



AMRC

Australian Mekong Resource Centre

Annual Report Jan-Dec 2004



The University of Sydney

This report has been prepared by AMRC staff.

Photographs supplied by AMRC staff and associates.

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 2004	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 2004	14
Mekong Curriculum	
River Basin Development: A Negotiated Approach	
Water Governance in Context	
Toward a Political Ecology of Risk in River Basin Development: the case of the Mekong	
Research Training at the National University of Laos (NUOL)	
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
INTERN	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
RESOURCES	31
Website Development	31
DIRECTIONS FOR 2005	32
CONTACT DETAILS	32
Postal Address	32
Visiting Address	32

FOREWORD

REPORT OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE OF THE AMRC

The past year has been one of some considerable tragedy.

The Indian Ocean Tsunami has left its legacy on the East Asia region and its people; droughts and reduced river flows in the Mekong Region have once again shown the essential nature of wise and careful governance of the river's natural resources; and on a personal scale the drowning death of Charlie Pahlman, former member of the AMRC Steering Committee, has been a personal loss of an old friend for many AMRC staff, associates and friends.

But within this context the work of AMRC has progressed. New collaborations have been forged and old relationships reaffirmed.

AMRC staff were invited by AusAID to apply for a competitive grant from Australian Water Research Facility on water governance and by Oxfam America to take on the coordination of the Mekong Learning Initiative. Both have been successfully funded. These projects are quite different in nature and scope yet they maximize the different strengths of the AMRC and its associates - on the one hand the AMRC's high quality academic research and on the other, their networking and collaborations around applied research and teaching. For the Centre's longer term positioning both projects also indicate a strong profile and network in the region. In Australia it also indicates a mechanism for encouraging debates and influencing dialogues about regional developments and Australia's role and contribution.

As well as its core research activities, the Centre itself has maintained a highly professional public face and resource base through its website, and online data and analysis. The tireless work behind the scenes from Doug Bailey, and his support volunteer and project staff have also kept outreach programs like the Friday discussion forums and the MUD publication coasting along. Doug anchors many of the ongoing activities of the AMRC and helps maintain a high quality of output from the AMRC's office. An esprit de corp has helped sustain much of the work of the many associates, students, volunteers, and administrative staff, who have been associated with the AMRC over the years and this has allowed the AMRC to maintain an important and influential profile in Australia and abroad.

In 2004-2005 long term AMRC associates Fiona Miller and Simon Bush have left Australian shores for jobs at research bodies in Sweden and the Netherlands. While an in-office loss, they too will contribute to new networks and associations for the AMRC.

2005 marks the tenth anniversary of the Mekong Agreement – a milestone of interest to donor and Mekong governments, multilaterals, and Mekong and international civil society. Over the years this agreement and the body set up to implement it has been the subject of much interest and criticism. AMRC has initiated exciting work which will bring together new partners to stimulate some timely reflection and consideration of the Mekong Agreement – in its efficacy as a treaty between nation states sharing the river and its resources; and also in the structural model of the MRC itself. This research will be presented early in 2006, and should provide a catalytic dialogue amongst Mekong nations and the donor community about future directions.

It is with these types of innovative projects and collaborations that the AMRC maintains its important position – bringing together research with policy development and debate. It is also the context for students from Australia and the Mekong region to share their experiences and studies, and to continue to foster better and more informed linkages. The tragedies of the recent year we earlier referred to have forced many of us to reflect on the things we hold dear in life, and have in many ways highlighted the importance of the positive ways people can support more sustainable and equitable futures through their efforts to link up with others in their work, relationships and voluntary contributions.

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

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

A NOTE FROM THE AMRC DIRECTOR

If there is one theme that defined AMRC directions in 2004, it is water. Ironically for a year punctuated by the devastating wall of water that destroyed so many lives and livelihoods in Asia, water as a scarce and contested resource has become a focal area of our work. From the middle of the year, AMRC took on a project funded by the Australian Water Research Facility that looks at contextual aspects of water governance. This has given us an opportunity to continue to work with Fiona Miller in her new position at the Stockholm Environment Institute and with Andrew Wyatt who is based in Vietnam.

