government and non-government sectors in Australia and Asia. Completing his undergraduate studies at the ANU in 1997, Tim joined Environment Australia where he worked on a wide range of wilderness and World Heritage issues, including PA planning, and WH policy, with a strong focus on indigenous issues. In 2001, Tim joined the Australian Youth Ambassadors Program, and worked for IUCN - The World Conservation Union for 12 months, based in the Asia-Regional Office in Thailand.



Tim Wong with his research assistant Ae, conducting an interview in Khao Yai National Park, Thailand.

Encompassing several countries (Thailand, Lao PDR, Vietnam, China, Malaysia and Cambodia), this work focused on the identification, management, and protection of karst biodiversity and World Heritage in Asia, but also included work on the RAMSAR Convention and other wetland and water issues in the lower Mekong basin. Tim chose to stay with IUCN on contract for an additional six months to undertake further karst management work in China, before returning to Australia. Tim has undertaken several short term work assignments for IUCN since this time. Tim joined the AMRC in February 2003 under a research internship, assisting the Centre to develop an Australian Research

Council Linkages grant looking at environmental flows in wetland PA's. Following his interests in the protected area system in Thailand, Tim is currently undertaking a Masters degree in the Department of Geography, University of Sydney. His research is focussed on the history of Thailand's oldest National Park, Khao-Yai, and the various environmental and other discourses of different actors, that have influenced the evolution of the Park since its establishment.

Tira Foran (AMRC Associate)

Before joining the AMRC as an affiliate scholar, Tira lived for sixteen years in the United States, where he worked most recently as a consultant doing fisheries policy analysis and advocacy for Environmental Defense, a non-profit research and advocacy organization. In Thailand, where Tira grew up, he has conducted research on corporate social responsibility among multinational electronics firms. Most recently he has helped IUCN (the World Conservation Union) launch an "environmental flows" assessment programme in Southeast Asia. Tira is currently a PhD student in the Division of Geography. His research looks at the

effects of competing agendas on the Thai government's recent decision about how to operate Pak Mun Dam. Languages: Thai

Viliam Phraxayavong (AMRC Associate)

Viliam had ten years experience in the economic and social planning of Laos in the Royal Lao Government (1965-75). He was involved in the training of local administrators in the implementation of the National Development Plans and was also Director for the coordination of foreign aid. From 1981 to 1984, under the Lao People Democratic Republic regime, he was employed by the Department of Irrigation (Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries and Livestock) as Chef de Service of Irrigation projects financed by international agencies. He is currently conducting PhD research on "Impact of Foreign Assistance on Laos since the 1940s". Languages: Lao, French, Thai

Yusheng Zhang (AMRC Associate)

Yusheng has more than six years experience working for the Chinese government. As a geologist, he is interested in environmental and social problems associated with natural resource development in developing countries. His research looks at the political-ecology of mineral resources extraction in Yunnan, China, the Lanping mine in particular. His thesis aims to analyze the causes and implications of environmental changes brought about by mining, and to address social equity issues arising from mining. Between October 2002 and January 2003 Yusheng carried out fieldwork in Yunnan on the effects of mining. Languages: Chinese

Past Associates:

Cameron McAuliffe (AMRC Associate)

In 1999 Cameron completed his research into the impacts of the recent economic crisis in Thailand on its rural communities, which included critiques of rural-urban migration patterns and the media representations of returning domestic migrants. This research involved two-months of village-based fieldwork in NE Thailand and was the basis of his Honours thesis in Geography, which was completed in 1999. In 2000, Cameron produced a biographical photo-documentary work based on the life of a former refugee in the Sydney Lao community. He is currently researching issues of identity construction in migrant communities in Sydney and Vancouver as part of his ongoing work towards his Ph.D. Cameron has also taught English in Lao PDR for a short stint and is a graduate chemical engineer. Languages: elementary Thai, Lao and Spanish

Gerard Cheong (AMRC Associate)

Gerard has a background in forestry EIS as a private consultant. He currently works for the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs as a community consultant for numerous migrant and refugee communities in Sydney. In late 1999, he managed the Safe Haven for Kosovars in Singleton until its closure. During December 1999 and January 2000, he set up, through extensive consultation, a community relations and development strategy at the Safe Haven for East Timorese in East Hills, Sydney. In 1999 he presented a paper on Participation in Water Resource Management in Lao PDR at the international Symposium on Society and Resource Management, University of Queensland. He has suspended his Masters thesis on community participation in the water resources sector in Lao PDR and is working in East Timor as a UN volunteer helping to set up the East Timor Environmental Authority. Languages: Malaysian/Indonesian, Cantonese, elementary Thai and Lao.

