



AMRC

Australian Mekong Resource Centre

Annual Report Jan-Dec 2005



The University of Sydney

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD	5
REPORT OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE OF THE AMRC	5
DIRECTOR'S REPORT	6
INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND TO THE AMRC	7
ACTIVITIES OF THE AMRC DURING 2005	9
1. CORE ACTIVITIES	9
Information Source and Dissemination	9
<i>Reference Library</i>	
<i>Website</i>	
<i>Newsletter</i>	
<i>CD-ROM Production</i>	
Databases	10
<i>Reference Database</i>	
<i>Contacts Database</i>	
<i>Maps Database</i>	
<i>Images Database</i>	
Networking Activities	11
<i>Mekong Discussion Group</i>	
<i>Conference & Seminar Participation and Conference Presentations</i>	
2. AFFILIATED ACTIVITIES	14
3. PROJECT ACTIVITIES 2005	14
Mekong Learning Initiative	14
Water Governance in Context	15
Toward a Political Ecology of Risk in River Basin Development: the case of the Mekong	16
Research Training at the National University of Laos (NUOL)	16
Mekong Water Governance	17
Challenge of Agrarian Transition in Southeast Asia	17
4. ACTIVITIES OF AMRC ASSOCIATES AND POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH	18
CENTRE ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE AND DEVELOPMENT	26
STAFFING	26
STEERING COMMITTEE	26
VISITORS TO THE CENTRE	26

VISITING RESEARCHERS	26
FINANCIAL STATEMENT & SUPPORTERS OF THE AMRC	27
FINANCIAL STATEMENT	27
PUBLICATIONS AND RESOURCES	28
PUBLICATIONS	28
Mekong Update & Dialogue	28
AMRC Working Papers	28
AMRC Mekong Briefs Series	29
CD-ROMs	29
PUBLICATIONS & CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS OF AMRC ASSOCIATES	30
DIRECTIONS FOR 2006	32
CONTACT DETAILS	32
Postal Address	32
Visiting Address	32

FOREWORD

REPORT OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE OF THE AMRC

The AMRC has had a highly productive year with a number of major outputs and publications completed, drawing on high profile partnerships and collaborations. This work has contributed to the good standing and research credibility that the Centre has amongst key development actors in Australia, the Mekong region and further afield.

Of course this high profile work would not be possible without the ongoing behind-the-scenes support work, the day to day management of the Centre, and the public face and outreach activities. The external profile provided by the website, the *Mekong Update* and other publications is supported by a physical presence hosting the library and information sharing events like the internal seminar programs and Friday discussions groups. Together these allow the Centre to maintain a presence within the University as a Centre of learning, scholarship and information exchange.

The AMRC was started in 1997, building on a strong interest amongst a loose network of people in the region and Australia's relationship with the Mekong. As the AMRC enters its tenth year of operation, we have a significant opportunity to look back at what the staff, associates, the Centre and our partnerships have achieved and developed over that time.

In the early part of the 2006-2007 financial year we are intending to undertake a review to learn the lessons of what has been achieved and to look forward to what role the Centre may have in the future. This review is to be done in the spirit of appreciative enquiry, to identify positive lessons and identify opportunities to improve the future effectiveness of the Centre.

We hope to look at what the AMRC has contributed over the years in Australia and the Mekong by exploring the challenges, debates and development dilemmas that the Centre and its staff have engaged with over time. We will also, of course, look at the experiences of research agendas and the work of associates and students, as well as the field school programs that have been a doorway into the Mekong region for so many Australian students.

We also intend to look at what has changed and what needs to change for a University-based research and advocacy Centre to meet the different contextual and development realities that are the Mekong in 2006. Associated with this is the changing relationship Australia has with the Mekong region through the official aid program, and the activities of the commercial sector and non-governmental organisations. We will seek out the perspectives and opinions of stakeholders, and identify needs and agendas that may not have been prevalent in the mid 1990s when the Centre was conceived and born. It is our aim that this process will provide reflections, leading to insights and guidance into what the Centre has achieved, what it is now, and most importantly, what roles and focus the AMRC could take in the future.

So we commend this annual report to you, and wish the staff and associates of the AMRC all the best for the coming year.

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

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

A NOTE FROM THE AMRC DIRECTOR

2005 saw us continue with our primary focus on water in its river basin context. In mid-year, we ran a full day seminar at AusAID that brought in diverse participants with interests in water from around Australia, to present and discuss findings from the “water governance in context” study that we had carried out for the Australian Water Research Facility. This work has seen AMRC take a role in the national discussions around water management as well as in research associated more specifically with development assistance.

The second half of the year saw us commence a study on national interests and river basin governance, bringing together a team of law and political science specialists as well as Kurt Morck Jensen. Kurt is a senior water specialist from Danida, which has provided the bulk of the funding for the Mekong River Commission since 1995. The study was heavily focused on the existing and future role of MRC, and it engaged AMRC at a policy level hitherto somewhat distant from our main mode of operation.

The Mekong Learning Initiative moved into full gear in 2005. This has become an exciting area of our work, involving collaboration between staff and students from eight universities in five Mekong countries. The enthusiasm of participants has triggered a number of spontaneous collaborative activities in the form of research exchanges, moving toward the key MLI ideal of “building a body of knowledge from within”. At the same time, this work has challenged and stretched our staff, with Bob Fisher spending an increasing amount of time on the activities of the initiative and Nattaya Tubtim working nearly full-time for MLI.

