

Review of protected area and development in the countries of the lower Mekong River Region

First Regional Workshop, 6-7 May 2002, Mekong River Commission, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Background

The Review of Protected Areas (PAs) and development is being undertaken by the Lower Mekong River countries – Thailand, Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam – led by their respective protected areas management agencies in partnership with other sector agencies and international organisations.

Collectively these countries have more than 13 per cent of their area in national systems of protected areas. The proportion is increasing as more land and sea territory is brought under protected area management. Over the next ten years this national and world heritage estate of biological and cultural resources is likely to expand to cover more than 15 per cent of the Mekong River region, including areas in Yunnan Province of China and Myanmar. This extraordinary reservoir of natural resources is of critical importance to economic development of countries of the region.

Review objectives: After ten years of intensive protected area experience, the four countries are cooperating in a comprehensive review analysing the relationship between these areas and socio-economic development. The review will help to raise awareness of the economic importance of protected areas, strengthen financial and budgetary support for their effective management, and encourage integrated approaches to development planning involving protected area managers, economic development planners, and planners responsible for sectoral development projects and plans.

The objectives of the review are to:

1. Examine the effectiveness of protected areas management in four countries of the lower Mekong River region with respect to meeting both economic development and conservation objectives.
2. Analyse the relationship between economic planning processes and institutional arrangements and those for protected areas and biodiversity conservation at national and local levels and explore ways for beneficial integration between the two systems.
3. Identify the main lessons from the past ten years of experience in protected area development and management in the four riverine countries and relate this experience to new and innovative approaches being taken elsewhere in the world.
4. Define practical strategies and make concrete recommendations to enhance the contribution of protected areas to national and regional economic development.

Review activities: The review began in September 2001 with a series of national round tables and small group meetings involving a wide cross section of government and non government organisations. During the past four months teams of national experts have been preparing background papers exploring the relationship between key economic sectors and protected areas and lessons papers assessing national and global experience in PA planning and management. They have also been carrying out detailed field studies in each country to gather comprehensive information on the links between specific groups of protected areas and their surrounding economic landscape.

These activities have involved regular meetings of the Protected Areas and Development (PAD) core groups that bring together important national agencies and experts to provide technical guidance. They have led to the formation of national PAD networks of several hundred individuals who are being kept informed and invited to participate in the review.

Introduction to the first regional workshop

The first regional PAD workshop hosted by MRC provided an opportunity for representatives of the national review teams to share the lessons of the past decade and to discuss the results of the field studies. This report summarises the presentations and discussions at the workshop.

Government and institutional representatives from Cambodia, Lao PDR, Vietnam, Thailand and Myanmar attended the workshop along with representatives from UNDP, ADB, WWF, IUCN, Fauna and Flora International, SDC, Danida, ICLAM, Wetlands International, ICEM and the MRC Secretariat. Review team members and the MRC Environment Program provided technical support (a list of participants appears as Annex 1)

Objectives of workshop

The objectives of the workshop were:

1. To exchange views on the lessons learned from the past decade of experience with protected areas and development in the region.
2. To present and discuss the findings of the four field studies on the economic contributions of protected areas.
3. To define key national and regional issues for further analysis and attention through the review.
4. To identify the most appropriate ways to integrate PA economic benefits and development planning at national, sector and local level.

Process of the workshop

The workshop ran over two days. The first day included a keynote address on “Protected Areas as Production Centres in the Economy”, and presentations on the field studies in the four countries. The working groups on day one focused on three questions to guide discussion:

1. What are the key lessons from the field study reports for the Region.
2. How can the contributions of PAs to development be enhanced?
3. How can we achieve better integration of protected areas into the local, national and regional development process?

On the second day, each country delegation presented the results of its analysis of the national experience with protected areas. The four draft country lessons papers were presented. Convening the workshop in Phnom Penh provided an opportunity to have a more in depth presentation on Cambodia’s experience, including views from a number of key development sectors. The working groups and discussions on day two focused on two questions:

1. What are the key regional issues for protected areas and economic planning (eg. water, trade, and transboundary ecosystems)?
2. What are the strategies for dealing with these issues on a regional scale?

Summary of Workshop Proceedings

(the workshop program appears as Annex 2)

Opening Session

Welcome Remarks – Dr. Mok Mareth, Minister for Environment, Cambodia (Annex 3).

In his welcoming speech, the Minister explained how the Review is changing our view of protected areas - from places locked up and isolated from the economy to crucial assets productively linked to the surrounding development landscape. He observed that key sectors are beginning to recognise the benefits they receive from protected areas and to invest in them. Sectors such as fisheries and forestry are adopting protection as central to their development strategies. The Minister also highlighted the need to increase the investment for protection of natural systems and resources. Cambodia, he said is committed to protected areas and to increasing investments in them from all sectors and users.

Opening Speech – Joern Kristensen, CEO, MRC (Annex 4).

In his opening speech, the CEO of MRC stressed the importance of natural resources of the lower Mekong region to local communities and the need for effective management and wise use of the national systems of protected areas to be integrated into the Basin Development Plan.