Helen Gunning-Stevenson (AMRC Associate)

Helen has an MPhil in Social Anthropology from the School of Oriental & African Studies (SOAS), University of London. Her research into primary schooling and its impacts on traditional culture included a six month field study in a village in Saraphi province of northern Thailand. Helen was employed by Community Aid Abroad for the three years prior to joining the AMRC, working in their Sydney office on

a range of projects including organizing events and recruiting regular supporters. Helen left the AMRC in April 2002. Languages: Thai, elementary German

Helena Clayton (AMRC Associate)

Helena's research interest lies within local and rural policy issues related to resource management in agriculture and fisheries. An interest in these issues in the Mekong Region has developed through her involvement with Community Aid Abroad groups concerned with local issues both in Australia and the Mekong region. Helena completed an Honours degree in Agricultural Economics in 1996 and is soon to submit her Masters thesis in the same discipline. During 2001 Helena continued her work with the Agriculture Faculty at the University of Sydney, undertaking research in collaboration with Can Tho University in Vietnam on sustainability issues facing rice-shrimp farmers in the Mekong Delta. The focus of this work in 2001 was to extend the findings from research conducted over the last 3 years to farmers and local government departments and centres in the Delta. Helena has also continued to participate in the NSW Oxfam Community Aid Abroad campaign committee, which provides input and support locally on OCAA's national campaigns.

Kheung Kham Keonuchan (AMRC Associate)

Kham has two years experience in planning at the National Office for the Environment, Department of Forestry, Laos, with research experience in the study of eco-tourism in protected areas in Laos and the environmental impact of irrigation development in Laos. The focus of Kham's research was to gain an understanding of the social-economic, political, cultural and ecological contexts of shifting cultivators and how these contexts affect and motivate shifting cultivators in decision making, their practice and the adoption, modification and rejection of new practices. Kham submitted his PhD thesis in mid-2000 and has returned to Laos with his family. He is now working as National Program Director of the World Food Program with the FAO. Languages: Lao, Vietnamese, Thai.

Lilao Bouapao (AMRC Associate)

Lilao has seven years experience with the National Statistical Centre under the State Planning Committee, Lao PDR supervising numerous socio-economic survey projects and teaching basic statistics to provincial and district statisticians. In mid-2001 he submitted his Masters thesis on rural development project management in Lao PDR and returned to Laos where he has been working with the FAO and WFP. In September 2002 he received a writing fellowship at RCSD. Languages: Hmong, Lao, Thai, Russian.

Pham Thi Bich Hang (AMRC Associate)

Hang graduated in geography from the Hanoi National Pedagogic University in 1981 before commencing work at the An Giang Teachers Training College where she taught physical geography. She gained further teaching experience at the National Political Institute. Hang commenced post-graduate studies in cartography in 1989, progressing to PhD studies in 1992. In 1996 Hang began her MA at Sydney University on women and culture in Vietnam, focusing on war widows' experiences of change in the Mekong and Red River Deltas since 1975. She revised and completed her Masters thesis in December 2002. Languages: Vietnamese

Premrudee (Eang) Daoroung (AMRC Associate)

Premrudee (Eang) was an NGO staff member instrumental in the establishment of the Community Forest Support Project at the Department of Forestry, Lao PDR. Eang has been working with the regional environmental NGO, TERRA (Towards Ecological Recovery and Regional Alliance), for a number of years. She conducted her Masters research on external agencies' influence in forestry frameworks and practice in Lao PDR during 1998-2000. After two years in both Sydney and Laos carrying out her research work, she has received her MSc and returned to the region to work with TERRA where she is now Director. Languages: Thai, Lao

Susan King (AMRC Associate)

Susan King has been an education expert on various AusAID Technical Assistance Panels and has worked on a range of education projects in Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam. She is currently assisting the Royal University of Phnom Penh Cambodia to develop capacity in curriculum and staff development including the pilot of a post graduate program in sustainable tourism development in collaboration with international universities.

