



Proceedings

**Regional Consultation Meeting 2007
on Watershed Management
in the Lower Mekong Basin**

**5-7 November 2007
Vientiane, Lao PDR**

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*Institutions that support participatory
decision-making and the formulation
of priority issues will ensure wise
management of watersheds*

Introduction to the Regional Consultation Meeting 2007

At the last Greater Mekong Sub-Region Ministerial Meeting in Manila, in June of this year, the results from an evaluation of the first 15 years of GMS activities were presented. One of the most noteworthy outcomes reported was that hardware investments (i.e. infrastructure) need more support from software investments (in capacity development) to achieve positive and sustainable impact.

This theme is exactly what we shall focus on over the coming three days of our Regional Consultation Meeting. We will share views on which capacity development activities are needed to underwrite investments with a watershed management (WSM) focus. By capacity development we mean the process through which people, organisations and society as a whole create, strengthen, adapt and maintain human potential over time.

Under this watershed management topic we will share knowledge and discuss policy development, institutional development and human resource development issues. All three topics are closely related and are crucial for future watershed management development. Human development is discussed in the paragraph above; policy development determines the mandates, roles and responsibilities of institutions relevant to watershed management. Institutional development determines the tasks and skills of the professional staff in institutions with responsibility for watershed management.

During the first day we will discuss and share our experiences in watershed management related policy development. Over the last year we have analysed national watershed management related policies and regulations. The analyses were discussed in national working group meetings and consultations. These

national meetings, together with the results from our deliberations today, will hopefully provide sufficient guidance for the next steps that need to be undertaken.

On the second day our overriding topic will be watershed management as related to institutional development. To ensure wise management of watersheds, there is a need for institutions that support participatory decision-making and the formulation of priority issues. This is complicated by the cross-administrative border and cross-sector nature of watershed management. The relationship between watershed and river basin management requires special attention, as does the cumulative impact of watershed management on the overall health of the Mekong River Basin.

The third day will be devoted to a field trip that will demonstrate issues discussed over the first two days in a real life situation. The work will not stop there: for two days after our Regional Consultation Meeting, the observer participants at this meeting will continue the dialogue in a more capacity building context.

The format of this three-day meeting will use three techniques. We will first look at specific country experiences and views; these will then be complemented by presentation of opinions and experience from outside the region. Then we will enter group and plenary discussions that will bring all the information together, leading to concrete recommendations for follow-up activities in the near future.

Cornelis van Tuyll

Vientiane, November 2007

Session 1 Opening



Welcome Address

Mr Do Manh Hung

Officer In Charge, MRC Secretariat

*H.E. Mrs. Khempheng Pholsena, Minister to the Prime Ministers Office,
Chairperson of the Lao National Mekong Committee;*

Mr Nguyen Hong Toan, Chairman of the MRC Joint Committee;

Distinguished participants;

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure and honour to welcome all of you to this Regional Consultation Meeting on Watershed Management. We are delighted to see so many participants from our MRC countries and from outside the region. I welcome all the distinguished delegates from the four MRC countries. Most of you have been involved in our watershed management activities over recent years. I am especially happy to know that a number of participants come from the provinces in which our pilot watersheds are situated.

I welcome all distinguished guests from other organisations inside and outside the Mekong region. We thank you for giving us the opportunity to share our experience with you and to learn from your experience. We all know there is no blueprint for watershed management, but experience and lessons in this region and from other regions can help us in designing and improving watershed management activities in the Mekong Basin. Coordination and cooperation with other organisations and projects is crucial for streamlining our orientation and concepts. Working together to find ways and means for efficient and effective watershed management should be our common objective.

I welcome the many observers, from this region and from outside, supported by the German organisations InWEnt and DAAD. Having you with us for the coming three days underlines the significance not only of human resource development activities, but also of the crucial importance of relating such capacity building to real life and practical work. Since the main role of our programme is capacity development, your attendance is vital to all of us.

Under the overarching principle of Integrated Water Resources Management, it is at the watershed level that these principles are integrated into concrete planning processes and translated into management practices. The MRC is extremely interested in watershed management because the cumulative effects of management practices in watersheds are essential to the river basin's health. Therefore, watershed management, though a definite national responsibility, has a considerable trans-boundary dimension.

Watershed management programmes and projects have existed and been implemented for many years. A lot of experience has already been gathered. Best practices are available, but we all know that we are not yet in a situation where we can be completely satisfied with what has been achieved. There remain a number of open questions and unsolved issues. Most of these are not of a technical nature, but are rather a matter of policy or regulatory and institutional character.

State of the art watershed management programmes show that wise management of water, and of land closely related to water, depends on human behaviour. Human behaviour in turn relies on the supporting environment in which it reacts. It requires knowledge and experience, supporting regulations, and last but not least communication possibilities. In this respect policy and institutional development must be in place to provide as much support as possible to the necessary processes. We need institutions which support the

implementation of policies and regulations, the integration of local needs and expectations, plus private sector interests.

Our exchange of experience over the next two days is, of course, of an informal nature. We are not aiming for decisions, agreements or anything so official: we are looking to gain knowledge, and to use lessons learned to generate a win-win situation for all of us through better ideas on how to deal with watershed management policy and institutional issues.

We should use this chance to improve by building and using networks: networks of practitioners in the field of watershed management, networks between representatives of pilot watersheds, between experts from the region and those from outside the region.

Ladies and gentleman, we have two interesting days ahead of us. The success of the meeting depends on all of you. It depends on your active participation and on your willingness to share your experience with us and to be interested in the experience of others. I kindly ask you to take this opportunity, and wish you two interesting days of fruitful discussion.

Thank you for your attention.

**H.E. Mrs. Khempheng Pholsena,
Minister to the Prime Minister's Office,
Head of the Water Resources and Environment
Administration, Member of the MRC Council for
the Lao PDR, and Chairperson of the Lao National
Mekong Committee**

Mr Nguyen Hong Toan, Chairman of the MRC Joint Committee;

Mr Do Manh Hung, Officer in Charge of the MRC;

Distinguished participants from the MRC member countries and beyond;

Representatives from international and bilateral organisations;

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the government of the Lao PDR, and especially on behalf of the Lao National Mekong Committee, it is my pleasure and privilege to welcome you to this Regional Consultation Meeting on Watershed Management. I am grateful and honoured that this meeting takes place in our capital, Vientiane. We will do our best to be a good host to all of you.

The Mekong is our joint resource and our joint responsibility. By signing the 1995 agreement we committed ourselves, as the four countries within the Lower Mekong Basin, to jointly aiming for sustainable development in the Basin. By doing so we put special emphasis on water and water-related resources. The interaction between water, land and our respective peoples' interventions is one of the key issues. For us watershed management is very important. It provides a bridge between the strategic policy and planning level of the river basin, on the one hand, and the needs and expectations of

the local population, on the other. Watershed management aims to create and maintain the balance between the ecological, economic and social functions within a watershed. Achieving this balance is crucial to sustainable development and has high priority in our countries. Sound watershed management means making IWRM (integrated water resources management) operational at the local, district and provincial levels. I can assure you that the Government of the Lao PDR fully supports the IWRM concept and its implementation within the context of watershed management.

Against this background, your meeting over the next two days will specifically focus on the enabling environment for watershed management. Such an enabling environment is characterised by effective policies and regulations, efficient institutions and sufficient human capacity.

Our government recently established the Water Resources and Environment Administration (WREA), of which I have the privilege to be the Head. This administration is responsible for guiding policy development, co-ordination, and macro-level planning in the area of water resources and the environment. I am confident that a consultation meeting like this one helps to shape and customise the legislative framework and institutional responsibilities in the four Lower Mekong Basin countries, to the benefit of the people.

I realise that we face a number of institutional challenges. Some of these challenges are crucial to shaping our role in the future. We have to adapt our institutional landscape to the coming requirements. Improvements and changes are needed to achieve sustainable watershed management as an important input to overall development in our countries. I am especially pleased to learn that this meeting will focus its discussions on policy and institutional issues. Based on its responsibility, WREA is very interested in your consultations over the next few days and your recommendations for follow-up activities.

I would be delighted if the results of this meeting can assist our administration in setting priorities for the near future. I expect the MRC-GTZ Watershed Management Programme to continue to take up these issues and assist the four riparian countries with respective dialogues.

As I can see from your programme, you will specifically deal with experiences from the region. We are happy and prepared to share our experience in the Lao PDR with our colleagues from neighbouring countries. This exchange will help us in improving our efforts and in achieving our objectives more efficiently.

I am grateful to the donor community for the support they provide by making these kinds of events possible. I especially thank the German government and its development organisations for their support.

Ladies and Gentlemen, some of you are here as active participants; some of you are here as observers to learn and gain the experience needed for your daily work. The development and achievements of the meeting will greatly depend on your input and guidance. Please be aware of the high responsibility that places on your shoulders. I am confident that, with your motivation and dedication, the MRC and all of you as participants can look forward to fruitful and successful days. I wish you all the best in this important event.

Thank you.

Professor Hartmut Gaese

I would like to welcome all participants to this occasion - those of you from the MRC member countries and visitors from other regions. Our thanks must go to the MRC and GTZ for providing us with the opportunity to participate in this meeting.

More particularly, on behalf of the InWEnt and DAAD alumni, I would like to offer our gratitude to the MRC and to the four countries, Cambodia, the Lao PDR, Thailand and Viet Nam, for this chance to learn from their discussions on watershed management. These InWEnt and DAAD alumni are those sitting at the back of the room. They are attending the meeting as observers, having studied in Germany and participated in capacity-building events on issues related to watershed management.

The University of Cologne has two master's courses focusing on integrated water resource management in the tropics and subtropics. Most of the students come from abroad, including from Southeast Asia and the MRC member countries. Often these students are supported by scholarships from DAAD, the German Academic Exchange Service. Many students from Cambodia, the Lao PDR, Thailand and Viet Nam have been able to study at the University of Cologne and other universities in Germany thanks to DAAD scholarships.

The German capacity-building organisation InWEnt regularly organises events on issues related to natural resource management and watershed management. These events are designed for participants from governments, public administration, the private sector and other stakeholders. Many of these activities occur here in the region. The former students of these university courses and capacity building events can contribute their knowledge and capacity to the development of sound watershed management policies in their respective

countries. They can do this working for their governments, in research, or for the private sector.