Key note address - Dr. David James, “Protected Areas as Production Centres in the Economy”

Senior economist on the PAD review team delivered the keynote address. . He presented an overview of the contribution of protected areas to economic welfare and development. Dr James outlined the key socio-economic features of the four LMR countries and showed how protected areas are essential and important components of the natural resource management regimes. He pointed out that the LMR national economies are not capturing the full range of benefits – ie the goods and services – that protected areas provide. He went on to show how the various sectors of agriculture, fisheries, forestry, water supply, power generation, industry and tourism benefited from the direct uses of goods and services from protected areas.

Dr James explained the implications of price distortions for protected areas and advocated the need for recognising their development contribution in national accounts. He also showed how different management regimes of spatial planning and land-use zoning and management in protected areas can bring various benefits to different users. He concluded his presentation by highlighting the importance of protected areas for national and regional economies with examples from the water resources, fisheries and energy sectors.

Field study results

Government delegations from Laos, Vietnam, Thailand and Cambodia made presentations on the results of the field studies in their countries. Each presented the socio-economic context of the study sites, the various direct and indirect benefits they provide at the local, regional, national and global scales, and provided the results of economic valuations of PA benefits to selected sectors. In Lao PDR, these included the local value of forest products, the provincial value of watersheds, various development values at the national level and the global climate services. In Vietnam the case studies related to fishery production, irrigation and watershed protection, ecotourism, local livelihoods and flood protection. The Thailand case studies dealt with tourism and recreational benefits, NTFPs, ground water recharge, flood control, and fisheries. In Cambodia, the field study investigated PA benefits to local fishing communities, tourism, and for hydropower generation.

The case study presentations showed that conservation of protected areas is a sound development strategy and that a wide range of economic sectors benefits from and are supported by protected areas. These benefits need to be factored in to sector planning and budgets. The studies demonstrate that high development values justify greater investment in protected areas, as well as the importance of greater community involvement in collaborative management regimes.

Summary of Discussions Points

Day One: 6th May 2002

Direction and guidance for the PAD review arising from discussion of field study reports in panel sessions and working groups

Need to exercise caution in promoting the use of protected area services and products as a strategy for their conservation; the critical question is - are the uses sustainable? For example, NTFP and wildlife use. Similarly, are the ecological costs associated with hydropower development acceptable?

Need to link conservation with development – not just highlight economic benefits but also ensure that conservation of protected areas is the first priority.

Social and intangible development benefits should be recognised, not just those benefits with immediate monetary value – for example, educational, health and cultural values.

The costs of protected areas, particularly to local communities, also need to be taken into account.

Interdisciplinary teams involving park management and planning agencies are needed to assess the benefits of all PAs to development.

Site selection when applying the PA benefits field study methods nationally

Sites should be groups or clusters of protected areas, not individual sites – this allows PAs to be assessed within the linking development landscape.

More study sites should be within the LMR basin.

Are the study sites representative? Need to ensure pilot study sites reflects nationwide problems and a representative selection of ecosystems.

Understand the relevance of development policies to the PAs and their use eg decentralisation, poverty alleviation

Study process needs clear goals, objectives, target groups and methods.

Definition of “protected areas” and “development” should be clear and consistent – for example development is more than financial returns.

There is a limitation of data available; policy makers need to realise that collection of good data is imperative to good decision-making.

Government data is sometimes unreliable.

Need to use standard methodology; check quality and accuracy of information provided; be careful about assumptions and present them with caveats.

Need for rapid assessment techniques – decisions and plans need to be made in a timely way, otherwise unwise and uncontrolled development can overrun conservation assets.

Rapid assessment is facilitated if the results of studies done in other similar areas could be used to value benefits (eg. tourism visitation, rates, travel cost method) – these are called benefit transfer studies.

There is limited capacity. Agency staff will need training in this form of economic analysis.

Acknowledged importance of the field studies as discussed in panel sessions and working group discussions

They demonstrated the development benefits of protected areas.

Field study results provide information for local level officials to bring protected areas into the development planning process, because of the contributions they are making to the various productive sectors of the economy.

Examples of cooperation in management of shared marine and terrestrial ecosystems were provided.

Development of simple methods for valuing PAs and for assessing their development benefits.

Points raised on integrating PAs with economic planning

Location of protected areas on a national planning perspective is very relevant, especially in recognising and capturing the development benefits that are expected to flow?

There is insufficient collaboration between sectors to ensure that PA development benefits are maintained and enhanced – some sectors are benefiting but others are degrading those benefits.

Need to establish linkages with local communities, sectors, and other countries.

Establishment of protected areas management boards with representatives from key stakeholders to build capacity, and undertake poverty alleviation programs. Establish stakeholder committees at local and national levels in dealing with protected area issues.

Downstream users eg of water, should pay the cost of upstream management. This applies within and between countries.

Cross sector agreements and international law is needed to ensure the 'user pays'.