Sukun Keat (AMRC Associate)

Sukun spent seven and a half years assisting Khmer refugees along the Khmer-Thai borders where he was involved in the administration of the Khao I Dang camp and the teaching of management courses to students at the Institute of Public Administration in Site 2. From 1993 to 1998 he was appointed as Minister for Youth, Sport and Women's Affairs then as Secretary of State for Women's Affairs. In the latter capacity Sukun was involved in setting up the Women's Affairs Ministry as well as the National Policy for Cambodian Women. In close cooperation with local and international NGOs he initiated different programs throughout Cambodia such as Women in Development Center to provide vocational training and information to Cambodian women, especially those living in the rural areas. In 2001 Sukun withdrew from his studies at Sydney University and returned to Cambodia to work for the Khmer Institute of Democracy. Languages: Khmer, French

Takehiko "Riko" Hashimoto (AMRC Associate)

Riko has a background in coastal geomorphology, with a particular interest in sedimentation and landform evolution in deltas and estuaries, mangrove habitat dynamics, acid sulfate soils and geoarchaeology. His research activities in the last 8 years have been based in the North Coast and Sydney Regions of New South Wales, southeast Queensland, southern Thailand (Nakhon Si Thammarat Province), and Japan, in part as a consultant to the Australian Museum, the New South Wales Department of Land and Water Conservation and the Manly Hydraulics Laboratory. In August 2000, he visited the Mekong Delta in Vietnam, where he investigated environmental issues associated with recent infrastructure development in the Vietnamese part of the Mekong Delta, notably those associated with large-scale water-control projects and the intensifying use of the coastal zone resulting from the rapid expansion of shrimp aquaculture, mangrove forestry and irrigated rice cropping. The findings of the project are summarised in the AMRC Working Paper "Environmental issues and recent infrastructure development in the Mekong Delta". In 2003 Riko completed a PhD thesis which has elucidated the evolutionary history of estuarine-deltaic systems on the North Coast of New South Wales during the last 10,000 years. Languages: Japanese, German, French

Xiaojiang Yu (AMRC Associate)

Xiaojiang joined the AMRC in April of 2001. Xiaojiang has a PhD in Environmental Policy, International Development and Natural Resource Management from Macquarie University. He is also a graduate of Adelaide University with a Master of Environmental Studies and has a degree in Power Engineering from Shanghai Jiaotong University. His past research and work experiences have been focused on the social and environmental issues related to economic development. His research interest has been to develop a strategy for international aid and regional cooperation with respect to sustainable development in the Pacific Island region and Southeast Asia. He has extensive work experience in government agencies, universities, industry companies and local communities. His recent research examines cross-border energy/transport projects in the GMS and their impacts on socio-environment and biodiversity. Languages: Chinese

Xiu Juan Liu (AMRC Associate)

Xiu Juan is a lecturer in Economic Geography at Xinjiang University in northwestern China. Her PhD study, submitted in March 2001, is on water resources and environmental management in transitional China, with specific focus on the changing political ecology of water management in the Tarim River Basin in Xinjiang. For the remainder of 2001 Xiu Juan worked as a researcher with the AMRC, studying water resource management in the upper Mekong Basin (Lancang) in Yunnan Province, China. Xiu Juan now resides in Auckland, New Zealand. Languages: Mandarin

CENTRE ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE AND DEVELOPMENT

STAFFING

AMRC Director: Associate Professor Philip Hirsch

AMRC Research Program Manager: Andrew Wyatt

AMRC Program Officer: Doug Bailey

AMRC Project Officers: Alanna Linn; Ryan Van Den Nouwelant

AMRC Regional Research Program Officer (based in Chiangmai, Thailand): Nattaya Tubtim

AMRC Senior Researchers: Bob Fisher; Kate Lloyd

AMRC Website Manager: Doug Bailey



AMRC Staff and Associates (from left to right): Jeff Neilson, Anucha Leksakundilok, Yusheng Zhang, Viliam Phraxayavong, Kaviphone Phouthavong, Naomi Carrard, Doug Bailey, Phil Hirsch.

ACADEMIC ADVISORY PANEL

The Academic Advisory Panel is made up of the Director and another member of staff from the Division of Geography, as well as academic representatives from Departments such as the Australian Centre for Environmental Law, Department of Anthropology, Faculty of Agriculture, the Research Institute for Asia and the Pacific, and the Department of Government, University of Sydney. The Panel is responsible for strategic advice on research and publication activities of the Centre.