These events provide a very important opportunity to stay in contact with former students and participants, and to provide further training. This event is an excellent example of such continuity. At the end of the meeting, there will be two more days of workshop on Thursday and Friday for further capacity building for the alumni.

Before that however, I look forward to an interesting and rewarding meeting with you all.

Thank you.

Policy Development

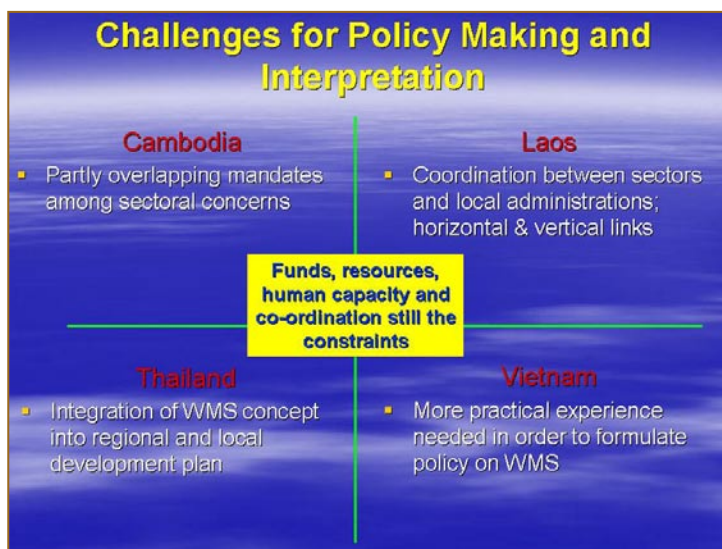
A consolidated review of the programme's one-year policy analysis across the riparian countries was provided by Khamla Phanvilay of the National University of Laos.

Watershed Management Policy Review in the Lower Mekong Basin

The analysis covered both policy in the sense of government intent, and the legislation designed to implement that intent. It thus dealt with both bio-physical and administrative issues. Country policy papers were written first in the local language of each country and then in English. Findings for each country, as already agreed with national bodies, were presented as summarised in the table and figure below.

ISSUES	Cambodia	Lao PDR	Thailand	Viet Nam
Coordination	Insufficient co-ordination between sectors and between central and local administrative levels			
Institutions & mandates	Issues are covered more than policies	There are few explicit mandates for WSM issues	All issues covered implicitly, but no explicit mandate for siltation	5 issues covered explicitly: water quality; water quantity; planning; monitoring; and river basin management
Financial incentive	Insufficient funds to prepare integrated WSM; no specific budget allocated to WSM activities			
Capacity building	Policy analysis	Policy analysis	More information for local administrations	Policy analysis for central and local staff

Based on the analysis, recommendations were separately provided to each country on how to achieve further progress. Advice was given on how to improve institutional and legal frameworks, how to design clear mandates for agencies involved in WSM and how to advance capacity building programmes.



Reaction

The presentation was followed by several responses. A Thai participant remarked that certain details were not presented in all countries and that these should be added to all case studies. For instance, given the frequent droughts in northeast Thailand, the Thai report would benefit from mention of drought challenges. Other issues that should be mentioned in all cases were river basin co-ordination and river use conflict, which are currently listed only in the Vietnamese and Cambodian policy papers.

Other issues proposed for addition to future analysis were the meaning and implications of IWRM at regional level. It was suggested that as discussions have now been held at the international level, dialogue at the regional level would help provide a holistic view. The Cambodian team remarked that a recent water law had yet to be added to the Cambodian country matrix for policy and legislation. They also corrected the perception that their National Committee was no longer needed, saying that it was regarded as important and should be maintained.

Regional Priorities for Policy Development

The country teams discussed and presented their national priorities for policy development under the framework of the following questions:

- Which watershed management policies/regulations have a high priority out of regional, national and local interest?
- Which issues can be improved as soon as possible?
- What information/experience from other countries would be helpful?

Cambodia

The Cambodian team drew up a matrix to reflect the different levels of priority for WSM policies.

Policy / Regulation (as a priority)	Regional	National	Local
Forestry		✓	✓
Water Use	✓	✓	✓
Land Use (all levels)		✓	✓

The team reported that in the near future Cambodia would be able to integrate management by bringing key sectors together and improving sharing of information and knowledge between agencies. Private sector initiatives would be encouraged in order to pass charges for services on to water users. Cambodia wants to learn from the experience of other countries, especially concerning benefit-sharing mechanisms, best practices for pilot interventions and management mechanisms, and on the difficult matter of integrating policies from different sectors. A pressing requirement in Cambodia is the need to simplify all the existing ideas on regulations and actions from different sectors into a national code of conduct.

Lao PDR

Many laws apply across various sectors in Laos and review and consolidation of the existing legislation related to use of natural resources has been named a high national priority, as has creation of a comprehensive national code for management of these assets.

Immediate plans include the setting up of watersheds as administrative units. However, this will require improved information flow and co-ordination. Co-ordination across agencies is currently lacking, a problem that has been exacerbated by decentralisation policy. The Lao PDR would also like to create a monitoring system to track and plan the use of natural resources.

Advice and information from neighbouring countries would be most welcome on the establishment of a legal framework, as the Lao authorities lack experience and structures in this area. Information is also needed on establishing indicators for natural resource management: Laos is familiar with regional indicators but wants to study international systems also. These could help with integrated WSM, resource-use planning and the development of auto-financial mechanisms, including an incentives policy.

Another important part of policy development will be land-use studies, especially regarding the ethics of foreign direct investment in land use. The country could learn from best practices in the private sector elsewhere, and would like to develop guidelines for private operations. Human resource development will also be crucial.



photo: Oxford Communications

Thailand

The Thai country team accorded the highest priority to planning at regional and national levels. It was felt that sound preparation at these levels will lead to safe water and other benefits. This planning would have to include a holistic approach to IWSM and multi-stakeholder analysis to ensure participation at all levels.

Therefore Thailand will conduct analysis of all stakeholders to improve participation. This should be followed by training at all levels. The Thai team felt that they did not yet have sufficient knowledge on the information or experience that currently exists in the other riparian countries, and felt that efforts should be made to find out what they can learn. Site visits could be conducted to help in this regard, while impact studies of watershed management programmes - case studies from watersheds around the region - would also help information exchange. Such sharing of data might help the region understand and plan for future changes caused by possibilities such as upstream dams and global warming.

Viet Nam

In terms of priorities, the team felt that a clear central policy is needed in Viet Nam. A WSM decree would formalise co-ordination between the two ministries that manage this sector. Regarding existing legislation, the 2005 Environment Law and other policies need to be applied in co-ordination to all facets of integrated WSM. Other priorities include training of staff, public awareness campaigns, and development of innovative approaches for sustainable financing of WSM, for example through Payment for Environmental Services mechanisms Viet Nam is already moving towards such a decree on co-ordination between bodies, and it is also working to make local people

aware of the importance of their participation. Also as matters of urgency, human resources require development from the top down while a policy framework is needed at the fourth level of administration, the commune.

International exchange was held to be very important. It was noted that Thailand has much experience in river-basin management - and the team felt that Viet Nam could learn from the Thais, especially regarding stakeholder participation. Staff in Viet Nam also need to learn about monitoring and the improvement of WSM systems, adopting and enforcing national standards, and economic analysis within watersheds. Additional measures that the team would like to see tackled include the strengthening of the regional database (felt to be the task of the MRC), the enhancement of bilateral co-operation (especially with Cambodia regarding the Seson River), and the provision of up-to-date information on policy formulation for sustainable WSM.

In Short

- Co-ordination across sectors needs improving everywhere
- Consolidation of existing laws is vital
- All countries want to learn from each other
- Stakeholder participation is emphasised in Thailand
- The private sector has a role to play
- Training is a priority in all countries
- Self-financing mechanism are needed for sustainability

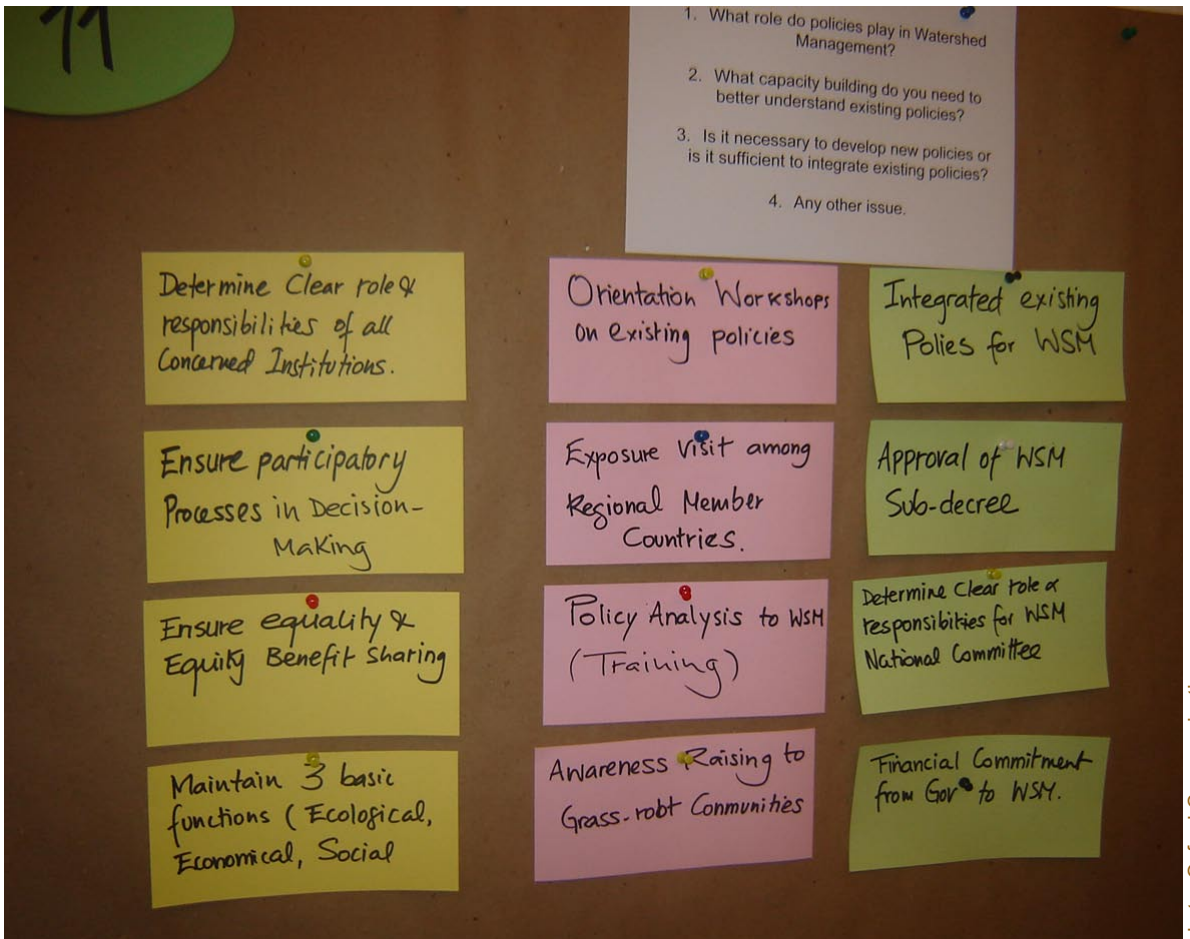


photo: Oxford Communications

Sample results from Alumni table discussions, Session 1

Session 3

Best Practices in Policy Development



The New Generation of Watershed Management Programmes

Thomas Hofer, UN-FAO

Mr Hofer briefly introduced the concept of watersheds and FAO's involvement in developing their management worldwide. Over the course of this extensive experience, a shift in watershed management approaches can be detected. This follows an extensive review of WSM carried out between 2002 and 2005 by FAO and international partners.