An important new responsibility that AMRC has taken on during the year is the coordination of the Mekong Learning Initiative. Oxfam America and the Open Society Institute had been supporting a curriculum development project under MLI, but in mid-2004 we were approached to take on coordination and reformulation of the program. Working on learning at and beyond the boundaries of several higher education institutions and communities with whom we work in the region is an exciting departure in itself, and we also felt honoured to be seen by the supporting and participating agencies in MLI as an institution sufficiently engaged to take on this expanded role.

2004 saw the usual happy/sad completion/departure of postgraduate AMRC associates. Anucha Leksakundilok submitted his PhD on community-based ecotourism in Thailand. Andrew Wyatt submitted his PhD on infrastructure development and BOOT in Laos and Vietnam. Simon Bush submitted his PhD on fisheries in Laos. All three are now Doctors in Thailand, Vietnam and the Netherlands respectively.

Nattaya Tubtim in Chiangmai and Bob Fisher in Sydney continued to provide excellent support to AMRC. Nattaya has anchored some of the AMRC collaborative research on water in Thailand and neighbouring countries, and she has taken an increasing role in MLI. From 2005, she is responsible for coordinating the program. Bob has provided outstanding support to postgraduate students and has become increasingly involved with curriculum aspects of the MLI work, while dovetailing his important work with IUCN on poverty, livelihoods and conservation with AMRC's sustainability and social justice concerns. This has taken a particularly important direction in the aftermath of the tsunami. As always, Doug Bailey's multi-tasked position is the engine that keeps AMRC together as an institution and gives us the necessary visibility and allows us to meet our outreach potential beyond the project-specific work that keeps us so busy. Naomi Carrard has become another core AMRC worker drone in her anchoring role in some key projects.

Another component of AMRC's extended family in the region is a group of Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development. Emily Hunter worked from March 2004 at National University of Laos, and Natalia Scurrah from September 2004 at Ubonratchathani University in what is a developing network of young Australians who have cut their teeth at AMRC and who play a creative support role with some of our collaborative partners. An important element of this work is connected with the MLI network.

At the end of the year (well timed to join our annual AMRC pre-Christmas lunch), we had a week long visit by Kurt Morck Jensen, DANIDA's senior water specialist, who will spend six months with us in 2005-6 on a major study of water governance in its transboundary context. The core element of this work will be to conduct an independent study of the Mekong River Commission and frameworks for water governance in the Mekong.

As always, the continued material support and collaboration from agencies including the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, Oxfam America and Oxfam Community Aid Abroad and our many regional partners and friends is an essential part of what keeps us going. As academic life gets ever more pressured, so relevance and continued engagement in the world of ideas and action around sustainability and social justice seem to matter ever more – even if this often seems to further add to the pressure-cooker environment of our daily working lives!

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 2004

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.

Over Easter 2004 large demonstrations by ethnic minority groups in the Vietnamese Central Highlands over religious freedom and return of ancestral lands took place. This resulted in large numbers of ethnic minority people fleeing into neighbouring Cambodia.

Outbreaks of the avian influenza have continued to occur in the region, particularly in Vietnam where it has proved a financial disaster for the country's commercial poultry industry. The World Health Organization is concerned about the possibility of a serious human pandemic originating from bird flu. Vietnam has been making progress in stemming the spread of HIV-AIDS. By contrast, Cambodia is faced with a more grim situation. It has the highest prevalence rate in Asia notwithstanding a decline from a 1997 peak of new cases.

Cambodia's forests continue to be devastated by unfettered logging. A Global Witness report during the year highlighted systematic corruption in the Cambodian forestry industry. Chinese logging companies have been criticised for clear-felling of montane rainforest in north-west Burma.

In 2000 a commercial navigation agreement for the Mekong was entered into by Burma, China, Laos and Thailand. Amid controversy, rapids were blasted to clear passage for shipping. After a pause clearing of rapids along the Thai-Lao border has resumed.

Many more dams are planned for the region. Construction of the Son La dam - to be the largest hydroelectricity plant in Southeast Asia - in Vietnam will start in 2005. Laos plans to build 15 hydropower dams on tributaries of the Mekong. Burma has a massive and accelerating dam-building program on the Salween, Irrawaddy and other rivers, with finance coming from Japan, China, and Thailand. A decision to proceed with the Nam Theun 2 dam in Laos, despite widespread opposition to the project, was made by the World Bank in March 2004. Debate still rages over the downstream impact of the Chinese dams on the Upper Mekong (Lancang) in Yunnan.