The aim of the Advisory Panel is to involve people from the University and the Division of Geography in the Centre, so that it goes beyond a single initiative of the Division and draws upon wider expertise within the University. The Panel has a loose structure and holds occasional meetings on a needs basis.

Members of the Academic Advisory Panel in 2003 were: Stephanie Fahey, Peter Hinton, Peter Dauvergne, Phil Hirsch, Andrew Wyatt

STEERING COMMITTEE

A Steering Committee includes representatives of several Australian and regional organisations with interests and involvement in the Mekong Region. The primary function of the Steering Committee is to advise on the role of the Centre beyond the walls of the University. The aim of the Committee is to provide ideas and direction for the Centre as well a key point of liaison with various organisations on their activities. The Committee is a point where people can share ideas, provide advice, discuss the direction of the Centre, and assist with information sharing so the AMRC can learn from (and share) experience with other organisations working on Mekong issues. The Committee oversees the main activities of the Centre, especially outreach and resource aspects.

Members of the Steering Committee in 2003 were: Charlie Pahlman, Lee Rhiannon and Michael Simon.

VISITORS TO THE CENTRE

The Centre has been visited by postgraduate students, researchers and NGO workers utilising its resources for research purposes and to consult with staff and Associates. Visitors to the Centre in 2003 included:

In November a group of eight from Tay Nguyen University, Vietnam consisting of:

Dr. Nguyen Xuan Thao, Rector; Mr. Ho Tam, Vice Rector; Dr. Nguyen Tien Dat, Head of Logistics Dept; Dr. Nguyen Van Hoa, Head of Personnel Dept; Mr. Tran Ngoc Kham, Director of Information and Library Center; Dr. Phung Quoc Chuong, Head of Study Affairs Dept; Mr. Tran Xuan Ninh, Head of Finance & Accounting Dept; Mr. Nguyen Van Vuong, Head of Administrative Dept.

Dr. Truong Thi Kim Chuyen, a lecturer from Vietnam National University, visited the Centre in December to search for teaching material in environmental sociology.

VISITING RESEARCHER

Caroline Garaway was a visiting researcher at the AMRC from October until December 2003. Caroline is a human ecologist with particular interest in the human ecology of living aquatic resource use (particularly in SE Asia) and the development of integrated approaches to living aquatic resources management and research. She was formerly a Research Associate within the Department of Environmental Technology, Imperial College London. Upon returning to London she took up a position as Lecturer in Environment & Development within the Department of Anthropology at UCL. For the past 9 years she has been involved in UK DfID funded research projects in South and South East Asia (including Thailand, Lao PDR, Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh). Lao PDR has been the focus of her investigations into the nature and importance of fishing, the impact of development initiatives (such as fish enhancement and agricultural development) on living aquatic resource use, and learning approaches to management under uncertainty.



FINANCIAL STATEMENT & SUPPORTERS OF THE AMRC

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

1 January-31 December 2003

Carried forward from 2002181466

Income 2003

Core: Rockefeller Brothers Fund 107093

Oxfam Community Aid Abroad6000

Dialogue on Water, Food and Environment (CD-ROM) support 9939

Return to Oxfam America for unused research on mining issues -15238

Reimburse Dialogue: AusAID ISSS -114

Publications 47

TOTAL INCOME **107727**

Expenditure 2003

Salaries

Administration 80474

Casuals 54436

Workshop costs 420

Travel and maintenance 5624

Publication and printing 3936

Communication 3620

Office equipment 4007

TOTAL EXPENDITURE **152517**

CARRY FORWARD **136676**

PUBLICATIONS AND RESOURCES

PUBLICATIONS

Mekong Update & Dialogue

The *Mekong Update & Dialogue* is published on our website in pdf format and is also mailed free of charge to approximately 270 subscribers on request. In 2003 the four issues addressed the following themes: Dialogue; Community forestry; Refugees; Transboundary environmental conflict issues.