Major developers must pay realistic cost for PA services eg hydro schemes with PAs in Lao PDR, Vietnam and Cambodia.

Increase regional cooperation in protected area planning and management is needed, including through transboundary protected areas (TBPAS).

TBPAS provide the opportunity for large ecosystems to be protected under a common and agreed management regime; are separately managed by the countries involved; there is regular sharing of information and cooperation; cooperation is better between countries of equal power and capacity. Relevance and implications of development policies to protected areas and their use should be assessed and understood.

Use zonation to manage uses, apply the user-pays principle, establish local PA funds, and realise that not all protected areas and zones with each PA can generate tangible benefits.

The user pays principle should not only apply to domestic users but also international beneficiaries.

Major development projects need to consider upstream and downstream costs.

Need criteria for establishing protected areas – some countries have set aside very high percentage of land as protected areas but the levels of protection vary greatly. Ensuring representativeness and using different categories of protected areas is important in realising the full range of PA development benefits.

For each PA explore opportunities for revenue generation and ensure adequate investments flow from users. This will require adequate assessments of benefits and negotiated agreements with beneficiaries. Manage protected areas effectively in ways that ensure the right to livelihood of local people. There needs to be compensation for restrictions imposed on local subsistence users. There should be equity and local benefits – local people must have priority access. For example, there needs to be local benefit sharing, eg. tourism revenues with local communities.

Ensure use of EIA in development planning in and around protected areas. Need for EIA of all development projects in protected areas.

Building of simulation models to assess costs and benefits – whether tourism infrastructure development is being done in an environmental sensitive or destructive manner and the resultant impacts on tourism visitation to the area.

There is a need to create greater awareness of protected area benefits and users, in particular, need to be aware of the benefits they receive. The existing protected area system is not fully valued by the governments or decision-makers; the benefits analysis can be used as a tool to increase awareness. Awareness of PA values within Government and Development Sectors needs to be raised

Day Two: 7th May 2002

National lessons learned

Each country delegation presented the results of its analysis of the national experience with protected areas and development over the past ten years. The presentations provided an overview of the respective protected area systems, outlined important trends over the past ten years looking at the issues involved in linking protected areas with development on an achievements and remaining challenges basis.

Key issues covered in the Lao presentation included the comprehensive nature of the protected area system and the GoL's progressive policy of participatory management. The challenges highlighted were the economic situation in Lao PDR, the lack of capacity at all levels and the need for provincial planning to include the functions and linkage with protected areas. The significant potential for hydropower development in Lao PDR and the links with PAs was also outlined. Other development sectors discussed were ecotourism, NTFPs and Fisheries and the role of Integrated Conservation and Development Projects (ICDPs) in exploring ways of integrating PAs into economic planning.

The Thai presentation highlighted the growing environmental awareness in Thailand and the changes in legislation reflecting this public awareness. The current commitment to expand Thailand's PA system to cover 25% of the country was emphasised, as were initiative to monitor development impacts on protected areas and involve local communities in planning and managing protected areas. The zoning of protected areas for conservation and sustainable use was considered a critical strategy. Key achievements include the expansion of reserve system, development of management plans, community

involvement, the adoption of the concept of sustainable multiple use and the integration of PA management in the 5 year national development plan. Key challenges include management capacity, confused status of land ownership, designation of core zones in multiple use areas, good scientific knowledge for management, inconsistent legal framework, interdepartmental co-operation, development of good multiple use pilot projects and pressure for economic over environmental objectives.

The Vietnam presentation looked at the issues involved in integrating protected areas and economic planning, stakeholder participation in protected area management, adopting appropriate models for protected area management, filling knowledge gaps and funding mechanisms for protected areas. The key achievements were expansion of PA system, improved policy and planning framework, piloting of new approaches to stakeholder involvement, increased awareness and experience in implementing conservation projects, development of PA investment plans and institutional structures. Some key challenges include better integration of sectoral interests, engaging stakeholders, ecological viability of the many small and isolated PAs, diversifying management approaches, management capacity, scientific information base for managers and funding.

The Cambodian presentation highlighted the expansion of the PA system, the importance placed on poverty alleviation as a national priority, and the need for a national legal framework and policies on PAs. Key economic sectors receiving PA benefits were identified as forestry, fisheries, agriculture, tourism, water, energy, health, transport and rural development. Key achievements include the development of an institutional framework for PAs, piloting of community forests and fisheries, development of master plan for tourism and PAs, link between water supply and PAs, potential for hydro development, and the establishment of provincial and municipal PA conflict resolution sub committees. Some key challenges include illegal logging, hunting and NTFP collection, damaging fishing methods, over fishing, encroachment of agriculture, recognition of the benefits provided by PAs to water management, environmental assessment of hydro schemes, affect of transport infrastructure on PAs, co-management, and the wildlife trade.

Summary of key points raised during discussions following presentation of the national lessons papers.