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 2004

Throughout 2004 AMRC has further consolidated 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. A CD-ROM for secondary school students - Mekong Quest - was 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 intern, Phonesavanh Daoheuang, AMRC Research Program Manager, Andrew Wyatt, Research Assistant, Naomi Carrard and various other researchers and students.

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 now 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 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 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. In 2004 the website was given a complete face-lift, vastly improving its look and streamlining navigation.

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 has produced three CD-ROMs. In 2004 we produced our third CD-ROM entitled *Mekong Quest: Volume One*. This is AMRC's 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 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 nearly 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. 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 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. One good example of networking is the Mekong Curriculum project which was, in 2004, reconceptualised into a new project called Mekong Learning Initiative.

The AMRC 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).

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).

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. A notable highlight in 2004 was a discussion of Thai-Burma border issues by Maung Maung Nyo, a former official in the Burmese government, and two former Burmese student activists. Other presentations included topics as diverse as HIV-AIDS, the fate of Thai language teaching, community economies and ancient Cambodian water management systems.

The 2004 program is displayed in the table overleaf. For details of the 2005 program please visit the AMRC website.

Mekong Discussion Group 2004

Date	Topic	Presenter(s)
12 March	Toward a Mekong Curriculum?	Phil Hirsch, Director AMRC
7 May	Approaches to HIV/AIDS programs in border areas of Cambodia	Nami Nelson, Senior Project Officer, CARE Australia
21 May	A practitioner's reflection on Southeast Asian language teaching in a period of higher education reform	Nilwan Jiraratwatana, Lecturer in Thai, School of Languages and Cultures, University of Sydney
13 August	Conflict in the Nam Ngum watershed, Laos	Phonesavanh Daoheuang, Postgraduate Student, University of Utah
27 August	Ancient water management north of the Tonle Sap, Cambodia: new perspectives from remote sensing	Damian Evans, PhD candidate, Archaeology Department, University of Sydney
10 September	Community economies and post-development futures	Katherine Gibson, Department of Human Geography, Research School of Pacific & Asian Studies, ANU
17 September	Australian Laos Institute for Cooperation and Development	Kevin Prakoonheang, Postgraduate Student, School of Geosciences, Sydney University
8 October	IUCN's emerging approach to "pro-poor conservation"	Bob Fisher, Senior Researcher, AMRC
15 October	The reality behind border demarcation between Burma and Thailand	Maung Maung Nyo, Zaw Naing & Soe Lwin

Conference & Seminar Participation and Conference Presentations

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

10-14 April Phil Hirsch delivered keynote paper on *Land and water: the challenges of building sustainable societies with a focus on Vietnam and its region, and the role played by international agencies*. Linking Latitudes Conference, Asia Education Foundation, Hanoi

April Phil Hirsch presented *Geographies of Risk in River Basin Development: cases from the Mekong*, Institute of Australian Geographers conference, Adelaide, April 2004

12-15 April Kate Lloyd presented paper "Tourism and transitional geographies: mismatched expectations of foreign tourism investment in Vietnam" at IAG conference

13-16 April Two presentations by Simon Bush at the Institute of Australian Geographers Conference, Glenelg, South Australia: *Needing the supply, or supplying the need? A political ecology of Mekong fishery statistics and management at different scales; Participatory by name, extractive by nature: antagonisms in postgraduate rural geography*.

13-16 April Fiona Miller presented paper *Tensions and Contradictions of Transition: Individual and Collective Interests in Water in Viet Nam* at the Institute of Australian Geographers Conference, Glenelg, South Australia

29 June-2 July Kate Lloyd jointly presented paper "Changing Research Spaces: Doing human geography fieldwork in Viet Nam" at the ASAA conference in Canberra

19-21 July 2004 Phil Hirsch presented *Isan in terms of the lessons from Thailand's development within wider the Mekong Basin context*, Conference on Community Empowerment and Development: A Review of Experiences, Concepts and Discourses on Development in the Northeast Region (E-san) Ubonratchathani University

August Tira Foran participated in a World Bank technical workshop in Bangkok on the proposed Nam Theun 2 hydropower dam

mid-August Fiona Miller participated in the *SEI Risk and Vulnerability Programme Meeting*, Rayong, Thailand

mid-August Fiona Miller participated in the *SEI SUMERNET Sustainable Mekong Workshop*, Bangkok, Thailand

5 October Presentation by Simon Bush at the National University of Laos on PhD findings entitled "Capture and Culture Fisheries in the Lao PDR"

8 October Bob Fisher gave Mekong Discussion Group Seminar presentation "IUCN's emerging approach to pro-poor conservation."