Mekong Update & Dialogue 6.1 January-March 2003

The first issue for the year asks four contributors who participated in the Dialogue on River Basin Development and Civil Society in the Mekong - held in Brisbane and Ubon - to reflect on the lessons learnt from the Dialogue and its limits. Premrudee Daoroung observes that while some may have expected a forum to negotiate, it was anything but. Mike Ounsted suggests that some may not have been ready to negotiate, while Philip Hirsch observed that there are limits posed on such dialogue when different 'languages' of development are being articulated in the same forum. Chumnarn Pongsri urges that we have to learn more and try harder. All agreed that the Dialogue was a unique opportunity to simply hear and learn what the other side had to say and that we have to hope that a way forward can be found to better address the processes of development in the Mekong in order to avoid its marginalising effects that are being borne by many communities in the Mekong River Basin.

Mekong Update & Dialogue 6.2 April-June 2003

In this issue Bob Fisher outlines the diverse contexts of community forestry in three Mekong countries. He concludes that while only limited progress has been made in devolution of control and benefit sharing, there are some good signs with regard to the promotion of participation and informal forms of community forestry. In response, academics from Laos and Thailand provide their own perspectives on community forestry, reflecting well the different social scientific analyses that derive from the more politicised and more program-based approaches in Thailand and Laos respectively.

Mekong Update & Dialogue 6.3 July-September 2003

In the third issue of Mekong Update we reflect on Australia's current refugee policy in light of the detention camps that have taken over from reception centres, and the "queue jumper" tarnish that has superseded empathy and sympathy for those who have crossed dangerous waters in leaky boats. The lead piece is by Viliam Phraxayavong, himself a former refugee who poignantly reflects on the two types of camps that interred him during the 1970s and 1980s - re-education camps in his native Laos, and holding camps in his first point of refuge, Thailand. Andrew McGregor's response reminds us of Australia's swing towards a more legalistic and less humane approach to refugees.

Mekong Update & Dialogue 6.4 October-December 2003

The final issue for the year deals with the ramifications of ecotourism in the Mekong. The lead article by Anita Pleumarom, a prominent media critic, argues that rather than expanding ecotourism, decision-makers should be aiming to address environmental degradation resulting from the rapid growth of tourism and to strengthen the control by local communities over tourism development. One of the implications of ecotourism is its reallocation of natural resources from the control of local communities to serve the interests of economic growth and business. Responses by Dr. Pham Trung Luong and Pradech Phayakvichien suggest improvement in planning and industry regulation.

AMRC Working Papers

The AMRC working paper series provides opportunity for the writers to publish detailed, analytical writing on contemporary issues confronting the Mekong Region. Three new working papers were published during 2003.

- Working Paper No. 1 – "Australian Aid, Development Advocacy and Governance in the Lao PDR. Mixed Messages and Emerging Possibilities", Jonathan Cornford, September 1999 (out of print)
- Working Paper No. 2 – "Water Margins: Development and Sustainability in China", Gavan McCormack, June 2000
- Working Paper No. 3 – "Accounting for Development: Australia and the Asian Development Bank in the Mekong Region", Helen Gunning-Stevenson, February 2001
- Working Paper No. 4 – "Environmental Issues and Recent Infrastructure Development in the Mekong Delta: review, analysis and recommendations with particular reference to large-scale water control projects and the development of coastal areas", Takehiko 'Riko' Hashimoto, June 2001
- Working Paper No. 5 – "Twinning Squares and Circles: the MDBC-MRC Strategic Liaison Program and the Applicability of the Murray-Darling Basin Management Model to the Mekong River Basin", Alanna Linn & Doug Bailey, April 2002 (out of print)
- Working Paper No. 6 – "The changing face of Mekong resource politics in the post-Cold War era : re-negotiating arrangements for water resource management in the Lower Mekong River Basin (1991-1995)", Abigail Makim, August 2002
- Working Paper No. 7 – "Civil Society and Internationalized River Basin Management", Fiona Miller, Philip Hirsch, June 2003
- Working Paper No. 8 – "Give a man a fish..." Contextualising Living Aquatic Resources Development in the Lower Mekong Basin", Simon Bush, August 2003
- Working Paper No. 9 – "Security Developments in the Thailand-Burma Borderlands", Desmond Ball, October 2003

Working papers are available from the AMRC at a cost of A\$12 Australia + Asia-Pacific; A\$15 Elsewhere (incl GST & postage). All Working Papers (except #3) are downloadable free of charge from our website.

AMRC Mekong Briefs Series

Mekong Briefs, available free of charge from the AMRC, are designed for use by students, teachers, NGOs and members of the public.