The differences between these 'old' and 'new' generations of WSM programmes, summarised on the slide opposite, can be summarised into four main themes:


Old Characteristics	New Characteristics
Integrated management	Embedded management
Participatory management	Collaborative management
Current practice	Desirable practice
Project format	Service format

The findings of this review are currently being tested in four locations across the globe, and the presenter was hopeful that the MRC member nations will be interested in adopting this approach. FAO recommends a national watershed management programme framework that runs through four phases: PILOT, ORIENTATION, CONSOLIDATION, and EXPANSION.

People are encouraged to reassess general and accepted truisms regarding watershed management based on holistic assessments and scientific evidence. It is then often found that small-scale and localised human activities have very little effect on watersheds and river systems when compared to natural

Findings in brief

Old approach	New approach
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treating symptoms • Insufficient attention to capacity building • Lack of clear focus • Sector-based Research, Education, Training (R,E,T) • Top-down or bottom-up • Intuition and common myths • Short-term planning and financing • Women involvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treating underlying causes • Government capacity and institutional arrangements • Interventions with focus on water • Multi-disciplinary R,E,T • Bottom-up and top-down • Scientific and tested evidence • Long-term planning and financing • Gender balance in decision-making • Capacity building, communication • Climate change impacts • New financing mechanisms (PES)



processes that occur over a wide terrain. This realisation can cause people to rethink commonly held misconceptions. The presentation drew a number of conclusions at various levels, some of which are summarised below.

Area	Conclusions
Policy issues	Policy and legal reforms create an institutional framework for implementation WSM is a multi-purpose approach that should be used across different sectors Water is the core focus of WSM policies
Knowledge management and science	Science, research and local knowledge should be combined to accompany policies and programmes Pilot activities, indicators and shared information are vital
Institutional issues	WSM mechanisms should exist at different levels, including legislative, judicial and executive Long-term financing mechanisms are needed.
Capacity-building issues	Human resource development is required at all levels Training must be practical, using demonstration/pilot sites Public awareness needs raising through visual evidence

A New Approach to Watershed Management: Experiences from Thailand

Dr Amnat Wongbandit

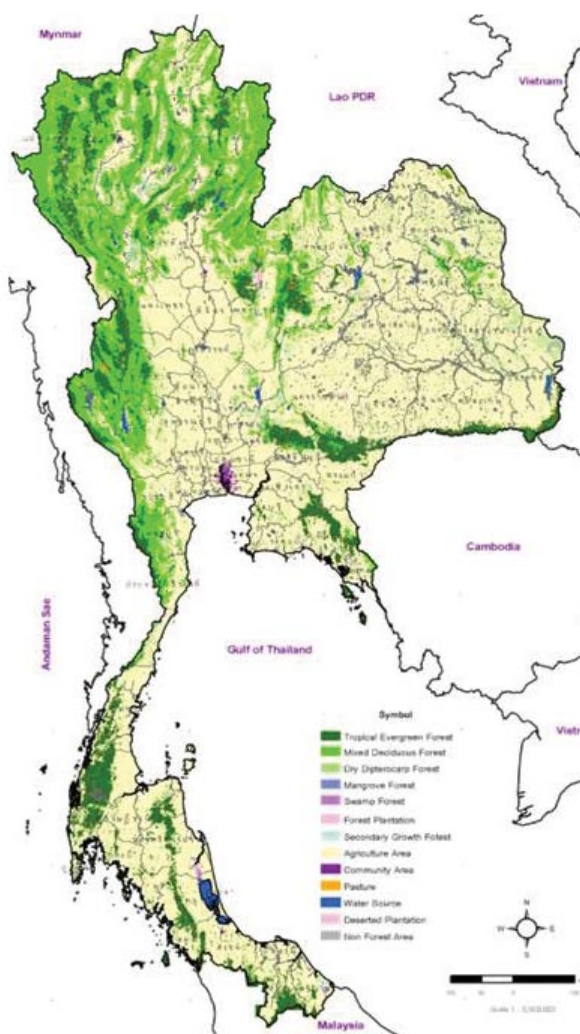
In recent years the concept of watershed management seems to have departed from the old idea that socio-economic development can be part of watershed management through the participation of local people and the intervention of technicians. The new approach to watershed management regards watershed management as part of a wider socio-economic development process that depends on the participation of all stakeholders. At the same time the functions of a river basin depend upon negotiation among the stakeholders. As a result such functions may vary from basin to basin.

*the stakeholders themselves have
an opportunity to determine the
functions of their river basins*

The new approach to watershed management is acceptable to Thailand since this concept responds to the real needs of people conducting their lives. It would be unrealistic to ask people to conserve natural resources and the environment when their basic needs are still not met. Another interesting feature of the new approach is that all the stakeholders themselves have an opportunity to determine the functions of their river basins, with data and information supplied by technical people. In fact Thailand adopted this new approach some time ago, as shown by the existence of this concept in key policy documents such as the Tenth National Economic and Social Development Plan 2007-2011, the Policies and Plans for the Enhancement and Conservation of National Environmental Quality 1997-2016, and the Environmental Quality Management Plan 2007-2011.

Regarding decision-making processes, according to Thai law the prime minister, ministers, and heads of government agencies both in national and provincial administrations are generally able to make decisions without consulting stakeholders, but in practice many decisions on important matters are scrutinised through public consultation. At the local level, local people and all stakeholders usually have a role in decision-making processes.

Despite the inclusion of the new approach to watershed management within policy, Thailand still has several hurdles to overcome. These include the wide discretion that government agencies enjoy in setting up goals and objectives, their interest in expanding their own power and budgets, the financial dependency of the local governments on the central administration, a lack of understanding of the benefits of watershed management, and a consequential lack of political will.



The 'Old' and the 'New' Approach to Watershed Management

Country table discussions revolved around two main questions:

- How does the new generation of WSM ideas fit into national strategies and concepts, provincial and district concepts and planning processes?
- What are next steps in accommodating this new generation of WSM ideas in your country?

Cambodia

The capacity building aspect of this new approach fits particularly well with our national strategies. Human resource development is a high priority for the government. Actually, Cambodian decision-making and planning processes are already moving towards the 'new generation' style through the bottom-up and decentralisation approaches encouraged from the central level. Thus, local governments and local communities are being empowered, but more financial resources are required if this process is to continue as far as we would like it to.

*policy development must have clear beneficiaries
and therefore our overriding priority is creation of
guidelines and a clear framework for WSM*

Current policy aims to build upon existing human resources development initiatives to ensure that HRD efforts filter out across the stakeholders required to set up proper integrated WSM bodies. The new provincial WSM committees in Cambodia are a step in the direction of the new approach, as they represent institutional and capacity development across local communities. All policy development must have clear beneficiaries and therefore our overriding priority is creation of guidelines and a clear framework for WSM.

Lao PDR

These new ideas fit with our thinking in the Lao PDR - the government is in favour of them. These approaches can fit with our existing policies, even though these are at present directed more towards an integrated approach rather than the recommended embedded focus on natural resource capital assets. Poverty alleviation remains our utmost priority and in rural areas much household income comes from 'wild' land - 85% of our population is rural. Lao land policy stipulates the use of watersheds as a land planning unit and land-use planning is essential to policy. Water is essential to land and therefore forest is crucial. The government has set a target of 70% tree cover in mountainous rural areas. Where hydropower and eco-tourism are planned, this figure needs to be higher. An ongoing obstacle to implementing existing policy and any new direction is a lack of capacity, and this is especially true in rural areas.

While both top-down and bottom-up approaches are already employed in the Lao PDR, we have many committees that talk without taking action and we need to move towards a lead agency to clarify processes. A forum for information sharing is also needed. Other steps that should be taken sooner rather than later include further survey of the exact status of watershed land and the quest for sustainable auto-financing mechanisms that will allow Lao people to fund our own WSM activities and move away from current donor dependence. Research and development are also required to improve administration tools and to show how to encourage the private sector to use best practices that protect both people and the environment.



photo: Oxford Communications

Thailand

As Dr Amnat pointed out, some of these approaches are already in use in Thailand. The organisational framework is in place, from the national Constitution down to the local level and incorporating 25 River Basin Masterplans (see figure below). The system is highly participatory. Provincial levels must follow the national strategy in guaranteeing water quality, combating soil erosion etc. However, the local level is the implementing unit so stakeholders are really involved in all fields. Moreover, civil society was heavily involved in planning the administration system. Public participation is key to the approval of all activities.



Laws that will be very pertinent to WSM issues are currently being debated. If they are accepted, they will increase the 'New Generation' aspects of policy in Thailand. Implementing these measures, such as the Common Forestry Law, and new Water Law will require more capacity building (river basin organisations can help with this) and the process of reorganising to accommodate any new laws will help to clarify the roles and responsibilities at each level and within each agency.