The year saw the completion of two postgraduate theses by AMRC associates. Tim Wong finished his study of community-national park relations and changing approaches to environmentalism in Thailand. Yusheng Zhang completed his thesis on environmental management and impacts of the Lanping lead and zinc mine in Yunnan. Simon Bush was appointed to an academic post in the Environmental Policy group at the University of Wageningen in the Netherlands.

Youth Ambassadors continue to work with AMRC through the MLI project. Natalia Scurrah completed her placement at Ubonratchathani University, and Lindsay Soutar and Tanja McKenzie both commenced at Khon Kaen and Yunnan Universities respectively.

Doug Bailey has continued to keep the Centre's work running efficiently, particularly the outreach work through the website, newsletter and seminar series. In late 2005, Kate Griffiths joined the administrative staff of the Centre, and she will be focusing particularly on upcoming work on water governance in Cambodia.

AMRC shared a tragic loss in early 2005 with the death of Charlie Pahlman. Charlie had been a long-term friend of the Centre and many of its associates. His ideals had helped shape the founding principles of AMRC, and he is sorely missed. Later in the year, a Charlie Pahlman Memorial Account was established, and AMRC was asked to administer this. Activities will involve a series of annual lectures and associated events.

2005 marked the final full year of core support from the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, which has now closed its Mekong program. This leaves us in 2006 with a considerable challenge, since the core funding has facilitated the centre beyond its involvement in various project activities. A review in the second half of 2006 will help us look ahead to working in a different funding environment.

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 2005

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.

In early May, 2005, heads of ASEAN power authorities meeting in Vientiane agreed to fast track the ASEAN Power Grid project. A Memorandum of Understanding is to be prepared for signing in 2006. Both the Vietnam-Cambodia and Thailand-Cambodia links are due to be commissioned by 2007. The Thailand-Laos interconnection is scheduled to be operating by 2009 and will draw energy from the Nam Theun 2 dam.

On July 5, 2005, the Kunming Declaration was signed by leaders from the six Mekong countries. The agreement is for \$25 billion worth of tourism, transnational highway and hydropower projects. It is aimed at facilitating trade and investment within the region as well as boosting health surveillance at borders in order to stop infectious diseases such as SARS.

Rail, water and road transportation has been steadily growing in the Region. The Chinese government has funded a survey for a new railway line from Central Cambodia to the border of Vietnam. Vietnam has been spending heavily on developing the railway system in the central region of the country. An investigation by representatives from the six Mekong countries - China, Laos, Burma, Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam - concluded that the Mekong can be used for shipping finished oil products in a similar way to the Yangtze River in China. Oil shipping is already happening from Thailand to Jinghong in Yunnan.

Hydropower dams continue to be developed in the region. Nam Mang 3 dam in Laos was opened. Construction of the massive Son La dam in Vietnam started in late 2005. Laos plans to build more hydropower dams - such as Xekatom dam and Se San 4 - on tributaries of the Mekong. In December 2005, Thailand and Burma signed a pact to build a series of hydroelectric dams on the Salween River in Burma.

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, website, 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 2005

In 2005 AMRC has expanded its position as a leading research and resource centre specializing in the Mekong Region. Partnerships with research institutes and NGOs working both in Australia and in the Mekong countries have continued to flourish. We have been involved in a number of training, research and dialogue activities simultaneous with consolidating our resource base within the University of Sydney. Our partnership with the Danish aid agency DANIDA in a major policy study of how the MRC and other water governance arrangements in the Mekong mediate transboundary, national government and civil society interests, has been a particularly significant milestone for us.

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 Visitors Room (Room 467, Madsen Building, University of Sydney) was well used throughout the year by visiting fellows Kurt Morck Jensen and Bach Tan Sinh, AMRC Research Assistant Naomi Carrard, AMRC Research Program Manager, Andrew Wyatt and various short term researchers and students. On account of its heavy use, three new computers and a printer were purchased for the room in 2005.

Reference Library

The AMRC reference library is housed in both the AMRC Office (Room 464) and the Visitors Room (Room 467). The library resources are always expanding, albeit gradually. In addition to hard copy material there is a small but growing collection of CD-ROMs, including those produced by the Centre itself. The AMRC library and website work in tandem as complementary sources of information, providing greater accessibility than before. The library continues to accumulate resources covering mainland Southeast Asian environment and development issues not found in the University's collection. The library is made up of contemporary materials such as newsletters, governmental and non-governmental material, journals, reports, newspapers and magazines. In addition, on the AMRC website homepage there is a scroll-down menu for accessing 'Mekong News' pages which contain various listserv items addressing key topics related to environmental and livelihood issues in the region. These are accumulated as archives on the website filed under a number of topics.

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 (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. 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 possible to get a sense of the evolution of these issues by reading items covering an extended period of time. There are six case studies on the website: three providing a multi-scale analysis of natural resource management in Laos; one a multi-scale case study of the social and environmental effects, and governance, associated with hydropower development in the Se San River Watershed; one a National University of Laos research-training project; and another one originally designed for the *Dialogue on River Basin Development and Civil Society in the Mekong Region*. The website provides lessons from the Mekong Region about current dialogues, stakeholders dimensions and prominent regional issues. 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. Recently a new left menu bar link entitled "Education" was added in order to make it easier for teachers to source material.

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

The AMRC has to date produced three CD-ROMs. AMRC's third CD-ROM, entitled *Mekong Quest: Volume One*, was our first tailor-made outreach to high school education. 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. With the potential to expand into a series, this first installment contains two 'quests' for students to undertake. In 'Village Life in Laos' students are invited to participate in a conference, giving a presentation about the differences between their lives and those of Lao villagers. In 'Dam or No Dam' students hold their own conference to debate the proposal of large hydropower developments along the Mekong River. The CD-ROM is available for purchase from the AMRC via an order form on our website.