- Mekong Brief No. 1 "The Asian Development Fund (ADF) & Asian Development Bank (ADB) in the Mekong Region", December 2000 (out of print)
- Mekong Brief No. 2 "Ordinary Capital Resources (OCR) of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in the Mekong Region", May 2001

Mekong Briefs are downloadable free of charge from our website.

CD-ROMs

The AMRC has now produced two CD-ROMs, both based on the River Dialogue held in Australia and Thailand late 2002. Limited copies of these CD-ROMs are still available free of charge at the AMRC Office. However if you wish to have one mailed then you need to email us explaining why you would like a copy.

- *Dialogue on River Basin Development and Civil Society in the Mekong Region*
This first AMRC CD-ROM was produced in time for the River Dialogue conference in Ubon, Thailand in early November 2002. The Australian component of the Dialogue took place in late August/early September 2002. Although modelled on the AMRC website section "Dialogue on River Basin Development and Civil Society in the Mekong Region", the CD-ROM features an additional page, not on the website because of file sizes, with links to Brisbane conference video clips.
- *Negotiating River Basin Management: Lessons from the Mekong*
This second CD-ROM is based upon the outcomes of the whole River Dialogue process, both in Australia and in Ubon, Thailand during 2002. The CD-ROM contents include sections dealing with themes in river basin management (with case studies of the Se San Basin, blasting of Mekong rapids and Pak Mun dam), stakeholder dialogue and links between the Murray-Darling and Mekong river basins. Video clips taken at the Brisbane and Ubon conferences provide living illustrations of the diverse perspectives on river basin management.

PUBLICATIONS & CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS OF AMRC ASSOCIATES

- Bush, S. R. 2003 "Using a simple GIS model to assess development patterns of small-scale rural aquaculture in the wider environment." *Aquaculture Asia* 8(1): 40-42
- Bush, S.R. 2003 "Give a man a fish...": Contextualising living aquatic resources development in the Lower Mekong Basin. AMRC Working Paper No. 8. Australian Mekong Resource Centre, University of Sydney.
- Bush, S. R. 2003 Presented paper 'Comparing what matters with what is done: fisheries and aquaculture in the Lao PDR' at the Second Large Rivers Symposium, Phnom Penh, 11-14 February 2003
- Fisher, R. 2003 'Innovations, Persistence and Change: Reflections on the State of Community Forestry.' In RECOFTC and FAO Community Forestry: Current Innovations and Experiences. Bangkok: Regional Community Forestry Training Center and Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations.
- Fisher, R. 2003 Controlling the Forests: Community Forestry in the Mekong Region. *Mekong Update & Dialogue*, vol 6(2), June 2003, pp 2-3.
- Fisher, R. 2003 When is Action Research Participatory? *ACM News*, Vol 4 (2), April 2003. (CIFOR ACM Project newsletter)
- Fisher, R. 2003 Presented paper on 'Community Forestry in the Mekong Region', Mekong Research Group Seminar, Division of Geography, University of Sydney, 2 May 2003
- Fisher, R. 2003 Presented paper on 'Community Forestry in Southeast Asia and South Asia: Devolution or Persistence of State Control.' "Politics of the Commons" Conference, Chiang Mai, 11-14 July 2003
- Fisher, R. 2003 Presented paper on 'Within Boundaries: Implementing Pro-poor Conservation in Protected Areas', as member of Panel on Poverty and Protected Areas, World Parks Conference, Durban, 8-17 September 2003
- Fisher, R. 2003 Presented paper on 'What Can Applied Anthropology Offer to Anthropological Theory? The Case of Community-based Forest Management', Australian Anthropological Society Conference, 1-3 October 2003, University of Sydney
- Hirsch, P. 2003 *The Politics of Fisheries Knowledge in the Mekong River Basin*, Proceedings (refereed) of the Second Large Rivers Symposium, Phnom Penh, Mekong River Commission
- Hirsch, P. 2003 Gave Keynote Paper on "Development assistance in a transboundary river basin setting: The role of institutional mechanisms in safeguarding poor people's livelihoods and rights to land

and water in the Mekong Region", Conference on *From water 'wars' to water 'riots'? The role of the poor and implications for water management institutions in future water related conflicts*, Copenhagen, Danish Institute for International Affairs, 3 December 2003