Generally, there is a need to examine the selection criteria for protected areas across all countries – the number of categories allowing for varying intensities of use needs to be expanded. The controls on use are too restrictive and are contributing to the illegal degradation of the PA system rather than better conservation.

The involvement of the private sector through various systems of concessions in protected areas, for example for tourism, is in its infancy in the region and needs to be piloted and expanded.

In all countries, better cooperation between PA managers and line ministries is needed. In Cambodia, specific suggestions were the Ministry of Women's Affairs and the Ministry of Land Use Planning and Construction.

Information sharing among countries in the region concerning PAs is important, particularly for forest management and wildlife harvesting in and around PAs. The three key groups that should be involved in the development of sustainable use practices in the forestry sector are government agencies, private sector and local communities – each of these actors should be involved in the definition of regimes of protection and use for all forest systems.

The criteria for the siting of fish sanctuaries needs to be more fully developed in all countries. Some sanctuaries are not located to bring optimum benefits to the rehabilitation of fish stocks and habitats. For example, year-round water is not necessarily a useful criteria in areas where seasonal inundation is critical to breeding and nurseries.

It has been shown in commercial fisheries that by removing the largest individuals, you end up selecting for a smaller sized fish population and forcing younger spawning. Therefore, restrictions are needed so that the largest fish in the population are not removed. An example is with a striped bass fishery on the E. coast of the U.S. where there are minimum and maximum size limits.

Some governments have no clear legal framework for charging fees for nationals and internationals to enter protected areas and for the subsequent use of that revenue stream. In all four countries, most income from PA tourism is not invested back in the targeted protected areas.

The challenge of achieving both poverty reduction and conservation was of central concern to all countries. Increasingly, PAs would be assessed for the contribution they make to poverty reduction. A goal should be to have PA benefits and associated revenue flow back to the local communities as well as to effective conservation management. For this reason, the Government of Cambodia recently made

a commitment to setting aside up to 30% of all protected areas for co-management with local communities. In areas where there is tourism potential, ecotourism can provide job opportunities and alternative income streams. In Thailand, people who live around protected areas are able to sell items such as NTFPs to local and foreign tourists, as well as to serve as tourist guides. In Cambodia, approximately 60% of rangers are recruited from local communities. In one protected area, people can collect and sell NTFPs. There should be consideration by government regarding what portion of protected area revenues should flow back to local communities. Funds from protected areas should be used to support community infrastructure. In Vietnam, it is required by national legislation that whenever protected areas are proposed, they must include plans for resettlement of people and the establishment of buffer zones, in order to reduce pressure on the core zone. There are also government programmes for people in and around protected areas, such as rural credits and job creation. Thailand has a system for collecting revenues from protected area visitors and for collecting fines. These revenues are used for development of park facilities. With government decentralisation, 5% of this income also now goes to subdistricts. Protected areas can provide only limited income generation opportunities – false expectations should not be raised.

Summary of Workshop Discussions

Topic One: What are the key regional issues for protected areas and economic planning?

Migration of people. There is a rapidly increasing population within the region. People are moving from areas of dense populations and diminishing natural resources to those of relative natural resource wealth leading to increased impacts on protected areas. The effects of migration policies need to be assessed and managed.

In all countries there is poor inter-agency and inter-organisational collaboration on development policies and assessment. Protected areas are impacted by road developments, hydro-power development, resettlement schemes, logging and agriculture. There is a need for better communication and effective EIA for projects impacting on protected areas.

The role of PAs in management of water was identified as a key regional issue. An important consideration was the impacts of upstream users on downstream communities. For example the possible impacts on dams on migratory fish and the possible negative impacts of reduced river flows. Other key issues relating to water included pollution of rivers impacting on downstream users and the need for sharing of the costs for pollution control. With water it is clear that good resource management upstream through systems of protected areas will benefit downstream users. Should the cost of this management be shared when clearly the benefits are? For example the protection of nursery areas upstream clearly benefits downstream fishing communities. Collaboration is needed.

The growth of tourism to the region and the importance of PAs was identified as a key issue by the working groups. It was felt that there was a poor understanding of carrying capacity and the impacts of tourism on the environment, especially within PAs. Benefit sharing associated with tourism development is another key regional issue. Large tourism developments have provided little real benefits to local communities. There are very few if any good examples of benefit sharing from tourism developments in the region

Border areas contain a significant proportion of the regions protected areas. These areas offer both a challenge and a major opportunity to manage the natural system collaboratively. These areas also highlight a growing awareness for the need for international co-operation on the development of shared resources such as river systems and forests. There is a need for political will to achieve effective cross border management. There is also significant opportunities to begin cooperation on shared management concerns such as fire management, invasive species and wildlife trade.

Illegal activities including wildlife trade and logging were identified as continuing critical issues for protected areas. Illegal activity was regarded as a major contributor to the 'empty forest' syndrome where wildlife in forest areas has been overexploited. Laws often impact on poor local communities

but the “big men” or major players were above controls. Greater co-operation across borders is needed for enforcement activities.

There is a growing recognition of the importance of the local level in protected area management.