Databases

Reference Database

The AMRC reference database (using Endnote software) contains around 2,000 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.

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 ACDSsee 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.

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.

AMRC coordinates and facilitates networks in the Mekong Region. Currently our most distinctive role here is as coordinator of the Mekong Learning Initiative, a collaboration between staff and students of eight universities in five Mekong countries. MLI supports innovative approaches to classroom- and field-based teaching and learning about environment, natural resource management and livelihood development; small scale research exchanges; and regional policy analysis. AMRC is also an Australian Partner Organisation for the Australian Youth Ambassador for Development program and has placed several AYAD volunteers in Thailand, Laos and China, as well as AVI volunteers in Vietnam.

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), Rural Development Research Center (RDRC) in Kunming (Yunnan) and World Fish Centre (based in Penang).

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

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 2005 were John McFarlane talking on "The role of the Australian Federal Police in Southeast Asia", former Australian Ambassador to China, Dr. Stephen FitzGerald, on "Donor-government relations in Cambodia", Professor Peter Curson discussing "Bird flu in Southeast Asia/Vietnam", and Professor Duncan McCargo from University of Leeds who gave a seminar entitled "Thaksin's war? Alternative understandings of the conflict in southern Thailand".

The 2005 program is displayed in the table overleaf. For details of the 2006 program please visit the AMRC website.

Conference & Seminar Participation and Conference Presentations

2-5 February Kate Lloyd and Meheux, K. presented paper "Developing methods to measure tropical cyclone impacts in communities in Fiji" at Planning for Natural Hazards - how can we mitigate the impacts? Symposium, University of Wollongong

18 March Bob Fisher presented guest lecture "(Participatory) Action Research, CBNRM and Extension", Faculty of Forestry, National University of Laos, Vientiane

April Phil Hirsch presented "Governance and water in Thailand" at International Conference on Thai Studies, Northern Illinois University

May Phil Hirsch presented "Governing water as a common good in the Mekong River Basin: issues of scale" at conference on Freshwater and Salt, University of Technology Sydney

17 June Bob Fisher presented 'Long term impacts on the tsunami on the livelihoods of the poor' at the Mekong Discussion Group, University of Sydney

12-17 July Bob Fisher was facilitator of Training Workshop 'Research Methods in Social Sciences Approaches to the Environment', Kunming, Regional Development Research Centre (Kunming University) and Australian Mekong Resource Centre

15 July Andrew Wyatt co-presented research papers on "Water Governance in Context: Lessons for Development Assistance" to the Australian Water Research Facility, AusAID, Canberra

19-22 July Phil Hirsch presented "Transboundary water governance and issues of scale in the Mekong River Basin" at Institute of Australian Geographers conference, University of New England, Armidale

1-3 August Phil Hirsch presented "River hardware and software: perspectives on water governance in the Mekong River Basin" at NUS Centenary conference on Asian Horizons: Cities, States and Societies, National University of Singapore

1 October Paula Brown attended IMPAC 1, the first International congress on Marine Protected Areas in Geelong, Australia

17-20 November Andrew Wyatt was participant/discussant at Rivers Watch East and South Asia General Meeting, Siem Reap, Cambodia

28-29 November Phil Hirsch presented "Cultures of regulation, river basin organisations and IWRM in the Mekong River Basin" at The International Forum on Integrated Water Resources Management of the Mekong River Basin, Chiang Rai

10 December Bob Fisher presented lecture "Community Involvement in Natural Resource Management: International Experiences and lessons", Forest, Range and Watershed Organization, Tehran, Iran

12-15 December R.J. Fisher and Ravi Prabhu "Community Forestry: Some international experiences and lessons." First International Workshop on Community Forestry in Liberia: Towards a Shared Framework and Action Frame for Community Forestry in Liberia (Presented by Ravi Prabhu)

Mekong Discussion Group 2005

Date	Topic	Presenter(s)
11 March	The role of the Australian Federal Police in Southeast Asia	John McFarlane, Visiting Fellow, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, ANU
8 April	Donor-government relations in Cambodia	Dr. Stephen FitzGerald, former Ambassador to China
22 April	Fish markets in the Mekong	Simon Bush, School of Geosciences, Sydney University
6 May	Terrorism in Thailand and Malaysia: causes and connections	John Funston, Director, National Thai Studies Centre
13 May	Mobility and vulnerability in northern Laos	Chris Lyttleton, Department of Anthropology, Macquarie University
20 May	Forest issues in Southeast Asia, with special reference to Indonesia	Lesley Potter, Visiting Fellow, Department of Human Geography, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, ANU
3 June	Bird flu in Southeast Asia/Vietnam	Prof. Peter Curson, Director Health Studies Program, Division of Environmental and Life Sciences, Macquarie University
17 June	Socio-economic impacts of the tsunami	Prof. Stephanie Fahey, Director, Research Institute for Asia and the Pacific (RIAP) & Bob Fisher, School of Geosciences, Sydney University
26 August	Social movements in the Asia-Pacific: contexts, transformations?	James Goodman, Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences, UTS
2 September	People of the Pak Mun: negotiators and civil politics	Kanokwan Manorum, Faculty of Liberal Arts, Ubon Ratchathani University, Thailand
16 September	Chinese dams and potential hydrology and geomorphology changes in the Mekong River	Iwona Wiszniewski, School of Anthropology, Geography and Environmental Studies, University of Melbourne
Wednesday 21 September, 3pm	SPECIAL SEMINAR Thaksin's war? Alternative understandings of the conflict in southern Thailand	Duncan McCargo, Professor of Southeast Asian Politics, University of Leeds
4 November	DANIDA's involvement in the Mekong	Kurt Morck Jensen, Senior Advisor, DANIDA (Danish International Development Agency)

December Naomi Carrard participated in a field visit for the “National Interest and Transboundary Water Governance in the Mekong” project. This visit included a workshop at the MRC Secretariat in Vientiane.