Viet Nam

The 'new generation' is built into existing policies but not yet sufficiently. For example, some attention has been paid to the underlying causes of environmental degradation, and to capacity building at local levels, but neither of these initiatives has gone far enough to meet the standards described to us today. In particular, participation is still not sufficient, especially regarding involvement of the private sector. Another major deficiency is that the legal framework is not well integrated. Planning is currently confined to the various sectors of administration and does not cut across them well, and this affects long-term vision in watershed management. While watershed issues are given some consideration in basin development planning, they are not yet fully integrated into this process.

More understanding of the functions of watershed areas is needed in Viet Nam. Training centres for WSM could help in this regard and would also help fulfil other requirements. As well as legal and institutional measures, financial and monitoring systems are also needed to bring local watershed management up to the standard where it could then be fully integrated into national decision-making processes.

In Short

- These new ideas are in line with current thinking and can fit with our existing policies
- Improved co-ordination is needed to fully implement the new generation
- The four countries show varying levels of centralisation and coordination on these issues
- National priorities are not the same and these will determine the way forward

Session 4 Summary of Day One Discussions



What Insights Were Gained on Day 1?

Members of each major group of participants were invited to share their reflections on the discussions made during the first day of the meeting.

Viet Nam

We heard today about a new generation and an old generation in WSM: an old approach and the next approach. To us, what will not change is that watershed management cannot be separated from river management. If we can manage watersheds properly then we are greatly assisting national and regional development: watersheds are often home to poor communities and ethnic minority groups. Development and capacity building in these areas are thus very valuable. WSM is cross-cutting: addressing this issue has benefits in many areas. The national legal framework for WSM is very important and developing this will help the evolution of the rule of law across society.

The 'new generation' seems to be a practical way to improve many parts of society. It will help us learn things such as how to increase private sector involvement in development. It will generate information on how to do this and we need to stimulate co-ordination and discussion on this. We need to draft a decree to get this going. We would also like to see better networking between watershed management and river management and between different countries, The MRC Basin Development Plan should take care of this.

International Consultant

It is very clear that different countries have individual approaches - this is a good thing. WSM is a cross-cutting co-ordinating activity. Different people have different ways of doing things and co-ordinating these is not easy. How can we create guidelines and processes to co-ordinate regional, national, even

watershed level activities? Even if you do find a way in one watershed, do not regard it as a magic solution that you can impose everywhere.

WSM is a planning process rather than simple 'planning'. It must contribute to overall socio-economic growth. Balance is required between development and resource protection/rehabilitation. Sometimes this balance is missing. Our job is to inject knowledge about watershed processes to inform decision-makers at the political level.

FAO

I have been much impressed by the quality of the discussion and the energy on display today. It has given me a good insight into the Mekong region. The development of policy here is very complex: you all have to consider the various sectors in each country as well as the trans-boundary issues. Exchange of information and discussion here can only help with policy formulation. Scaling up small successes can also be a good tool for moving forward.

Lao PDR

Watershed management is closely linked with river management. Initially the WSM approach proved very difficult for this programme but it seems to now be approved by all the riparian countries due to the combined efforts of the MRC and GTZ.

We in Laos use both top-down and bottom-up approaches to planning - when we use each depends on the situation. Hydropower is our top development priority and WSM will be crucial to the success of this. We need to improve our legal framework: there is too much misunderstanding prevalent at the moment. We have some problems in common with both Thailand and Cambodia.

Laos in particular lacks knowledge on integrated watershed resources management. This meeting highlights the importance of transboundary issues. We all have to be aware of upstream and downstream issues - as a country on the middle part of the river, Laos can understand this well.

Thailand

Emphasis is needed on three main issues at the watershed level:

1. All participants should understand processes before embarking on activities;
2. More knowledge is needed: this should be provided through an information management programme;
3. Human resource development is always fundamental.

The grassroots process has already improved but capacity building is needed - it can be supplied by riverbasin organisations. The opening of learning centres is a step in the right direction but more links are required between the grassroots and policy-making levels. These can be developed under the umbrella of UN and river-basin organisations.

Cologne University, Centre for Technology in Tropical Countries

I report some of the comments from the Alumni tables. WSM is about co-ordination: power must be shared to achieve a balance. This co-ordination must occur at different levels, from top to bottom, for example from project management to a state planning level. Training and awareness raising are also very important. They guarantee integration of awareness at different levels and should cover all sectors.

The importance of information, and quality of information, should not be underestimated. Otherwise decision making suffers. Data standards need to be defined otherwise data sharing does not work. Data management is thus required to ensure that information is 'sound'. Without these steps, co-ordination becomes very difficult.

Cambodia

WSM plays a significant role in economic development, especially for Cambodia as our lands are surrounded by mountains. We have been thinking about WSM for a long time but have not yet created a specific policy on this. Rather, each sector has its own approach to the matter.

Government initiatives are now receiving outside support, which is encouraging us to put more emphasis on WSM. Provincial WSM committees are now being set up. It has been very good to listen to the knowledge gained in other countries today and we are enjoying the opportunity to share best practices and experience.



photo: Oxford Communications

Sample Alumni table discussion results, Session 4

In Short

Benefits of Programme Implementation

- If we can manage watersheds properly then we are greatly assisting national and regional development
- Adopting the 'new generation' approach to WSM will help us learn things such as how to increase private sector involvement in development
- The opening of learning centres is a step in the right direction
- Government initiatives are now receiving outside support, which is encouraging us to put more emphasis on WSM

Steps to be Taken to Continue the Progress

- The national legal framework for WSM is very important and developing this will help evolution of the rule of law across society
- Our job is to inject knowledge about watershed processes to inform decision-makers at the political level
- Scaling up small successes can be a good tool for moving forward
- WSM is about co-ordination: power must be shared to achieve a balance
- The importance of information, and quality of information, should not be underestimated

Needs of Member States

- We would like to see better networking between watershed management and river management and between different countries
- We need to improve our legal framework: there is too much misunderstanding prevalent at the moment
- More links are required between the grassroots and policy-making levels - these can be developed under the umbrella of UN and river-basin organisations
- Capacity building is vital

Session 5

Institutional Development: Studies from the Region



Institutional Development

An introduction by Cornelis van Tuyl

Watershed management can be defined as the **co-ordinated multi-stakeholder management of land, water and other resources within a region, in order to maintain the watershed functions**. The question analysed in this section is how this co-ordinated multi-stakeholder management can be institutionalised. It must be realised that there is no blueprint for doing this effectively and efficiently. Each country and possibly even every watershed may have a different situation which needs an individual approach.

Most countries have a system in which co-ordination occurs between the levels of government (national, provincial and local). What seems to be more difficult is horizontal co-ordination and co-operation between different districts, especially when they are situated in different provinces. Since watershed boundaries do not follow administrative borders, cross administrative-border dialogues need to be institutionalised. Communication processes for this context are not yet in place. The same situation exists with multi-stakeholder dialogues. With a few exceptions, these multi-stakeholder dialogues are not common. Firstly, dialogue between stakeholders with a common understanding and/or interest is rarely practised. Setting up such dialogues could be useful in encouraging better understanding between and representation of groups.

Secondly, dialogue between the various stakeholders - that is from different government organisations, from the private sector, from local organisations or interest/user groups and individuals with different interests - are currently not practised at all. Sharing views and interests between these different stakeholders will promote understanding of their individual interests and expectations, and so point the way to a process of consensus building.

The specific purpose of watershed management institutions is to guide co-ordinated multi-stakeholder management towards the formulation of a watershed-specific blueprint or agenda that will be integrated into overall national socio-economic development processes. Thus watershed management is not a planning process in itself, but rather a cross-administrative and cross-sectoral dialogue which is designed to inject information and guidance into existing planning processes so that maintenance of watershed functions, goods and services are sufficiently included within plans and activities. Consequently, monitoring systems need to be in place as well.

The above-mentioned dialogues, along with the formulation of blueprints, agendas and monitoring activities, need to be organised and institutionalised. This is the background for the discussions in this section.

Reflections and case studies on the development of watershed committees were provided by representatives from each riparian country. Brief summaries of these follow.

Viet Nam

The Srepok River Basin straddles Viet Nam's southern border with Cambodia, covering four provinces and over 18,000 km in Viet Nam alone. Priority issues in the area include the seasonal opposites of drought and

Follow-up steps

- Continue building capacity among local people, especially for communes and districts within the pilot area. Between now and early 2008 two consultation workshops will be organised for officials in Lak and Krong Bong districts.
- MRC-GTZ input regarding an international consultant in institutional development: A draft of WSC mandates will be available by January 2008 and distributed to stakeholders, NWG, VNMC. The final mandates will be available before March 2008.
- The WSC will be established and capacity building carried out for its members between March and November 2008.
- We hope that MRC-GTZ Watershed Management Programme can continue to support WSM in Phase 3 in the areas of capacity building, database, information systems, strategic framework and guidelines.

flooding and under-developed transport infrastructure. An agreement to set up the Srepok River Basin Council was made between the four Vietnamese provinces within the basin in 2005 and the organisation was recognised by the government the following year. The first meeting of the council was organised in November 2007.

The structure of the organisation follows normal administrative lines within the local government system, but the council will support the establishment of independent watershed committees (WSCs) under its jurisdiction. Four WSCs have been planned so far. These are already benefiting from training courses and attending consultation sessions with agencies in the capital, Hanoi, under the MRC-GTZ programme. The RBO and the WSCs enjoy government support and it is hoped that with further support these bodies can develop into true WSM bodies for the good of the people and the environment within the Srepok River Basin.

Thailand

This comparative case study looked at two watershed committees in northeast Thailand: the Nam Mong and the Nam Pung river basins, known respectively as the Mekong 2T and Mekong 3T riverbasin organisations (RBOs). The most salient

difference lies in the way these RBOs were set up: The Mekong 2T RBO was selected from representatives of multi-stakeholder groups at administrative boundary levels (province, district and sub-district). The Mekong 3T RBO

Which institutional structure of RBO is more effective with regard to IWRM?