18 November Bob Fisher co-wrote script for "Linking Mangrove Conservation and Local Livelihoods: The Case of Pred Nai Village, Eastern Thailand", video prepared for Global Synthesis Workshop *Making the case for poverty-focused conservation*, World Conservation Congress, Bangkok.

November Phil Hirsch presented paper *Water governance reform in Asia and the Pacific* at workshop on Environmental Reform in Asia, November 2004

18 November Bob Fisher was coordinator of Global Synthesis Workshop *Making the case for poverty-focused conservation*, World Conservation Congress, Bangkok, 18-25 November 2004.

29 November-2 December Fiona Miller gave two presentations and participated in AMRC workshops, at the *Southeast Asian Geography Association Conference*, Khon Kaen, Thailand

29 November-2 December Andrew Wyatt gave two presentations and participated in AMRC workshops, at the *Southeast Asian Geography Association Conference*, Khon Kaen, Thailand

29 November-2 December Phil Hirsch participated in Panel on “*Teaching the Mekong*” at the *Southeast Asian Geography Association Conference*, Khon Kaen, Thailand

29 November-2 December Naomi Carrard participated in AMRC workshops, at the *Southeast Asian Geography Association Conference*, Khon Kaen, Thailand

13-15 December Fiona Miller gave presentation on vulnerability and livelihoods at *Water Evaluation and Planning (WEAP) Workshop*, Oxford, England

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 2004, although only one meeting was actually held. This took place on 29 March and was attended by Lindsay Soutar on behalf of the AMRC. Issues covered included: the ADF9 replenishment process, World Bank and IMF spring meetings, formal consultations between Australia and the ADB, the GMS regional cooperation strategy program, and the proposed ADB-financed Yunnan railway project.

3. PROJECT ACTIVITIES 2004

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



Mekong Learning Initiative panel at SEAGA Conference in Khon Kaen, Thailand, December 2004.

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.

Since early 2005 the Mekong Curriculum project has been reformulated into the Mekong Learning Initiative.

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).

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

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).

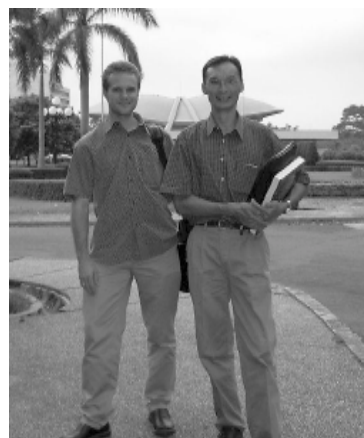
5. Dealing with conflict and risk

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

Partners:

Funding bodies: Australian Water Research Facility (AusAID)



Andrew Wyatt and Jeff Nielson doing research at the National Parliament in Jakarta, Indonesia, for the Water Governance in Context project.

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 3 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 enters a new phase 2003-6, which will involve 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

4. ACTIVITIES OF AMRC ASSOCIATES AND POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH

Andrew Wyatt (AMRC Associate & Research Program Manager)

Finally, after many stressful months in early 2004, Andrew completed his PhD thesis on 'Infrastructure Development and BOOT in Laos and Vietnam: A Case Study of Collective Action and Risk in Transitional Developing Economies' in April. While based at Can Tho University for the remainder of the year, Andrew continued work in Vietnam and Cambodia on the ARC Discovery project to investigate the political ecology of risk construction and mediation in large scale water infrastructure developments in the Mekong. In the second half of the year he also conducted field work in Vietnam and Indonesia for the Australian Water Research Facility project on water governance in the Asia-Pacific. Associated with this latter work, he presented papers at a water panel at the South-East Asia Geography Association Conference in Khon Kaen in December.

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". In 2004 Anucha completed his Ph.D. on community participation in environmental management in ecotourism. 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 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.



Fiona Miller with friends and colleagues from the College of Technology, Can Tho University, Vietnam.