There is a history of conflict between protected area agencies and those who rely on protected areas for livelihood. There is a need for governments and communities to cooperate in achieving sustainable resource management in and around protected areas, including enforcement of agreed controls.

Topic Two: What are the strategies for dealing with these issues on a regional scale?

More extensive use and commitment to existing regional agreements and forums is needed. Many agreements have been ratified but not followed. Existing agreements and legislation need to be reviewed for their potential as a framework for cooperation on PA management (eg. Agreement on the Cooperation for the Sustainable Development of the Mekong River Basin, MRC, 1995 and the ASEAN Agreement on Conservation). Existing working groups and forums should be used to discuss regional issues relating to PA's eg. PAs and tourism through PATA.

A key strategy to deal with many of the regional issues is improved PA education, training and information exchange. The establishment of networks for exchange of information and experience, in particular is a practical and important first step. A range of options were discussed to improve this exchange of information; for example,

- Joint field study programs
- Intensive short training exercises linked with discussions about regional issues
- Sharing of information on PA impacts during development project design and implementation
- A network for regional protected areas research

The need to work at a local level in all countries on benefit sharing and co-management approaches.

Managers need to understand local community attitudes to PA resources and how they are used. Resources important to local welfare need to be clearly identified. The establishment of procedures to share benefits of PAs with local communities is an important strategy. Putting effective co-management in place with clearly outlined responsibilities and monitoring was also seen as a key to effective management

Closing remarks by Joern Kristensen, CEO, MRC Secretariat (Annex 5).

Conclusion

The workshop provided direction and guidance for the PAD review, particular by making specific recommendations relating to the important issues for inclusion in the national and regional reports. The workshop helped reinforce the regional PAD network established through the review and enhance ongoing exchange between its members. It raised awareness on the methods for gathering information on the economics of protected areas and the use of that information in influencing national and local development planning. The working group sessions at the workshop also provided advice on the most appropriate ways to integrate PA benefits into development planning.

Annex 2

**FIRST REGIONAL WORKSHOP ON
REVIEW OF PROTECTED AREAS AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE FOUR COUNTRIES OF
THE LOWER MEKONG RIVER REGION,
6-7 May 2002, Cambodiana Hotel,
Phnom Penh, Cambodia**

PROGRAMME

Master of Ceremony: Chin Samouth

Monday, 6 May 2002

08.00-08.30 **Registration**

08.30-09.10 **Opening session**

Welcome Remark by H.E. Dr Mok Mareth, Minister, Ministry of Environment and Vice Chairman of CNMC, Cambodia

Opening Remark by Joern Kristensen, CEO, Secretariat

The economic of protected areas

Chairman: Wallop Bangkurdpol, Co-Chairman Ian Campbell and Kishore Rao

09.10-09.30 *Protected areas as productive units of the economy – David James, Senior PAD review economist*

09.30-09.35 **Q&A**

Protected Areas and Development Field Studies: Result of each field study

09.35-10.55 **Lao PDR:** *The field study area encompasses two protected areas located in the northeast of Lao PDR: Nam Et and Phou Loei National Biodiversity Conservation Areas (NBCAs). Study report presented by Kaisorn Thanthathep, Senior Expert, Science, Environmental Research Institute Technology and Environment Agency*

09.55-10.00 **Q&A**

10.00-10.20 **Vietnam:** *A region in central Vietnam including Bach Ma National Park, Hai Van-Hon Son Tra: a proposed Marine Protected Area; Bac Hai Van National Park; Phong Dien Nature Reserve; and Tam Giang and Cau Hai Lagoon. Study report presented by Vu Huy Thu, Vice Director, Department of Fisheries Management and Protection, MoFi.*

10.20-10.25 **Q&A**

10.25-10.45 **Thailand:** *The Eastern Forests Complex (EFC) in Rayong and Chanthaburi provinces, south-east of Bangkok and including Khao Chamao-Khao Wong National Park; Koh Samet National Park; and the Kung Krabaen Bay Royal Development Project area. The study report presented by Piti Kantangkul, Head of Natural Resource Management Branch, Agriculture and Natural Resources Economic Development, Economic Faculty, Kasetsart University.*

10.45-10.50 **Q&A**

10.50-11.10 **Coffee Break**

- 11.10-11.30 **Cambodia:** *The field study site covers the South West Cluster Protected Areas, including Phnom Bokor, Preah Suramarit Kossamak (Kirirom), Preah Sihanouk (Ream) and Kep National Parks. Study report presented by Ros Seilava, Financial Controller, Ministry of Finance and Heng Sophearith, Environment Programme Coordinator, Cambodia National Mekong Committee.*
- 11.30-11.35 **Q&A**
- 11.35-12:00 **Panel Session**
Chairman: Kol Vathana, Co-Chairman: Savanh Chanthakoumane
Panelist: All presentors
- 12.00-13.00 *Lunch*
- 13.00-15.05 *Working Group Instruction/Discussion*
- 15.05-15.25 *Coffee Break*
- 15.25-16.00 *Working Group Presentation*
- 16.00-17.00 **Plenary Discussion**
Chairman: Robert McKinnon, Co-Chairman: Ros Seilava and Dale Whittington
- 18.00-20.00 *Reception Dinner*