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 2005. The first meeting took place on 24 February in Canberra and was attended by Andrew Wyatt on behalf of the AMRC. Issues covered included the ADB water and communications policy reviews and Nam Theun 2 dam. Andrew Wyatt voiced several concerns about Nam Theun 2: inadequate compensation and mitigation plans, lack of clarity on the Laos Government’s plans to use funding for poverty alleviation, insufficiently advanced government structural reforms, corruption, poor compliance with safeguard policies, poor public consultation and failure to incorporate findings from the Global Commission on Dams. The second meeting was held on 14 October, also in Canberra. The AMRC was represented by Kurt Morck Jensen and Doug Bailey. The agenda included both ACFID and AusAID/Treasury updates on WB/IMF meetings, debt, the ADB and a presentation by Kurt Morck Jensen on the AMRC-Danida collaborative study of "National interests and transboundary water governance in the Mekong".

3. PROJECT ACTIVITIES 2005

Mekong Learning Initiative

Since early 2005 the former Mekong Curriculum project has been reformulated into the Mekong Learning Initiative (MLI).

The MLI involves institutions from around the Mekong Basin that are different in levels of experience with social and natural science approaches to natural resource management, with field research, with teaching at undergraduate and postgraduate level, with types of outreach roles, and in many other dimensions. Learning processes, cultures, and contexts also vary from one country to another. This diversity is at once a strength and a challenge. The linking potentials depend on ability for mutual sharing of experience and understanding of one another's learning contexts.

Many existing types of teaching and learning have limited impact. One-way classroom teaching is often less effective than a more interactive, hands-on approach with interesting visual materials. Activities such as study tours often have limited impact if they are limited to "show and tell" exercises rather than applied and engaged learning. Why are learning outcomes so uneven? MLI has the potential to reflect and draw on existing learning approaches and help facilitate their adaptation and application in new contexts.

There has been relatively little interaction and sharing among teachers and students from tertiary education institutions in the Mekong region. As a result, there are still limited opportunities for students to understand natural resource management issues in neighbouring countries or in their regional/basin-wide context.

There is a big gap between theory and application to familiar contexts. Case studies tend to be taken either from very local and familiar examples, or from outside the Mekong altogether. Critical and analytical tools and concepts are limited in their application due to the paucity of case studies from within the Mekong Region. At the same time, issues increasingly need to be understood in their (Mekong) regional context. While there are several regional centres with a Mekong focus at individual universities, links between them are limited and there are very few common learning opportunities, despite the plethora of non-academic regional organizations such as MRC, IUCN, Oxfam, TERRA and so on. MLI has the potential to develop

case studies and translate them into relevant regional languages that will allow teachers and students to draw on more relevant examples and apply them in a field setting, and to link tertiary education to the substantial body of knowledge developed within regional agencies.

Duration: 2005 - 2008

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); Tay Nguyen University (Vietnam)

Funding bodies: Oxfam America, Open Society Institute

Water Governance in Context

The project investigates the complexities and dynamic aspects of water regulatory systems in Indonesia, Vanuatu, Thailand, Vietnam and the Mekong region (as a transboundary case study). The Australian experience also features in research to identify lessons learned and implications for overseas development assistance. Five key themes are addressed, and these both inform, and are informed by, overarching issues that cut across all themes and case studies.

1. Drivers for change in water regulatory systems

This theme investigates governance and reform, looking at reasons for change such as unsustainability of water regulation and water scarcity. The focus is on contextual drivers for change, looking at environmental and climatic imperatives, infrastructure (eg storages, diversions and technologies), supply and demand, wider aspects of political and economic reform, social change and ideological influences.

2. Catchment management frameworks and issues of scale

This theme investigates frameworks for catchment management within ecosystems and ecological boundaries in each case, looking at relations between different scales of management. It looks specifically at linkages - or lack thereof - between local level management of small catchments and wider river basin management frameworks.

3. Public/private roles and initiatives

Analysis of public/private roles moves beyond a narrow assessment of privatisation and investigates state, private and community sector roles in water management and water service provision. It builds on work done by WaterAid and others, applying analyses to case studies in the Asia-Pacific region. Regulation is considered as both a bureaucratic and social process. The appropriateness of public/private roles and responsibilities in different contexts is addressed.

4. Equity implications of market and property rights mechanisms: gender, poverty and indigenous dimensions

This is a key theme in assessing development assistance programs from an equity perspective. This involves more in-depth case study at a local level. Gender, poverty and indigenous dimensions of water regulation are addressed with specific reference to the enhanced roles of markets and changing property regimes. 'Pro-poor' interventions and the concept of water as a human right are investigated (rights to water versus water rights).

5. Dealing with conflict and risk

This theme identifies dimensions of actual or potential conflict. A broad definition of conflict is adopted to encompass subtle tensions as well as more overt confrontation. Mechanisms for peaceful, sustainable and equitable conflict management are investigated, as are the economic and environmental processes relevant

to risk at different scales. An assessment is made of risk management and outcomes for different groups, with an emphasis on adaptive frameworks.