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

Kevin Prakoonehang (AMRC Associate)

Kevin (also known as Khamsone) 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 joined the Centre in May 2004 as a Research Assistant engaged full-time on the Australian Water Research Facility 'Water Governance in Context' project. Naomi has a Bachelor of Liberal Studies

(first class honours) from the University of Sydney with majors in Geography and History. She is currently completing a Masters in Environmental Law focusing on natural resource management in Australia and the Asia-Pacific. In 2005 she will continue working at the AMRC on the Danida 'National Interests and Transboundary Water Governance' project.

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)

In 2004, Phil Hirsch had a particularly busy teaching year, running units of study on Catchment Management, Globalisation and Regions in Transition, Resource and Environmental Management, Social Science of Environment, Resources and Regional Development, and gearing up for the January 2005 Southeast Asia Field School. He also saw a few postgraduate research students through to completion. His workshop and conference attendance and presentations included a talk to 300 Australian teachers in Hanoi at the April Linking Latitudes conference, a paper at the Institute of Australian Geographers Conference in Adelaide, the final workshop of the Both Ends/Gomukh project at Dordrecht in the Netherlands and a conference on community empowerment in northeastern Thailand at Ubonratchathani University in July, and a workshop in Kuala Lumpur on environmental reform in Asia and the Southeast Asia Geographer Association conference at Khon Kaen in November. He also continued his input into the research capacity building program at National University of Laos and served an overview role in the Mekong Curriculum project. Languages: Thai, Lao, intermediate Vietnamese, beginning Khmer

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. Simon submitted his PhD thesis at the end of 2004. Throughout the year he has been involved with the AMRC, contributing to the Mekong Update and Dialogue and Mekong Discussion Groups. Simon has continued his involvement with the region through his work with Oxfam America and the WorldFish Centre. In 2005 Simon will continue his work on fisheries in Laos and the Mekong Basin while maintaining a strong connection to the AMRC. Languages: Lao

**Tamerlaine Beasley
(AMRC Associate)**

During 2004, Tamerlaine continued to manage Beasley Intercultural, her intercultural consultancy and training company. The company expanded and now employs three permanent staff and ten consultants who operate across the Asia-Pacific Region. Tamerlaine continued to consult and deliver training programs for clients in Thailand and Australia including the Australian Embassy in Bangkok, AusAID and Universities which involved frequent travel to the region. Tamerlaine presented sessions at the Australian Institute of Training and Development National Conference on 'Global Teams' (awarded People's Choice award), at the Australian Psychological Society conference on Psychosocial Issues in Humanitarian Staff Care on 'Pre-departure training with impact', at the Thailand Update on 'Intercultural Essentials when working in Thailand', at the Australia China Business Council on 'Navigating Intercultural Issues' and the keynote speech at the Australia-Thai Business Awards in Bangkok. She also facilitated the AMRC annual strategic planning day and organised a seminar delivered by Senator Mechai Viravaidya in Sydney. Languages: Thai, Lao



Tam Beasley and Senator Mechai Viravaidya from Thailand in Sydney. Tam's intercultural consultancy and training company, Beasley Intercultural, organised the seminar in which the senator spoke.

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 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. 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 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:

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.

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 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 Research Assistant: Naomi Carrard

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

AMRC Senior Researchers: Bob Fisher; Kate Lloyd

AMRC Website Manager: Doug Bailey

Intern: Phonesavanh Daoheuang



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

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 2004 were: 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. One visitor of note was Kurt Morck Jensen. Kurt, a Senior Advisor with DANIDA (Danish International Development Agency). Kurt visited the AMRC in December in preparation for his six-month visit from September 2005 when he will be employed as study coordinator for the "National Interests and the Common Good" project.

INTERN

In mid-2004 Phonesavanh Daoheuang, a postgraduate student at the University of Utah, worked as an intern at the AMRC investigating competition and conflict in the Nam Ngum watershed. Phonesavanh has been developing a computer model that illustrates connections between society and resources in order to assess sustainable management options. Her work will contribute to an existing case study on the AMRC website.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT & SUPPORTERS OF THE AMRC

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

1 January-31 December 2004

Carried forward from 2003 136676

Income 2004

Core: Rockefeller Brothers Fund 106712

Dialogue on Water, Food and Environment (CD-ROM) support 4690

Publications and CD-ROMs 4992

Teaching15000

TOTAL INCOME 131394

Expenditure 2004

Salaries

Administration 85238

Casuals 22722

Regional Research Program Officer3431

Workshop costs 13484

Travel and maintenance 14768

Publication and printing 5477

Communication 2708

Office equipment 1902

Dialogue overheads2702

TOTAL EXPENDITURE 152432

CARRY FORWARD 115638

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 2004 the four issues addressed the following themes: Politics of the Commons; Debt and development; Participation and research; Burma: isolation and engagement.