- Hortle, K. G. and S. R. Bush 2003 Consumption in the Lower Mekong Basin as a Measure of Fish Yield. New Approaches for the Improvement of Inland Capture Fishery Statistics in the Mekong Basin. Ed: T. Clayton. Ad Hoc expert consultation Udon Thani, Thailand 2 to 5 September 2002, Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations RAP Publication 2003/01: 76-82.
- Lloyd, K. 2003 Contesting control in transitional Vietnam: the development and regulation of traveller cafés in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, *Tourism Geographies*, 5 (3): 350-366.
- Lloyd, K. 2003 To market or to a socialist market economy? A case study of foreign tour operators in Vietnam in T. Griffin and R. Harris (eds) *Current research, future strategies: bridging uncertainty*. Sydney, APTA Conference Proceedings, University of Technology Sydney: 439-451.
- Lloyd, K. 2003 To market or to a socialist market economy? A case study of foreign tour operators in Vietnam paper presented to the Asia Pacific Tourism Association Conference, July, Sydney.
- Miller, F. 2003 "Living with the Floods in the Mekong Delta Viet Nam", *Forum Mekong, Mekong Watch*, Vol. 5, No. 1, 2003 (in Japanese).
- Miller, F. 2003 "Seeing "Water Blindness": The Role of Water Control in Agricultural Intensification and Responses to Environmental Change in the Mekong Delta, Viet Nam" chapter in Connell, John. and Waddell, Eric (eds.) *The Local and the Global: Rural Change and Development in the Third World - The Work of Harold Brookfield* (forthcoming)
- Miller, F. & Hirsch P. 2003 *Civil Society and Internationalized River Basin Management*, AMRC Working Paper Number 7, University of Sydney, June 2003
- Miller, F. 2003 Presented paper "Risks, responses and rights: Gender Dimensions of Water Excess and Water Scarcity in the Mekong Delta, Viet Nam", at *Fluid Bonds: Gender in Water Resources Management - Workshop*, Australian National University, Canberra, 13 October 2003
- Pritchard, B. and Lloyd, K. 2003 Business cultures, the state, and the changing investment environment of East and Southeast Asia in N. Phelps, and P. Raines (eds) *The new competition for inward investment: companies, institutions and territorial development*. London, Edward Elgar: 173-192.
- Vandergeest, P., Phanvilay, K., Fujita, Y., Fox, J., Hirsch, P., Van Esterick, P., Withayapak, C., & Tyler, S. 2003 Flexible networking in research capacity building at the National University of Laos: lessons for North-South collaboration, *Canadian Journal of Development Studies*, 24(1), May 2003.
- Wyatt, A. B., 2003, *Review of the Social and Environmental Impacts of the Theun Hinboun Hydropower Project, Lao PDR*, paper submitted to the JBIC technical assistance for the preparation of Ta Trach Reservoir project, Vietnam.
- Wyatt, A. B., 2003, *Trans-nationalizing the commons in a post-socialist country: The case of privatised Lao hydropower*, paper for the conference on Politics of the Commons, 11 – 13 July 2003, Regional Centre for Sustainable Development, Chiang Mai University, Thailand.

RESOURCES

Website Development

While there were no major new developments in the website during 2003, improvements continued. The "Publications" section was re-designed. All working papers (with one exception due to technical problems) are now available as pdf files, and each is accompanied by a short abstract. In line with the AMRC's recent thrust into the realm of CD-ROM production, there is a new page listing CD-ROMs published by the Centre. The whole new section that was created within the AMRC website with the banner *Dialogue on River Basin Development and Civil Society in the Mekong Region*, has been relocated under "Events/Past" since the immediacy of the Dialogue has passed. Also in the "Events" section, the "Mekong Discussion Group" page now provides a short abstract of all presentations, thereby making it easier to get a handle on upcoming topics. In the "News" section a new category called "Se San River Basin" reflects the growing attention being paid to this particular development issue.

DIRECTIONS FOR 2004

- Take a lead coordinating role in coordinating curriculum development and associated collaborative research with university partners in the Mekong Region
- Further develop CD-ROM materials for schools
- Research on water and river basin management in relation to international development assistance
- Support the establishment of resource centers at National University of Laos and Ubonratchathani University, supported by our involvement in the Youth Ambassador for Development program.
- Consolidate our enhanced regional presence with staff based in Vietnam and Thailand

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