Duration: 2004 - 2005

Funding bodies: Australian Water Research Facility (AusAID)

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)

Research Training at the National University of Laos (NUOL)

The NUOL (National University of Laos) research training project has completed its first three year stage and entered its next three year stage beginning in 2003. The project has taken 12 staff in four departments at NUOL through the research process, from formulating research questions, through designing a proposal, carrying out fieldwork, analysis and writing. Three teams carried out research in different sites on aspects of local resource management and resource tenure, punctuated by training sessions run in Vientiane by AMRC Director Phil Hirsch and colleagues at York University in Canada, Chiang Mai University in Thailand and the East-West Centre in Hawaii. Research themes were mainly focused around the implications of forest land allocation on food security, and links between forest land allocation and changing agricultural patterns. The project hosted a national workshop in December 2002, which served as a forum for a number of agencies to reflect on the forest land allocation policy on the basis of village level experience. The project entered a new phase 2003-6, which involved training in research on community-based natural resource management (CBNRM), the development of research management experience at NUOL, and the establishment of an outreach-oriented CBNRM resource centre at NUOL.

Duration: 2003 - 2006

Partners: York University, Canada; NUOL; Chiang Mai University; East-West Centre, Hawaii

Funding bodies: International Development Research Centre

Mekong Water Governance

This study comes at an important time for the Mekong River Commission (MRC) as many questions are being asked about what the MRC should, or should not be, in the future. Many questions have arisen out of donor concerns over the MRC's recent strategic direction toward a greater role in investment facilitation. Uncertainty and apprehension about the MRC's role in the Mekong has been simmering for many years, not least in civil society and non-government circles. This study takes the view that the current times constitute if not 'the hour of destiny' then crunch time for the MRC. There are real and difficult choices to be made for the organisation, its constituents and its donors.

The objective of this study is to develop an understanding of how the MRC and other water governance arrangements in the Mekong mediate transboundary, national government and civil society interests. Accordingly, this study seeks to identify ways to improve water governance in the Mekong, particularly in relation to the future role of the MRC.

This study arose out of a concern that donor assistance to the MRC's capacity development was not taking the MRC forward as an engaged river basin organisation. The MRC's knowledge base is impressive and the intentions of the 1995 Mekong Agreement are good. But why are they not used more proactively for Mekong water governance and regulation?

One important study hypothesis is that there is a lack of government interest in the MRC since national interests appear stronger than transboundary interests and countries are reluctant to give up sovereignty. Moreover, there is no strong sense of water crisis that might unite countries under a common cause.

An important premise for this study is that the MRC's *raison d'être* is to be an organisation that acts in the overall interest of sustainable development and environmental well-being of the river basin, over and above what countries do in their national interests. Another is that while the health of the river is the concern of international law and principles for sustainable development, national law and specific agreements – it is ultimately the political choices of riparian countries that will decide the fate of the river.

Duration: 2005 - 2006

Partners: Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Funding bodies: Danida (Danish International Development Assistance)

Challenge of Agrarian Transition in Southeast Asia

AMRC is part of a significant five-year collaborative study of "The challenge of the agrarian transition in Southeast Asia" (ChATSEA). Led by Canada Chair of Asian Research Professor Rodolphe de Koninck at University of Montreal, and supported by Canada's Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council as a major collaborative research initiative, ChATSEA brings together researchers at diverse international institutions to examine a number of dimensions of rural change in five countries of the region, including Thailand and Vietnam. The research examines trajectories of change through four main conceptual windows: globalisation, livelihoods, spatiality and actors. It will develop case studies organised into six process teams. The key processes are agricultural intensification and territorial expansion, market integration, urbanisation and industrialisation, population dynamics, intensification of regulation and environmental change. AMRC Director Phil Hirsch is coordinating the environmental change process team in work that will intersect with other research being carried out by AMRC and its partners.

Duration: 2005 - 2010

Partners: SSHRC, Canada

4. ACTIVITIES OF AMRC ASSOCIATES AND POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH

Andrew Wyatt (AMRC Associate & Research Program Manager)

While based at Can Tho University, Andrew continued work in Vietnam and Cambodia on the ARC Discovery project to investigate the political ecology of risk in large scale water infrastructure developments in the Mekong. In early 2005, he completed field work for the Australian Water Research Facility (AWRF) project on water governance in the Asia-Pacific and in July co-presented associated research papers at an AWRF seminar in Canberra. During the year, he also provided advisory services to the Sesan Protection Network in Cambodia, represented AMRC at the Australian Government/NGO Roundtable on IFIs, and was a contributing author on Public-Private Partnerships to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change III Working Group, and a Tokyo University/UNEP project on Trans-boundary River Basin Management.

Bob Fisher (AMRC Associate & Senior Researcher)

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. In the same year co-wrote, with Alanna Linn, AMRC working paper on the MDBC-MRC Strategic Liaison Program and the applicability of the Murray-Darling Basin management model to the Mekong River Basin. 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 is now working as a Research Fellow in the Stockholm Environment Institute's Risk, Livelihoods and Vulnerability Programme (in Sweden). The overall goal of this programme is to contribute to an improved understanding of the vulnerability of poor and marginalised people to processes of environmental change. Prior to joining SEI in August 2004 she worked as an associate lecturer in Human Geography at Macquarie University, teaching a course on resource management. Fiona is also involved in the AMRC-led research project on Water Governance in Context. 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 Griffiths (AMRC Associate & Research Assistant)

Kate completed her Honours degree in Human Geography at the University of Sydney in 1997. Since that time she has held a variety of jobs in the public and academic sectors, ranging from Executive Assistant at the Lord Chancellor's Department, London to project work in the NSW Department of Education and Training, and the NSW Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care. Most recently she was employed at the Research Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Sydney. Kate has a strong personal interest in different cultures and societies and recently spent three months in Sri Lanka volunteering for a local NGO. She joined the AMRC in October 2005.