Mekong Update & Dialogue 7.1 January-March 2004

In the first issue for the year we focus on a gathering of several hundred intellectuals and activists in Chiangmai in July 2003 under the conference title, "Politics of the Commons: Articulating Development and Strengthening Local Practices". The entrenchment of the commons theme critique in a new orthodoxy, the translation of its analysis into institutional rules, game theory and discourses that sit as easily in World Bank documents as they do in critical social science treatises, has in part triggered a concern to re-politicise the commons. Peter Vandergeest and Chusak Withayapak reflect on an alternative branch of commons thinking.

Mekong Update & Dialogue 7.2 April-June 2004

In the second issue of the Mekong Update we look at issues surrounding debt and development. The lead article and responses, written from the perspectives of quite different development organisations, correspondingly seem quite polarised. Yet at the same time they all delve into some of the nuance of the debate – led in the first instance by a focus on the language of debt.

Mekong Update & Dialogue 7.3 July-September 2004

In this issue the lead article by Simon Bush questions how dilemmas of achieving participation in the research process can be overcome when the process is so constrained by exigencies of academic timeframes, thesis requirements and so on. In response Muonpong Juntopas suggests that participatory research can even serve to exacerbate problems related to unequal power and falsely legitimised claims to truth and knowledge. Utong Prasasvinitchai draws our attention to the nature of research itself, as constructed at academic institutions.

Mekong Update & Dialogue 7.4 October-December 2004

The final issue for the year poses the dilemma of whether to engage with or isolate Burma. Joern Kristensen's lead article contrasts and takes issue with what he sees as a fundamentalist North American and European isolation versus a more pragmatic ASEAN policy of "constructive engagement". He is supported in this position by the Thai contributor, who has worked at the grassroots level in northern Burma, monitoring community development projects. In contrast, the two Australian-based pieces, one by an Australian activist-academic and one by a Burmese exile, strongly oppose engagement and see even humanitarian aid as futile and a means of further propping up the regime.

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., 2004 *Needing the supply, or supplying the need? A political ecology of Mekong fishery statistics and management at different scales*. Institute of Australian Geographers conference, Glenelg, South Australia, Institute of Australian Geographers.
- Bush, S. R., 2004 *Participatory by name, extractive by nature: antagonisms in postgraduate rural geography*. Institute of Australian Geographers conference, Glenelg, South Australia, Institute of Australian Geographers.
- Bush, S. R., 2004 Research and 'participation'. *Mekong Update & Dialogue* 7(3), 2-3
- Bush, S. R. 2004 Scales and Sales: changing social and spatial fish trading networks in the Siiphandone fishery, Lao PDR. *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography* 25(1), 32-50
- Bush, S. R. and P. Hirsch (in press) Framing Fishery Decline. *Aquatic Resources, Culture and Development* 1(1), 1-12.
- Fisher, R. Nurse, M. Srimongkoltip, S. 2004 "Linking Mangrove Conservation and Local Livelihoods: The Case of Pred Nai Village, Eastern Thailand", script for video prepared for Global Synthesis Workshop *Making the case for poverty-focused conservation*, World Conservation Congress, Bangkok, 18-25 November 2004.
- Fisher, R. Schmidt, K. Steenhof, B. & Akesnshaev, N. 2004 Poverty and Forestry: A case study of Kyrgyzstan with reference to other countries in West and Central Asia. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Livelihood Support Programme. LSP Working Paper No 13. Published electronically: http://www.fao.org/sd/dim_pe4/pe4_040907_en.htm
- Hirsch, P. 2004 Development assistance in a transboundary river basin setting: the role of institutional mechanisms in safeguarding poor people's livelihoods to and rights to land and water in the Mekong Region, *Proceedings* (refereed) by Jannik Boesen and Helle Munk Ravnborg of international conference From water wars to water riots: lessons from transboundary water management, Copenhagen, December 2003. 97-111.
- Hirsch, P. 2004 The Politics of Fisheries Knowledge in the Mekong River Basin, in *Proceedings of the Second International Symposium on Large Rivers for Fisheries, Volume II*, Welcomme, R and T. Petr eds, FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, Bangkok, Thailand, RAP Publication 2004,

11pp, 91-101.