Tuesday, 7 May 2002

Lessons learned from protected areas and development

Chairman: Vu Huy Thu, Co-Chairman: Jeremy Carew-Reid and Hans Guttman

- 08.10-08.30 **The Lao PDR experience with protected areas and development – achievements and challenges – presentation of lessons paper by Savanh Chanthakoumane, Senior Officer, Department of Forestry, MAF**
- 08.30-08.35 **Q&A**
- 08.35-08.55 **Water Resource Development and Protected Areas – Case Study of Hydro-power Development in Lao PDR by Odomsak Philavong, Project Officer, LNMC.**
- 09.55-09.00 **Q&A**
- 09.00-09.20 **The Vietnam experience with protected areas and development – achievements and challenges - presentation of lessons paper by Tran Quoc Bao, Head of Nature Conservation and Environment Protection Division, FDP/MARD**
- 09.20-09.25 **Q&A**
- 09.25-09.45 **The Thai experience with protected areas and development – achievements and challenges – presentation of lessons paper by Wallop Bangkurdpol**

- 09.45-09.50 Q&A
- 09.50-10.20 **Panel Session**
Chairman: Kaisorn Thanthathep, Co-Chairman: Dick Watling. Panelist: All presenters
- 10.20-10.40 Coffee Break**
- Cambodia focus session*
Chairman: Jeremy Carew Reid, Co-Chairman: Magnus Torell and Hans Guttman
- 10.40-11.00 **The Cambodian experience with protected areas and development – achievements and challenges** by Kol Vothana, Deputy Director, DNCP, MoE
- 11.00-11.05 Q&A
- 11.05-11.25 *Economic planning and protected areas* by Ros Seilava, Financial Controller, Ministry of Economy and Finance.
- 11.25-11.30 Q&A
- 11.30-11.55 *Forestry development and protected areas* by Lic Vuthy
- 11.55-12.00 Q&A
- 12.00-13.00 Lunch**
- 13.00-13.20 *Fisheries development and protected areas* by Pich Serey Vath
- 13.20-13.25 Q&A
- 13.25-13.55 **Panel Session**
Chairman: David James, Co-Chairman: Vu Huy Thu. Panelist: All presenters
- Working Group Session**
- 13.55-14.00 *Instructions to working groups*
- 14.00-15.00 *Working group session on integrating PAs with economic planning*
- 15.00-15.30 *Reports of working groups to plenary*
- 15.30-16.00 **Plenary discussion**
Chairman: Andrew Mittelman, Co-Chairman: Piti Kantangkul and Ros Seilava
- 16.00-16.15 Coffee Break**
- 16.15-16.35 **Wrap up**
Chairman: Ian Campbell, Co-Chairman: Jeremy Carew Reid and Hans Friederich
- 16.35-17.15 **Closing session**
Closing Remark by Joern Kristensen, CEO, Secretariat

Wednesday, 8 May 2002

Departure of Participants

Annex 3

Opening speech by His Excellency, Dr Mok Mereth, Minister for Environment

- ❑ Chief Executive Officer of the MRC, Mr Joern Kristensen
- ❑ Distinguished delegates from China, the Lao Peoples Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam
- ❑ Valued partners from the development assistance agencies of Australia, Denmark and Switzerland, and from UNDP
- ❑ Friends from international environmental organisations
- ❑ Ladies and Gentlemen

Welcome to our beautiful country.

It is a great pleasure for me to open this important regional meeting. It is a pleasure because the meeting represents a major watershed in our thinking about protected areas. We are in a transition. Protected areas have been viewed as places locked away and isolated from everything around them. We are now beginning to understand the complex and productive ways they are linked to the surrounding development landscape: And we are becoming more outward looking in our management of them. This shift in thinking and practice is essential for two reasons:

- ❑ First, it is the only way in which all sectors will recognise the benefits of protected areas and invest in them; and,
- ❑ Second, it allows us to increase the development benefits while better conserving the natural systems providing them.

This is not an easy transition. I have been Minister for Environment for ten years and for much of that time our national parks, wildlife sanctuaries and other protected areas have been under siege from development pressures. It has been a continuing battle to control the harvesting of timber, wildlife and other products for short term gain. It has been a battle to prevent protected areas from being steadily eaten away by encroachment, construction and infrastructure projects.

These problems are not going to disappear over night. But I genuinely believe that we are at a turning point. In Cambodia, we are starting to have very positive experiences by bringing local communities into the management of protected areas. Collaborative approaches are challenging, but they are bringing improved fish yields, forest products, and additional income from tourism and significant improvements in conservation in the areas concerned. We need to understand these development dividends better.