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

Kevin Prakoonheang (AMRC Associate)

Kevin (also known as Khamson) has had considerable experience in rural development project management in Laos particularly with extension works, the training of rural development workers and local administrators. Kevin has been involved in the settlement of the Lao community in Sydney for many years. In 2000 he set up the Australian Lao Institute for Cooperation and Development in Laos (ALIFCAD), a non-profit organisation for the promotion of diaspora and development links with Laos, his country of origin. Currently Kevin is conducting PhD research on skilled return migration and development in Laos. Languages: Lao, Thai, French and elementary Vietnamese

Naomi Carrard (AMRC Associate & Research Assistant)

Naomi Carrard has been working as a researcher at the Australian Mekong Resource Centre since 2004. Her research has focused on water governance in Australia and the Mekong region as part of the Australian Water Research Facility project on water governance and development assistance in Asia and the Pacific and the Danida funded project "National Interest and Transboundary Water Governance in the Mekong". In 2005 Naomi completed a Masters degree in Environmental Law following on from her undergraduate studies in Geography. Naomi began her association with the AMRC in 2001 when she participated in the Mekong field school investigating rural livelihoods and environmental change in Southeast Asia.

Nattaya Tubtim (AMRC Associate & Regional Research Program Officer)

Nattaya is a social science researcher specialising in community-based natural resource management. She has extensive experience on research projects in Thailand and Lao PDR. Nattaya completed her BA at Silpakorn University, Thailand in 1989, with a major in Social Sciences for Development. She completed her Master of Sustainable Development in 2001 at the international program of the Regional Centre for Social

Science and Sustainable Development, Chiangmai University. Her thesis was on common property as enclosure, involving a participatory study of community-based fisheries management in southern Laos. Nattaya has excellent training and facilitation skills, with extensive experience of community-level processes throughout the Mekong Region. Languages: Thai

Paula Brown (AMRC Associate)

Paula commenced PhD research on the implementation of participatory approaches to aquatic resource management in Vietnam at Sydney University in August 2005. Her in-country research is supported by the ChATSEA (Challenges of the Agrarian Transition in South East Asia) project, focusing on two key ChATSEA research themes of regulation intensification and environmental change. In October 2005 she attended IMPAC 1, the first International congress on Marine Protected Areas in Geelong, Australia, which provided the opportunity to learn from regional Marine Protected Area practitioners from the Asia-Pacific region. Her research approach will be developed via a preparatory in-country research trip in early 2006 to discuss her proposed research with academics, practitioners and policy makers in Vietnam, and identify potential case study sites. Paula will commence detailed field research in Vietnam in second semester 2006. Languages: basic Vietnamese, French and Spanish

Phil Hirsch (AMRC Associate & Director)

Water governance in the Mekong occupied much of Phil Hirsch's research time during 2005. Together with AMRC colleagues Naomi Carrard, Fiona Miller and Andrew Wyatt, he completed a project for AusAID's Australian Water Research Facility on various dimensions of water governance in six countries including Australia, and the results were presented at a full day workshop in Canberra. Phil also commenced a study of water governance in the Mekong with a focus on the role of the Mekong River Commission, together with Kurt Morck Jensen from Danida, which funded the study, and several other colleagues. At the beginning of 2005 and again in early 2006, Phil took 22 students each year on five week field schools to Vietnam, Laos and Thailand. He was also engaged with a number of activities of the Mekong Learning Initiative. Among his international conference presentations were a talk at a conference on transboundary river basin management in Ubonratchathani and an invited paper at the National University of Singapore centenary conference. Languages: Thai, Lao, intermediate Vietnamese, beginning Khmer

Simon Bush (AMRC Associate)

Simon has been involved with the AMRC since 1999. In 2005 he obtained his doctorate for a thesis on the politics of living aquatic resources management and development in Lao PDR. Simon now works with the Environmental Policy Group at Wageningen University and Research Centre in The Netherlands focussing on environmental governance issues in Asia. Languages: 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. 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 undertook a

Masters degree in the Department of Geography, University of Sydney. His research 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. He completed his Masters in 2005.

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. In 2004 Tira helped Thai non-profit colleagues working on energy issues prepare for a regional conference, co-sponsored by World Resources Institute, on the use of governance indicators in electricity industry reform. 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 completing his PhD thesis 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 Masters degree research with the School of Geosciences, University of Sydney, looked at the political-ecology of mineral resources extraction in Yunnan, China, the Lanping mine in particular. Between October 2002 and January 2003 Yusheng carried out fieldwork in Yunnan on the effects of mining. In 2005 he completed his Masters thesis. Languages: Chinese

Past Associates:

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. In 2004 Alanna took up a position with the NSW government.

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 responsibility 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”. In 2004 Anucha completed his Ph.D. on community participation in environmental management in ecotourism. Languages: Thai.

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 recently completed his PhD thesis on issues of identity construction in migrant communities in Sydney and Vancouver. 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 three 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.

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.