Preliminary Result:

- Nam Mong seems to be the more effective river basin organisation with regard to the applied criteria

Main factors for effectiveness

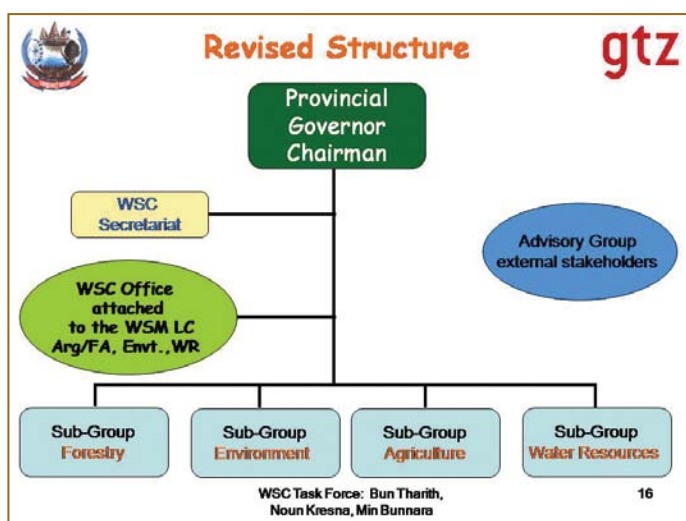
- Composition of stakeholders
- Ratio of multi-stakeholder.
- Area cover of representatives.
- People's participation.
- Empowerment by central Govt.
- Public relations and communications.
- Sharing knowledge within committee network.

representatives meanwhile again came from multi-stakeholder groups, but this time from the sub-river basin area committees. The 2T (Nam Mong) model was judged to be the most effective, as shown by the slide. Based on this comparison, the presenter was able to make recommendations on how to strengthen RBOs and raise awareness in order to improve participation in watershed committees.

Cambodia

The Cambodian presentation introduced the pilot watershed committee in Siem Reap province. This is a pioneering initiative within the country and one of the committee directors was part of the team attending the meeting. The organisation is chaired by the provincial governor, who takes a keen personal interest in its progress. Other members include local government officials from concerned sectors and representatives from district and commune levels. It has already been decided that a reformed structure is needed to create subgroups that can concentrate on managing specific sectors (see slide).

The Siem Reap WSC has set up a task force to manage this and other processes, and has also established a WSM Learning Centre, scheduled to open before the end of 2007. The committee needs further assistance in capacity building and information management and is looking to define clear procedures and participatory



approaches to watershed management that will benefit all its stakeholders and serve as a model for watersheds across the rest of Cambodia.

Lao PDR

A general account of watershed management in the Lao PDR was presented by the country's Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, which plays a leading role in promoting WSM at provincial and district levels. This process fits with overall government and Party policy in the Lao PDR, which is following a general process of decentralisation. The point was made that a course in WSM is now available at the National University of Laos.



The presentation emphasised that planning must take into account both political administrative boundaries and physical watershed boundaries. A complex planning net that takes into account the various processes and relevant agencies has been produced and is summarised in the slide below. This procedure aims to involve all stakeholders, from the village level up to central government agencies. The process is currently being piloted in the Nam Ngum watershed, which is large and complex and so provides a very thorough testing ground. Sub-watershed development plans have so far been drawn up for 16 of the 21 sub-watersheds within the Nam Ngum catchment area, and 11 of these are already being implemented.

Development of Watershed Institutions

The following plenary discussion was guided by two questions, and each country team reported back to the floor on the results of their discussions.

- Do we really need watershed institutions: why or why not?
- Which are opportunities and which are the challenges for watershed institutions in the near future?

Cambodia

It was felt that Cambodia does not need another formal institution because there are already three or four bodies working on watershed issues at national level. This existing structure, of national watershed guidelines at central level and watershed committees at provincial level, can be retained. Cambodia needs to clarify the roles and responsibilities of each agency, and the ministries of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, and of Water Resources, are getting together to set the agenda on this. Local watershed committees are very important for setting the local agenda. They are representative of local people and, being small, are flexible.

Government support, financially and in policy formulation, is lacking at the local level and this is a definite challenge. There is a risk that institutions may overlap or contradict key ministries involved in WSM. Therefore one ministry alone should take the lead in co-ordinating with the other ministries.

Lao PDR

Watershed institutions are considered important in the Lao PDR and we have been developing them since 1989. They are key to managing natural resources, which - in a hilly country like this one - must be carefully maintained to

guarantee livelihoods and sustainable water supply, and so avoid disasters. Land, water, agriculture and biodiversity are all interlinked and need managing through organisations that can cut across the normal administrative boundaries between these fields.

*watershed institutions
are key to managing
natural resources*

We are in the process of opening new organisations on natural resources and the environment. These present an opportunity for progress and should allow us to move very fast on water resource policy implementation. We will also have to build on the experience and capacity of the existing organisations as we make the transition to the new bodies. Regarding financial resources, there is already an operational Environmental Protection Fund in place.

Thailand

We really need an umbrella watershed institution to help integrate all the different bodies currently involved: a lead agency is vital. Such a body must provide a service: people living in watersheds must be given a chance to participate in decisions relating to their living environment.

*a lead agency is vital
- but it must give people a
chance to participate*

A new water law is on the way in Thailand. If passed this will pave the way for new water management practices at all levels, including in financial administration. This will present both a challenge and an opportunity.

Viet Nam

New concepts can best be integrated through an umbrella agency that supports all other involved bodies and provides training at local levels. Integrated water resource management and other initiatives are supported by international donors. We are making use of this opportunity as this assistance helps us bring these new developments to local levels.

Challenges lie in the economics of establishing WSM across the country, and in the difficulties of integrating this work into existing mechanisms and processes.

Session 6

Institutional Development: Best Practices - Other Basins



Watershed Management - Linking the Australian Experience to Mekong Countries

Peter Millington

The Murray Darling (MD) basin covers a million square kilometres in eastern and southern Australia, and includes parts of four States and one Territory. In that sense it is similar to the lower Mekong basin with its four countries. 15 major rivers flow through the basin and into the two main rivers - the Murray and the Darling. This is also similar to the Mekong system of tributary rivers.

Institutional arrangements for water resource management exist at three levels:

- river basin level - the Murray Darling Basin Commission (like the MRC);
- sub-basin/valley level - there are 15 sub-basins/valleys in the MD basin; each has a 'sub-basin management committee' (similar to the 25 sub-basin committees in Thailand);
- watershed level - committees or groups (both formal and informal); made up of districts, towns, villages and farmers, in a single watershed.

The 15 sub-basin committees have about 12 members from the valley community, agencies and special interest groups; the chair can be an agency or a person. The committees have a legal mandate that specifies roles, functions and responsibilities; agencies have an advisory role but the community stakeholders have overall control of the committee's work plan. They develop sub-basin natural resource strategic plans, help lower level 'watershed committees', allocate monies, and audit implementation of their strategic plans.

Within each of these 15 sub-basins there are up to ten lower level 'watershed management committees or groups'. There is no 'one magic solution' as to

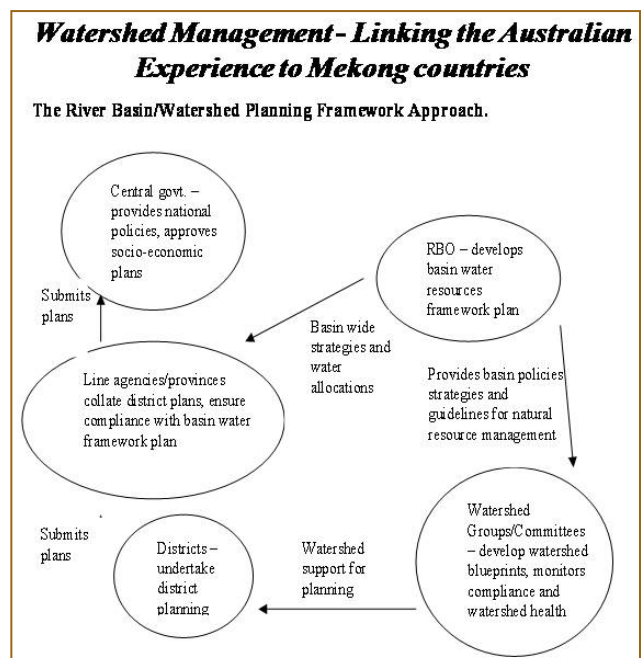
how these committees are created: some are formally created by the district administration, others are set up by farmers and villages coming together formally and informally. However, the approach adopted by these groups is basically the same. They

- Agree on how to constitute the group (formal or informal);
- Decide on its role - *what is it going to do?*
- Undertake a resource inventory or audit of the watershed - *understanding the resource issues and opportunities;*
- Identify the priority resource issues to study.

Some groups then present these priorities to the relevant line agencies for further study and await the results, whilst others:

- Identify the socio-economic development goals relating to the watershed (short and long term);
- Compare the development goals with the resource inventory - *where are the 'tensions and constraints' and the opportunities for further development consistent with watershed resource protection goals?*
- Identify study priority areas to clarify development versus watershed protection issues;
- Develop watershed condition 'targets' against which to monitor impacts of future development.

The key factor in the success of these arrangements from river basin down to watershed level has been the high level of awareness that has been developed by rural



communities, farmers and villagers over the last 20 years. For each watershed group it has been essential to,

- Improve the knowledge of the community concerning the condition of watershed resources;
- Involve the community at all levels in the planning and in the implementation of programmes - 'bottom up' watershed management;
- Ask the community to help identify gaps in knowledge about the watershed, how to fill the gaps, and how to develop low cost monitoring of the resource 'health' that communities can undertake;
- Help the farmers and villages to develop smaller 'catchment' groups to solve local problems e.g. 'Landcare/forest committees' for upland areas, 'Rivercare committees' for parts of rivers, 'Town/village water improvement groups' to address town water quality and quantity problems, 'Land and Water Management Committees' for irrigation areas.

Lessons for the Mekong Countries

- Determine the options for two or more districts sharing a watershed;
- Setting up co-ordination - agreeing on procedures and processes;
- First tasks - a 'watershed profile'; a 'resource inventory';
- Sharing and understanding the socio-economic goals of all the districts in the watershed;
- Compare the development goals with the resource inventory - pressures, tensions and conflicts;
- Identify key areas that need to be studied to resolve conflicts - priority for the watershed committee;
- Setting targets for the watershed - resource condition, development patterns and impacts;
- Monitoring - reporting on the watershed issues.