- Hirsch, P. and Wyatt, A.B. 2004 Negotiating local livelihoods: scales of conflict in the Se San River Basin, *Asia Pacific Viewpoint*, 45, 1, 51-68.
- Lloyd, L. 2004 Tourism and transitional geographies: mismatched expectations of foreign tourism investment in Vietnam, Paper presented at IAG conference, April 12-15.
- Lloyd, K. 2004 Tourism and Transition: mismatched expectations of tourism investment in Vietnam, *Asia Pacific Viewpoint Journal* 45(2): 197-215.
- Lloyd, K. 2004 Playing Games with conflict: the Ha Long Bay e-sim, In McKay, Elspeth (ed.) 2004. *Acquiring and Constructing Knowledge Through Human-Computer Interaction: Creating New Visions for the Future of Learning*, Conference Proceedings of the International Conference on Computers in Education, 30 November-3 December. RMIT, Melbourne: 171-178
- Lloyd, K. Miller, F and S. Scott 2004 Changing Research Spaces: Doing human geography fieldwork in Viet Nam, paper presented at the ASAA conference in Canberra June 29-July 2.
- Lloyd, K. Miller, F and S. Scott 2004 Changing Research Spaces: Doing human geography fieldwork in Viet Nam In: Cribb, Robert (ed.). 2004. *Asia Examined: Proceedings of the 15th Biennial Conference of the ASAA, 2004*, Canberra, Australia. Canberra: Asian Studies Association of Australia (ASAA) & Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies (RSPAS), The Australian National University. ISBN 0-9580837-1-1.
coombs.anu.edu.au/ASAA/conference/proceedings/Lloyd-HM-ASAA2004.pdf
- Meheux, K. and Lloyd, K. 2005 Developing methods to measure tropical cyclone impacts in communities in Fiji, paper presented to the Planning for Natural Hazards - how can we mitigate the impacts? Symposium, 2-5 February, University of Wollongong
- Miller, F. 2004 "Tensions and Contradictions of Transition: Individual and Collective Interests in Water in Viet Nam", Paper presented at the *Institute of Australian Geographers 2004 Conference*, Glenelg, Adelaide 13-16 April
- Wyatt A. B., 2004, Build Operate Transfer Projects, in Forsyth, T. (Ed.), *Encyclopaedia of International Development*, Routledge, London.

RESOURCES

Website Development

There was a complete overhaul of the website in 2004, thanks to the efforts of then AMRC staff Alanna Linn and Ryan Van Den Nouwelant. The website appearance is now much more chic and navigation has been vastly improved, for example by having a menu bar at the top of every page. News is now accessible directly from the homepage via a scroll-down index. News is filed into latest news and news archives categories. In the Projects section a new page has been created for completed projects. In the Publications section an archives page has been created for publications and conference presentations by associates. Links from the Links section are now accessible both thematically and alphabetically. In About Us an alumni page has been created for past associates.

DIRECTIONS FOR 2005

- Develop the Mekong learning initiative into a vibrant curriculum development and collaborative research program with strong outreach and learning focus that links Universities within the region and links university research with community processes in natural resource management.
- Embark on study of water governance in the Mekong through a critical analysis of the MRC and its role in managing the river basin beyond national interests. This study is particularly timely ten years on from the MRC Agreement.
- Work with National University of Laos to look at social aspects of land titling
- Embark on a five-year collaborative study with the Challenge of Agrarian Transitions in Southeast Asia project together with universities in Canada, the UK, Thailand and Vietnam. AMRC will coordinate the environmental change section of this program.

CONTACT DETAILS

Postal Address:

Australian Mekong Resource Centre (F09)
University of Sydney
NSW 2006

Visiting Address:

The Australian Mekong Resource Centre
Room 464, Madsen Building (City Road entrance)
University of Sydney
Tel: +61 2 9351 7796
Fax: +61 2 9351 8627
Email: mekong@mail.usyd.edu.au
Website: www.mekong.es.usyd.edu.au