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 eight 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

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

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

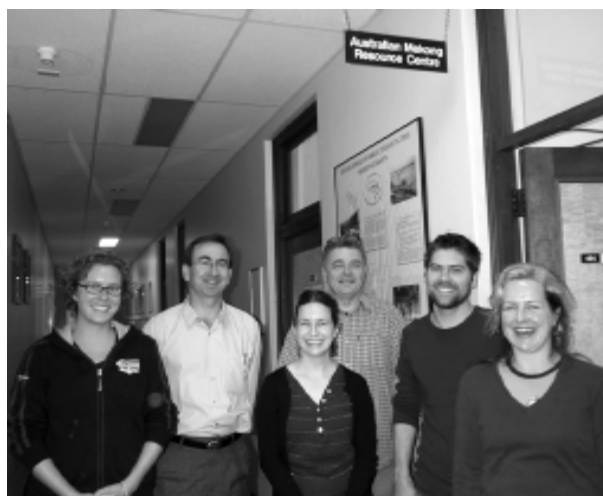
AMRC Program Officer: Doug Bailey

AMRC Research Assistants: Naomi Carrard, Kate Griffiths

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

AMRC Senior Researcher: Bob Fisher

AMRC Website Manager: Doug Bailey



AMRC Staff and Associates (from left to right): Jess McLean, Phil Hirsch, Kate Griffiths, Doug Bailey, Daniel Robinson, Paula Brown

STEERING COMMITTEE

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 2005: Michael Simon and Fiona Miller.

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. Japanese researcher, Kayo Onishi, visited the AMRC library in March. In October Mosharefa Shahjahan, a PhD student at the University of Adelaide, visited the AMRC and led the discussion in the Water Talk seminar on the topic of "Integrated River Basin Management for the Ganges: Lessons from the Murray-Darling and Mekong River Basins".

VISITING RESEARCHERS

Kurt Morck Jensen, from DANIDA (Danish International Development Agency), worked at the AMRC Centre from September 2005 until May 2006 employed as study coordinator for the "Transboundary Water Governance in the Mekong" project. Kurt has been working as Senior Adviser to the Danish government on water and environment and has extensive international experience. He has been responsible for managing Denmark's assistance to the Mekong River Commission.

Bach Tan Sinh was a visiting scholar at the AMRC from September 2005 until March 2006 conducting research on Japanese aid and sustainable development in the Mekong Region. Sinh is based at the Department of Science Policy Studies, National Institute for Science and Technology Policy and Strategy Studies (NISTPASS) in Vietnam.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT & SUPPORTERS OF THE AMRC

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

1 January-31 December 2005

Carried forward from 2004	115638
Income 2005	
Core: Rockefeller Brothers Fund	97447
Project support for Senior Researcher	74321
BICA Research Income	10000
Ford Foundation for project activity	7790
Publications	632
Interest	208
TOTAL INCOME.....	190398
Expenditure 2005	
Salaries	
Administration	139550
Regional Research Program Officer.....	3371
Workshop costs	4008
Travel and maintenance	7381
Communication, publication and printing	4259
Office equipment	10435
Insurance	1014
TOTAL EXPENDITURE.....	170018
CARRY FORWARD	136018

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 280 subscribers on request. In 2005 the first issue was special tribute to Charlie Pahlman; the remaining two issues addressed the themes of *River basin organisations* and *Poverty and biodiversity*. There was no fourth quarter issue in 2005.

Mekong Update & Dialogue 9.1 January-March 2005

In the first issue for the year we pay tribute to Charlie Pahlman who died tragically in January 2005. Each of the five tributes in this issue tells a bit about Charlie's life and influence on people. Charlie was motivated by our interconnectedness and a respect for universal human values and cultural diversity.

Mekong Update & Dialogue 9.2 April-June 2005

The second issue of the Mekong Update and Dialogue presents the positions of some key players and analysts in an ongoing defining of just what sort of river basin organisation MRC aspires to be. MRC faces the task of managing to multiple ends and the question is asked whether MRC is a regulatory body, a multi-stakeholder forum, a technical and scientific agency or an investment broker. The lead article by MRC Chief Executive, Olivier Cogels, is challenged by two respondents.

Mekong Update & Dialogue 9.3 July-September 2005

In this issue three scholar-practitioners collectively think "outside the box" to take us beyond the tired, polarised and circular debates on whether poor people destroy nature or whether environmental destruction makes people poor. In his lead article Bob Fisher stresses the contextual nature of links between poverty and conservation. Simon Bush cautions us against blaming the poor for loss of biodiversity and argues for the crucial role that biodiversity conservation plays in sustaining rural livelihoods.

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.

- 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 Paper No. 10 – "Ecotourism and Community-based Ecotourism in the Mekong Region", Anucha Leksakundilok, February 2004

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 three CD-ROMs. The first two are based on the River Dialogue held in Australia and Thailand late 2002. Limited copies of the second one 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. The third CD-ROM, *Mekong Quest: Volume 1*, is available for purchase by downloading an order form from our website.

- *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.
- *Mekong Quest: Volume 1*
The Mekong Quest CD-ROM is a product geared to high school education. The multimedia program is designed to provide an entry point to the geography of the Mekong River and the people, countries and ecosystems that are connected to it. It includes interactive material about Mekong issues and geographic concepts regarding Australia's neighbouring Asian countries, as well as the role of Australia in the Mekong Region. Based on the internationally renowned, inquiry-based learning format of 'webquest', Mekong Quest employs the CD-ROM format and video material to engage the students through visual literacy as well as the written word.