Key Questions

- What role do the provinces play in setting up multi-district watershed groups? *What is the role of central agencies ? Which agency is the 'resource manager' that sets guidelines and policies, and which agencies are the 'watershed planners' (the 'doers')?*
- How should watershed management priorities be linked to integrated planning at the provincial level etc? *Who ensures that these priorities are taken into account?*
- Who will support the committees/groups in collecting resource information?
- How can watershed committees inter-act with other similar groups - *learning by doing and comparing?*
- How can awareness be raised of watershed problems? *How do campaigns reach schools, villages, towns, farmer groups and provincial leaders?*

*Effective watershed management groups
with a clear role and with informed and
active partnerships with agencies = clean,
healthy and productive watersheds*

Country Table Discussions

Following the presentation on international river basin experience, country table discussions were held on institutional development, centred around the following questions:

- What are the current constraints/requirements in establishing/improving watershed groups or committees?
- Who will support groups/committees in collecting & analysing information?
- What are the options and needs for networking between watershed institutions within and outside the region?
- After having seen possible 2008 activities what next steps are possible?

Cambodia

Cambodia already has a water management committee and a working group. These two bodies need institutional improvements in:

- Capacity building, especially in monitoring and evaluation;
- Clear roles and responsibilities vis-à-vis line agencies;
- A co-ordination and networking mechanism (this has already been executed but should be upgraded);
- Database establishment (within the Learning Centre).

The existing government line agencies will provide the main support to information collection and analysis but academic institutions also have a role to play in this, particularly in supplying inputs to the Learning Centre that will open at the end of this year. The financial support of the government and donors will be needed.

Conferences and meetings such as this one are key to networking and exchanging information between institutions within the region and E-communications

can help us stay in contact on a permanent basis. Regarding institutions further afield, exchange visits provide a good opportunity to learn from the wealth of experience available around different parts of the world.

*conferences and meetings such as this one are
key to networking and exchanging information
between institutions within the region*

In 2008 we aim to draw up a code of practice or conduct for all agencies involved in watershed management and to instigate data collection and analysis activities that should then remain constant. Watershed guidelines need to be prepared - this lies within the continued finalisation of policy analysis in the country. Capacity building efforts will be ongoing.

Lao PDR

In the Lao PDR we are searching for ways of transferring donor-supported pilot projects into a wider national programme of action. At present the lack of a legal framework hinders comprehension of the possibilities for watershed institutions. Another problem is human capacity, especially in the secretariat: decision makers often do not have enough technical knowledge. This means there is a general lack of focus on natural resources at policy level and not enough follow up on the recommendations of technical staff. Across the board we suffer a lack of scientific background information, especially in research and development: research is given low priority, except in the new Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF) department.

We currently rely on donor assistance to collect and analyse information: the Lao PDR needs to develop its own specialisation. We can draw on data from many sectors, e.g. by using Environmental Impact Assessments from the

mining industry or hydro-power projects. There are many of these but they are not yet compiled together. We need a specialised and independent research organisation to provide support and vision to decision makers. Adequate resources must be directed to this - there is currently a problem keeping staff for such tasks. They tend to be moved on to other governmental departments.

Internal networking is currently insufficient: better co-ordination is needed, even within MAF's own agencies. Much information is already generated but it is not managed or transmitted adequately. New committees and agencies have been and are being set up and networking must be established between these.

*we need a specialised and independent
research organisation to provide support
and vision to decision makers*

In the near future a review of the various pilot projects should be conducted as part of steps to create a national system. Individual Watershed Committees can then be set up along the lines of the pilot projects, as at Nam Ton for example.

Thailand

Various committees are currently operating in Thailand - with different expertise and interests. There is thus a lack of co-ordination. Financial support to these committees and human capacity within them are insufficient. At the watershed level there are not enough learning opportunities for some local communities. To improve, the present bodies must be flexible - and they will need support from the political centre.

Information provision and use is a matter of vertical co-ordination. The government can create databases for committees, who will use and maintain them with ongoing government support. Networking, meanwhile, could be improved by a simple decision-support framework, by communication tools such as websites, and by study and research of individual basins. Creating a 'basin curriculum' to help local committees and working groups begin and structure such research would be very helpful. Regarding next steps, these various groups would also benefit from capacity building but no needs analysis has yet been conducted to define exactly how this should occur.

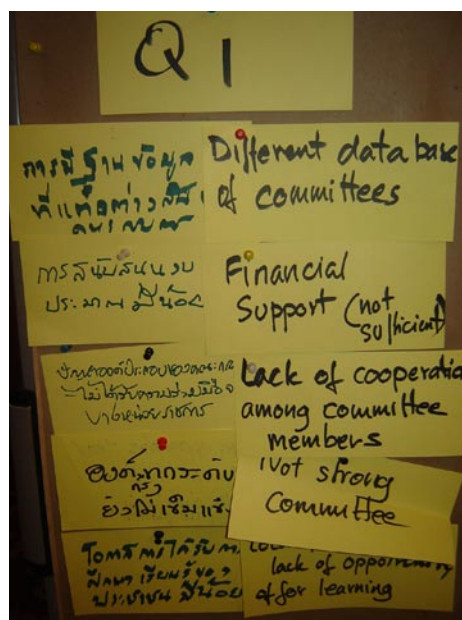


photo: Oxford Communications

Viet Nam

The main constraints in Viet Nam to establishing or improving watershed groups and committees are as follows:

- As a developing country, conflicts still occur that may hinder co-operation;
- Local people may not be aware of their roles in WSM;
- The capacity of management staff is too low to fully implement activities;
- There is a lack of funds for sustainable activities.

The country team had various ideas for dealing with these constraints:

- Through a legal framework and institutions;
- By strengthening staff capacity;
- With contributions from stakeholders and agencies: government, provinces (through Payment for Environmental Services), and the donor community.

Data on watersheds currently comes from various channels. The government plays a very important role in this, working through various agencies and departments to supply and analyse information. Sources include universities, working groups of scientists, policy makers and local communities.

To integrate watershed management, horizontal and vertical linkages are needed between line agencies and communities. Endorsement of all strategies must come from a high central authority, while mandates and responsibilities must be clear. Viet Nam can learn from others in this, for example from the Australian experience.

To integrate WSM, horizontal and vertical linkages are needed between line agencies and communities.

Immediate aims are dominated by the need for a government decree giving approval to establish institutions. Along with this Viet Nam should develop a mandate for these institutions and increase capacity building initiatives among the people who will be involved with them. We need to identify funding sources for this human resource development - GTZ will be crucial in this! Database work is also on the horizon, along with creation of monitoring systems for all planning and implementation activities.

Session 7

Institutional Development



Best Practices in Institutional Development in the Danube River Basin

Lars Ribbe

Major advances regarding integrated water resources management have been made in the Danube river basin since the foundation of the Danube Commission and the implementation of the Water Framework Directive.

The Danube River originates from a source in southern Germany and runs for 2,888 km until it reaches the Black Sea through its delta in Romania and Ukraine. The river basin covers an area of 801,463 km² (almost the same as the Mekong's ~800,000 km

while its average discharge is around 6,500 m³s⁻¹ (less than half the Mekong's 14,500 m³s⁻¹). The Danube basin is home to 81 million people living in 19 countries, making it the most international basin in the world. The Mekong basin has 70 million people living in six countries. Many of the Danube



countries are members of the European Union (EU). There are wide economic disparities between the countries with GDP (PPP per capita) ranging from US\$38,000 in Austria to \$3,000 in Moldova. Major water related economic sectors are: water supply for settlements, industry and irrigation, hydropower generation, navigation, fisheries and nature protection/tourism. Water quality issues, especially those related to nutrient inputs, are of major concern in the Danube basin.

Regarding the institutional development framework for river basin management two aspects should be emphasised: the setting up of the Danube Convention and the Water Framework Directive (WFD). The Convention was signed in 1995 and led to the establishment of the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (see www.icpdr.org), which opened its Secretariat in 1999 in Vienna. The Convention's objective is to promote co-operation and co-ordination between the Danube riparian countries in order to achieve pollution control, protect river ecology, minimise the impacts of floods, and foster information exchange and common data management. 14 riparian countries and the EU are contracting parties to the Convention.

The WFD is the common legal framework for water management in the whole EU. Its clear objective is to reach *good status* in all water bodies in the member states by the year 2015. This objective is to be reached by a common implementation strategy foreseeing the delineation and characterisation of river basin districts (by 2004), establishment of monitoring systems by 2006 and the definition of river basin management plans by 2009. If the good status objective is not reached by 2015, further six-year river basin management cycles will follow. Other important characteristics of the WFD include:

- Applies to all water bodies (ground, surface, coastal);
- Requires involving stakeholders and informing the public;
- Use of economic instruments to value water and to compare measures;
- Definition of one competent authority for each river basin district;
- The EU Commission supports the implementation process through guidance documents on relevant topics, information management (see Water Information System for Europe, <http://water.europa.eu/>) and other instruments;
- The EU Commission controls the implementation of the WFD through reporting obligations and evaluation mechanisms

Implementation of the WFD at Danube basin scale is co-ordinated by the ICPDR. The working scale at this level only reports on watersheds with an area of over 4,000 km² and lakes of 100 km². Detailed reports on the Danube river basin management districts are submitted by the competent authorities of member states. In general, a subsidiary principle applies to implementation of the WFD: the main responsibility for implementing river basin management measures lies at local and regional level. It should be noted that even the countries which are not members of the EU are following the EU directive: this shows a certain consensus regarding a common water policy.

The ICPDR submitted the Danube Roof Report on the whole basin to the Commission in 2004, revised the trans-national monitoring network in 2006, and is currently co-ordinating the establishment of the river basin management plan. An intensive process of stakeholder involvement and public information is accompanying this task.

A first basin-wide stakeholder conference was held in June 2005 in Budapest, Hungary. The first drafts of the programme of measures are now under discussion: implementation is scheduled to start in 2009.

The various steps of WFD implementation in the Danube Basin can serve as useful case studies and study of the tools and instruments provided by the European Commission through the Common Implementation Strategy may be valuable in the context of the Mekong River basin management.



Policy and Institutional Development and Networking

The final discussions of the workshop centred around two questions provided to the four country tables:

- What support do you expect from the MRC-GTZ Co-operation Programme to support your policy development and institutional development?
- On which activity/issue would you like to network with other countries?

Cambodia

A national meeting was held on the issues of policy and institutional development on November 1st just prior to this workshop. It was agreed that we need to strengthen capacity in:

- Policy analysis;
- WSM guidelines;
- A code of conduct.

Work on these is ongoing, but technical and financial support are needed to continue the process. Efforts are also required in national and international STE, plus regional bodies have a strong role to play in the co-ordination of information and knowledge sharing.