In fact protected areas managers need to begin talking the language of development, and marketing their products and services more effectively. This may seem a strange thing for an Environment Minister to say. But, opening all the doors and windows of our house, does not mean selling off all the furniture. In fact the reverse. The more that key sectors appreciate the development and economic returns they receive from protected areas, the more they are likely to lend budgetary support for their maintenance.

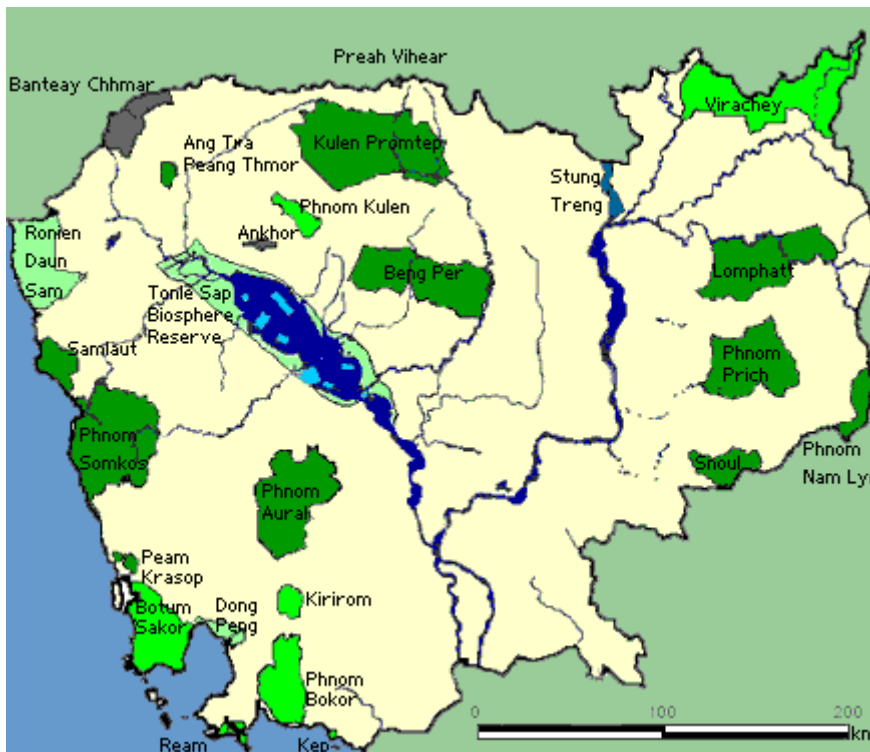
Already this is happening in Cambodia. Our fisheries and forestry agencies, for example, are promoting fish habitat sanctuaries, forest protection zones, gene pool conservation areas and other forms of protection as a key ingredient in their sector development plans. The same is true for tourism. And we are beginning to think through how similar approaches can be applied to rural development, industry and agriculture.

One thing is absolutely clear – and I am sure it is something that will be repeated frequently at this meeting – protection of our natural systems and resources is not receiving the investment required for the job. There is no question about our government's commitment to protected areas – Cambodia has one of the largest systems in the world, now covering over 20% of the land area. That is a remarkable

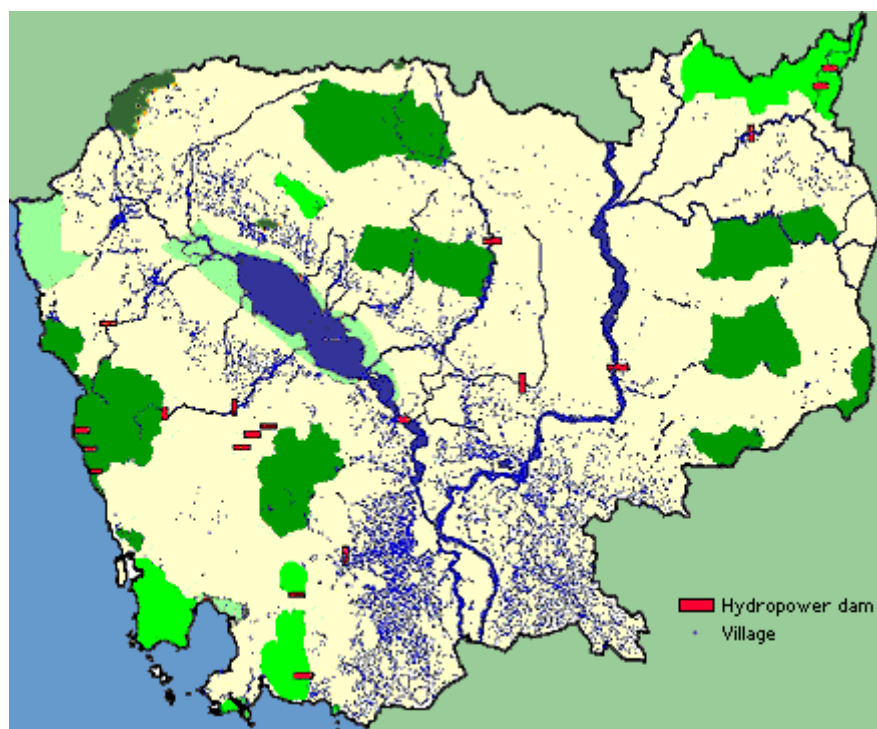
achievement through a period of relative instability. But that commitment is not fully translated into budget share, which in 2001 was 0.18% of national expenditure. This will need to change if the growing contribution of protected areas to national and local development is to continue. The source of that additional investment will need to come from all sectors and “users”.