PUBLICATIONS & CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS OF AMRC ASSOCIATES

- Bush, S. R. and P. Hirsch (2005) 'Framing Fishery Decline'. *Aquatic Resources, Culture and Development* 1(2), 79-90
- Carrard, N. (2005) "Drivers for Change in Water Governance: Lessons for Development Assistance" paper presented at AusAID seminar, Canberra, July 2005
- Carrard, N. (2005) "Transboundary tributaries and the Mekong Agreement", paper presented at Brisbane River Symposium, September 2005
- Fisher, R., Stewart Maginnis, W.J. Jackson, Edmund Barrow and Sally Jeanrenaud (2005) *Poverty and Conservation: Landscapes, People and Power*. Gland, Switzerland and Cambridge, UK: IUCN The World Conservation Union.
- Fisher, R. (2005) 'Forests and Poverty Reduction: A brief history of the relationship.' *Arborvitae* (IUCN/WWF Forest Conservation Newsletter), 29, December 2005.
- Fisher, R. (2005) 'Poverty and Biodiversity Conservation.' *Mekong Update and Dialogue*, Vol 8(3), September 2005, pp 2-3.
- Fisher, R. (2005) 'Common Property and Development: Forests and Pastures.' (2005) In Jim Fingleton (ed) *Privatising Land in the Pacific: A Defence of Customary Tenures*. The Australia Institute, Discussion Paper No 80.
- Hirsch, P., Naomi Carrard, Fiona Miller, Andrew Wyatt (2005) *Water Governance in Context: Lessons for Development Assistance*, Australian Water Research Facility - AusAID, Australian Mekong Resource Centre.
- Hirsch, P. and Lloyd, K. (2005) 'Real and Virtual Experiential Learning on the Mekong: Field Schools, e-Sims and Cultural Challenge', *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*. 29 (3) pp 321-337
- Hirsch, P. (2005) *Governance and water in Thailand*, paper presented at International Conference on Thai Studies, Northern Illinois University, April 2005
- Hirsch, P. (2005) *Governing water as a common good in the Mekong River Basin: issues of scale*, paper presented at conference on Freshwater and Salt, University of Technology Sydney, May 2005
- Hirsch, P. (2005) *Transboundary water governance and issues of scale in the Mekong River Basin*, Paper presented at Institute of Australian Geographers conference 19-22 July 2005, University of New England, Armidale
- Hirsch, P. (2005) *River hardware and software: perspectives on water governance in the Mekong River Basin*, Paper presented at NUS Centenary conference on Asian Horizons: Cities, States and Societies, National University of Singapore, 1-3 August 2005.
- Hirsch, P. (2005) *Cultures of regulation, river basin organisations and IWRM in the Mekong River Basin*, Paper presented at The International Forum on Integrated Water Resources Management of the Mekong River Basin, Chiang Rai, 28-29 November 2005
- Jaruwan Kaewmahanin, Somsak Sukwong and R.J. Fisher (2005) 'Pred Nai Community Forest, Trad Province, Thailand.' Case Study 1 in R.J. Fisher, Stewart Maginnis, W.J. Jackson, Edmund Barrow and Sally Jeanrenaud *Poverty and Conservation: Landscapes, People and Power*. Gland, Switzerland and Cambridge, UK: IUCN The World Conservation Union.
- Jaruwan Kaewmahanin and R.J. Fisher (2005) 'Forest Governance in Thailand.' Paper prepared for Institute

- for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES), Forest Conservation Project).
- Lloyd, K., Suchet-Pearson, S., and Wright, S. (2005). Decentring Fortress Australia: borderland geographies as relational spaces. Paper presented at the ARCRNSISS Workshop. University of Newcastle. June 2005
- Lloyd, K., Suchet-Pearson, S., and Wright, S. (2005). Borderland geographies: the exclusion of Melville Island in policy and practice. Paper presented at the Institute of Australian Geographers Conference. Armidale, NSW. 18-22 July 2005
- Lloyd, K. (2005) Catering to the backpacker: Tourism entrepreneurs and traveller cafés in Vietnam. Paper presented at the ATLAS backpacker conference 1-3 September, Kasetsart University, Bangkok
- Meheux, K. and Lloyd, K. (2005). Developing methods to measure the impacts of tropical cyclones in communities in Fiji. In: R.J. Morrison, S. Quin and E.A. Bryant (Editors) *Planning for Natural Hazards - How Can We Mitigate the Impacts*, GeoQuEST Research Centre, School of Earth and Environmental Sciences, University of Wollongong, NSW 2522, pp 177-188
- Tubtim, N. and P. Hirsch (2005) 'Common Property as Enclosure: A Case Study of a Backswamp in Southern Laos.' *Society and Natural Resources* 18: 41-60
- Wyatt, A. (2005) *Trans-boundary River Basin Management: The Case of Hydropower Development in the Sesan River Basin*, a case study paper presented to Tokyo University, Environment Law Institute, UNEP, project on Trans-boundary River Basin Management

DIRECTIONS FOR 2006

- Entrench the Mekong Learning Initiative in such a way that partner institutions take on increasing ownership and management of the collaborative activities.
- Complete and disseminate the work of the study of Mekong water governance, with specific emphasis on the role of MRC.
- Commence work with the Cambodia Development Resource Institute in support of research capacity strengthening on water governance.
- Take on a coordinating role in the Challenge of Agrarian Transitions in Southeast Asia project together with universities in Canada, the UK, Thailand and Vietnam.
- Commission and participate in an external review of the Centre's activities.

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