*setting up regional WSM Learning
Centres would enable sharing of
documentation and information*

Capacity building and knowledge-sharing are critical areas where we would encourage interaction with our partners in the Mekong region and also outside. On policy and institutional development Cambodia can learn valuable lessons from our neighbours: there is definitely room for benefit-sharing mechanisms through co-operation with Viet Nam, Laos and Thailand. Setting up regional WSM Learning Centres would enable sharing of documentation and information.

Lao PDR

External support to development of detailed legislation and frameworks would enable the Lao PDR to create a national network of watershed organisations that will protect existing natural resources. The MRC-GTZ programme could also provide invaluable assistance in the following areas:

- Strengthening research and education institutions related to WSM, e.g. the National Agriculture and Forestry Research Institute and the new Land Management Committee;
- Development of sustainable financial mechanisms, of an information system to help with planning and monitoring of watershed health, and of public awareness materials and campaigns;
- Developing the Nam Ton watershed as a learning centre and a model that can be scaled up nationally;
- Promotion of information and experience-sharing nationally, regionally and internationally;
- Facilitation of investment projects: how to access loans and investors, especially for new and existing hydropower projects.

*a national network of watershed
organisations would protect our
existing natural resources*

More exchange is required on research, and this could be stimulated through student exchange programmes. The Lao participants were also very impressed by the findings presented by the guests from the Murray-Darling River basin and the Danube region, and felt that study tours to such areas would be of great benefit to planners in this region. Networking should continue through regional meetings such as this one, through a regional information network, and through exchange and development of public awareness materials.

Thailand

MRC-GTZ support would be particularly appreciated in the area of policy analysis, specifically on WSM through a basin development plan that follows national policy. In addition, capacity building is needed within watershed committees on the matter of IWRM, and on organisation and management and sustainable agriculture within RBOs. To promote women's participation in this sector, the Programme could help set up a women's network on natural resource management and watershed management. Review should be made of the 1995 MRC agreement while a site visit to the Danube river basin would help Thai planners understand institutional development .

to promote women's participation in this sector, the Programme could help set up a women's network on NRM and WSM

Co-operation between the riparian countries could create a 'Mekong Standard' for watershed area classification over the four countries and a joint Mekong policy based on the 1995 Agreement. We would also be keen to see further sharing of WSM experience, local knowledge and literature, for example through a 'Mekong writer's award' or competition. Thailand also agrees with the idea of setting up a four-country regional learning centre.

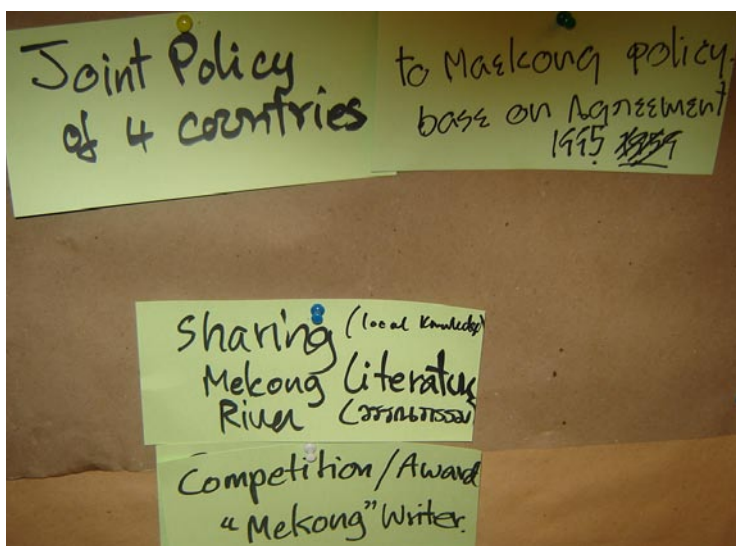


photo: Oxford Communications

Viet Nam

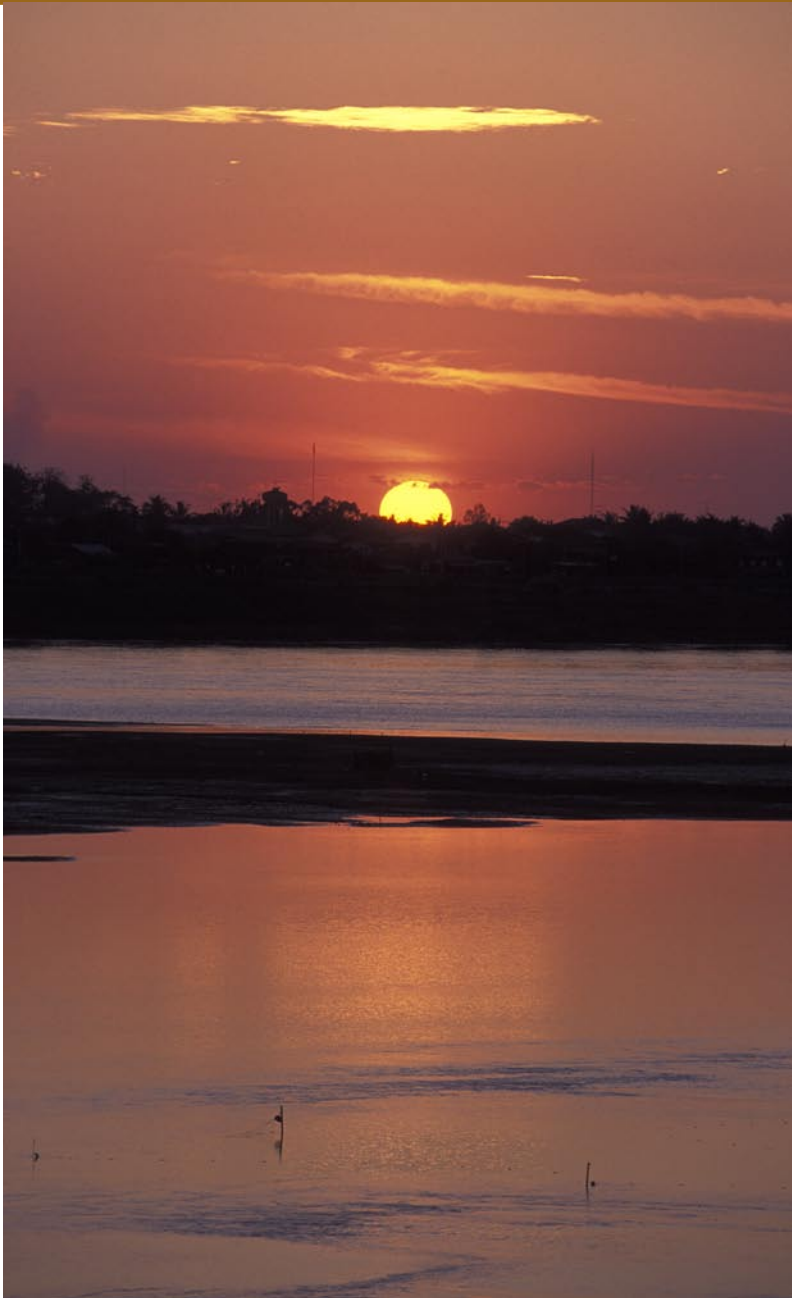
Viet Nam is looking for assistance with the activities planned for 2008:

- The process of developing a decree on inter-ministerial co-ordination;
- The elaboration of watershed committee mandates;
- Integrated capacity building on WSM at various levels: both long-term and short-term;
- Setting up a learning centre focused on WSM;
- Improving/updating our databases and assessing the status of national natural resources;
- Analysing the economic value of watershed areas: approaching the economic angle of WSM benefits.

Networking opportunities lie in exchange on IWSM and integrated river basin management and in setting up working mechanisms for WSM institutions.

Exchange programmes to share experience, between officials, WSM members and academics or students would also be valuable.

Session 8 Wrapping Up



Summary Discussion Day 2

Leading questions:

- What role can regional consultation play in improving national watershed management institutions?
- What new insights did you gain today?
- What are the next steps on the regional level to improve watershed management institutional development?

Viet Nam

We from Viet Nam ask the German government and GTZ to continue supporting this valuable programme. Within the programme different countries may have different requests. In Viet Nam our main priority is developing a decree on co-ordination. If GTZ can support the drafting of such a decree it would be very important to us, as we are still a poor country. We also need to learn how to develop agriculture in a sustainable way, and need assistance with institutional development. The different countries have varying institutional arrangements and this programme has the experience and expertise to help them all individually.

Setting up learning centres at three different levels - regional, national and local - would be of great benefit. This can help set up a network of scientists, including international experts, to support all of us.

At present we have only high-level dialogue and sometimes this is not flexible enough to achieve the real exchange that we all desire. We need to expand our dialogue processes. There are many different programmes within the MRC - the expertise is very wide. We should be able to integrate all this into

watershed management. We can learn at the macro-level (e.g. within the BDP) from programmes such as the Danube River Basin, but when it comes to local WSM we have to work out how to learn for ourselves.

Cambodia

I have gained much knowledge on WSM over the last two days, learning about the best practices and experience from the different countries represented here. We were also fortunate to gain knowledge from Australia and Europe. These experts have brought valuable lessons here.

I would encourage the MRC, GTZ and all the national Mekong committees to continue supporting this important dialogue process, which allows us to take this experience home and share it with colleagues there. The aim is to improve our provincial watershed management committee in Siam Reap and then scale it up nationally. The knowledge gained here will be invaluable in that process.

Under this programme we are helped to develop our own national policies and practices and to then share the best of these regionally to improve the perspectives of us all. Further co-operation in this matter can only enhance watershed management in our region.

Thailand

Each country is equal in these discussions. We share and gain experience from each other and hope that we can apply what we have learned here to what we do in our own country. To make this happen we need to keep the channels of discussion and dialogue open.

In Thailand we have been busy collecting local knowledge on watersheds and I think this has been happening elsewhere in the region too. It would be good if such knowledge can be presented and shared at the next forum.

Two issues seem crucial to me in supporting development across the basin. These are institutional and human resource development. Priority should be given to the first of these as institutions can then support the development of their own staff and clients.

Our equality is a strength that enables us to work together to advance development across the basin.

Lao PDR

Watershed management has been under discussion for a long time. It seemed to lose momentum for a while but has definitely been revived here at this meeting.

We have learned some amazing lessons from the Murray Darling and Danube river basins. Sustainable local funding lessons are at play there and we must learn from these examples. To do this, all of us will require effective management schemes. We have to start small and then grow. We could, for example, begin with technical working groups. By having more meetings and information sharing we could grow from there. Local-level support is essential, and we need to meet more than once a year to keep the momentum going. Country-specific technical expertise would also be of great help.

Cologne University, Centre for Technology in Tropical Countries

This has been a very professional meeting with lots of good quality water-related discussion. A dynamic process is obviously going on here and we are very happy to build a supporting bridge between the Mekong countries and Europe.

This is a complex process and huge challenges lie ahead. A good legislative framework is essential for moving ideas at supra-national level to actions at the local level. Mechanisms are also needed to make this whole process financially sustainable. This is a problem faced all over the world.

My university's task is to generate or accumulate knowledge and transmit it. This process is happening here. I am very happy to hear about your plans for learning centres. Yes, I would agree with you, they are needed at all levels. We can exchange ideas and contribute to learning if specific objectives are identified.

Consultant: Lao PDR

Things are changing in the Lao PDR - we now have experts all around the country. We still need support however.

WSM is a matter of co-ordination and there is no single blueprint for that - it must be adapted to the situation in each area.

Capacity building is a key issue for all our countries. The learning centres will also be crucial. Knowledge is always important, but transmission of the knowledge is equally important.

Consultant: Thailand

All four countries need to have watershed institutions. The form can vary from country to country and even from watershed to watershed. The exact shape of these bodies will depend on the way of life and situation in each area.

Despite our differences we can learn from each other. The process of this learning should continue indefinitely. That exchange will be crucial to making our projects sustainable - this work should not finish when a donor decides it is time to pull out.



photo: Oxford Communications

The Last Word

Cornelis van Tuyll

In a preparatory meeting for this workshop a few weeks ago we said "let's try to achieve momentum". It was felt that if we could get movement on some key common issues then we could then continue in a positive direction across all four countries.

Together we have found momentum on dialogue, with a little inspiration from outside. We have all been impressed with the achievements in Australia and the Danube. It must be remembered though that in the Murray-Darling Basin and the Danube region they have 25 years of experience in watershed management. We have some way to go in the Mekong Basin before we catch up.

Only four years ago the agenda in this region was rather different. We are now witnessing a shift towards policy and institutional development. Previously these issues were considered private national business. Now there is much more sharing and learning from each other in these vital areas, which can only be of benefit to all the people in the Mekong Basin.

I would like to thank you all for your interest over the last two days, and also for your active participation. We have built a bridge between the experience inside and outside the region, and I know for a fact that the outsiders have learned a lot. I am sure we can sustain the momentum gained and continue to learn from each other so that this knowledge can be translated into concrete improvements for the future.

Thank you all.

Post Meeting



Field Trip

On the third day participants meeting embarked on a field trip to the Nam Ton pilot watershed in the Lao PDR. The main purpose was to discuss and to share experience on several topics important for watershed management on the ground. First, ecological integrity and connectivity of streams were discussed at the mouth of the Nam Ton. Then the participants moved to the banks of the Mekong River, the direct link between the riparian countries, to address transboundary issues. Finally, matters related to forest management, agriculture and other kinds of land use inside the watershed were discussed in the setting of an upland rice field and rubber plantation.

Traditional Lao food was served for lunch at the district office of Ban Phialat, Sangthong district. After lunch Mr Sibountham, the district governor of Sangthong, Mr Souraxay Phoumavong, Deputy Director of the LNMC, and Dr Cornelis van Tuyll, Programme Coordinator for MRC-GTZ WSMP, opened the Lao PDR's first information watershed management office . This office will collect data and analyse for watershed management, and make it available to interested individuals. The trip ended with a cruise along the Mekong River, giving participants the opportunity to discuss their impressions of the day and the workshop as a whole.



Photo: Ha Pham Tan



Maps: (a) Nam Ton Watershed and (b) field trip route:



Site No. 1: Pakton

Pakton is the mouth of Nam Ton River, where it empties into the Mekong River. Impacts from activities inside the watershed can be observed at this point in altered water quality and water quantity parameters. The mouth of a river, its connection to a subsequent water body, is ecologically very important. Many fish species depend on migrations from a big to a smaller river for feeding and reproduction. If barriers close to the river mouth inhibit migration, fish stocks in both river systems might be endangered.

Site No. 2: Mekong River

The strong dependence of people on the Mekong presents a number of complex, interrelated issues for transboundary governance and development. In the lower basin, 70% of inhabitants are subsistence farmers living by traditional rice cultivation, fishing and the gathering of forest products. There is a growing need for integrated basin management to address food insecurity, rural poverty, environmental degradation, threats to biodiversity, and tensions among multiple users. All this requires good coordination and communication among the riparian countries. The MRC, which represents four of the basin's riparian countries, is facilitating this process.

Site No. 3: Upland rice field and rubber plantation

About a quarter of the Lao population practise shifting cultivation (mainly of upland rice) on a third of the country's cropped area. Logging and burning of forest areas and intensification of the cropping cycle due to a shortage of agricultural land causes degradation of the forest ecosystem and is reducing the sustainability of traditional farming systems. These changes in the drainage area then alter hydrology in watershed streams. Increased regional demand is leading to rubber tree plantations in many parts of the Lao PDR. If they are to be sustainable, the locations of rubber plantations have to be carefully selected, and arrangements must be taken to protect water resources.

Information Office on Watershed Management

This Watershed Management Information Office is the first of two planned in the Lao PDR (the next will be in Hin Heup district of Vientiane province) and one of seven to be supported by the MRC-GTZ Watershed Management Programme in the MRC Member States. These offices are designed to raise awareness among local people of the importance of natural resources in general, and of water and watersheds in particular. The offices will provide information on the functions and services of the watershed, as well as on problems and challenges.



They will inform visitors of the principles, impacts, methods and tools which can be used to achieve sustainable watershed management and shall also offer special training for people working in watershed management.

Opening of first Lao Watershed Management Information Office
Photo: Lueder Cammann

The offices will act as communication platforms for all kind of data, knowledge and news on sustainable watershed management. It is hoped they will become gathering points for all people concerned with watershed management: local people, extension workers and planners can use them to become more involved and to make more sophisticated information available for professional needs. As the data and information so provided will be first hand and from the specific watershed it can also be used for planning local strategies for flood/drought mitigation, climate change adaptation and related issues. Tourists looking for specific information on stream and watershed ecology will also be welcome at the offices and any resulting increase in ecotourism will be of benefit to the host villages.

All Watershed Management Information Offices will be equipped with a set of useful maps of the area (administration, topography, population, land and forest cover, drainage and water catchments etc.) as well as satellite images. Furthermore there will be computers, LCD-projectors and other training equipment. A water quality test tool kit will be available for monitoring water quality in rivers and streams.

Short report on the DAAD/InWEnt Alumni meeting

After the conference and field trip of November 5-7, the DAAD and InWEnt Alumni met for a two-day seminar. The aim was to exchange experience in watershed management and rural development, gained in the years since the participants had returned to their home countries after completing their study in Germany. The alumni came from Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand, Myanmar, Indonesia and Bangladesh.

During the first day impressions of the conference and field trip were presented and discussed. The leading questions were:

- What did you learn that you can use in your future work?
- What role do science, education and capacity building play in policy and institutional development for watershed management?
- What were the key impressions of the field trip?"

The general feedback of the participants was very positive. They appreciated this chance to take part in the regional consultation meeting and several participants noted that the complexities of the involvement of stakeholders from different countries and levels had become clear to them. Many participants were interested gaining insights into the working procedure and projects of the Mekong River Commission. The field trip and inauguration of the



photo: Günther Straub

Watershed Learning Centre was seen as a useful and interesting complementary activity to the conference.

In addition, each participant prepared either a poster or oral presentation on his or her current field of activity, project or institution. A poster presentation in the form of an information market closed the first day.

List of presentations during the alumni seminar

Name	Country	Topic
Sita Yuliasuti Amijaya	Indonesia	Community settlements along Code river - Lesson from Kampung Code in Yogyakarta, Indonesia
Khamdy Bounmany	Lao PDR	Water Management in the Lao PDR
Christia Meidiana	Indonesia	Annual flood protection concept in areas along Brantas Riverbank, Malang, East Java, Indonesia
Ratan Kumar Ghosh	Bangladesh	Living with floods: how to cope with disaster
Md. Mominul Haque	Bangladesh	Challenges for sustainable watershed management
Hoang Thi Thanh Thuy	Viet Nam	Bioremediation for contaminated aquatic system: problems and perspectives of the Saigon-Dongnai river basin
Khin Zar Kyaw	Myanmar	Contribution of cotton as a risk-releasing crop to dry zone farming
Ratnaningtyas B Lestari	Indonesia	Raising awareness of water pollution in the Upper Citarum River
Ali Md. Hazrat	Bangladesh	Decision Support System(DSS) for Teesta Watershed Management
Kim Minh Nguyen Thi	Viet Nam	Water resource monitoring
Nu Nu Htwe	Myanmar	Case study: Review of Mu River Basin Management
Nu Nu Tin	Myanmar	Case study on flood management in the Sittaung River Basin
Pham Thi Ngoc Lan	Viet Nam	Water quality degradation in some river basins in the middle of Viet Nam – problems and solutions
San San Moe	Myanmar	Current activities of Inle Lake watershed management in Shan State, Myanmar
Douangpy Wayakone	Lao PDR	Main issues of improved watershed management in Lao PDR

On the second day further presentations were given by the DAAD Alumni, while the InWEnt alumni discussed the benefits and critical points of their training in Germany.

Finally the participants came back together to talk about future networking activities. A German Alumni Association has recently been established in Laos and it was felt that this initiative should be replicated in Vietnam and Cambodia. Ms Nguyen Thi Nguyet of the Vietnam Institute for Water Resources Research and Mr. Lor Lytour of the Cambodian Royal University of Agriculture agreed to revitalise alumni activities in their countries. It was also suggested that a regional water alumni network be established for Southeast Asia. Mr Toan from the University of Hue agreed to design an initial website for this alumni platform. The meeting ended with a dinner in the Don Chan Garden restaurant.

It is worthwhile mentioning that this was the first time that DAAD and InWEnt alumni had met together. All participants appreciated this combination and recommended that the two groups join together again at the next regional alumni meeting.



photo: Günther Straub

List of Participants

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Mr Bun Tharith

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Mr So Than

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