Let me finish, by showing you an interesting set of maps of Cambodia that demonstrate the opportunities and challenges we are facing. They relate our protected areas to population. It is a sequence I know that you will all identify with in your own countries.

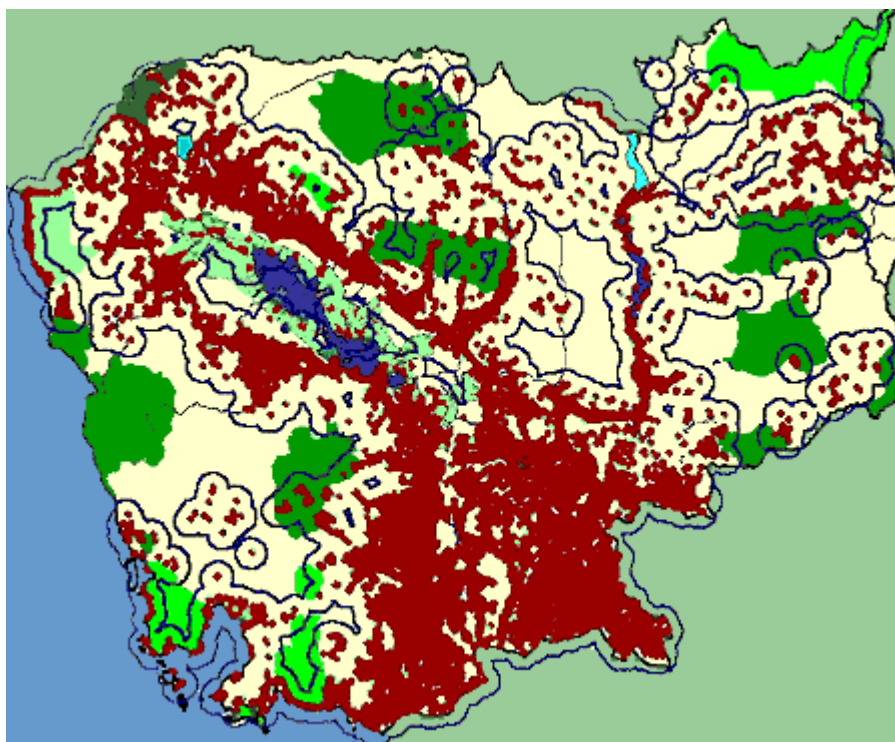
SLIDE 1: Here is our growing protected area system covering most of the country’s ecosystem types.



SLIDE 2: Now overlaid on that, lets look at where most people live. Each dot on this map represents a village.



SLIDE 3: Taking ten kilometres as the zone of influence of each village we can get a sense of the current intensity of pressure which local communities are placing on the protected areas system.



Cambodia's population is increasing by 2.4% so the pressure is only going to increase. I see this trend as the most important opportunity we have for conservation. It can be a force for better protected area management and use. It can be a force for avoiding the negative consequences of large development and for ensuring that sectors invest in the system.

As an initial step early this month, the Royal Government of Cambodia, headed by our Prime Minister, His Excellent Samdech Hun Sen issued a clear decision to involve communities in co-managing of up to 30% of all protected areas as buffer zones.

I believe that this review of protected areas and development is an important step in improving our understanding of how to harness this force. I am following the Cambodian national review process closely, and look forward to benefiting from the collective wisdom of the experts participating in this first regional exchange.

I would like to express my special thanks to the three governments which are contributing to the success of this important review – Australia, Denmark and Switzerland. Without their strong backing, we would not be able to take this critical step forward in protected area development. UNDP has also been a strong partner in the review process.

My sincere thanks are extended to the MRC Secretariat for its support of the two regional workshops associated with the review. This is the first workshop...and I must say that I am pleased that the second meeting will also be held in Cambodia! There is a growing need for regional collaboration in this field and it is very significant that MRC is taking a leading role.

I wish you well in this most important mission. But I do remind you, that too much work without relaxation, may not bring the best results – please take time to enjoy the special hospitality for which we Cambodians are well known. I ask the MRC Chief Executive Officer to give you some time off to enjoy the atmosphere and culture of Phnom Penh.

Thank you and success in your work.

Annex 4

Opening Speech
by
Joern Kristensen, Chief Executive Officer
Mekong River Commission

At the Opening Ceremony of the First Regional Workshop on
“Review of Protected Areas and Development in the four countries of the Lower Mekong Region”, 6-7
May 2002, Cambodiana Hotel, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

H.E.Dr Mok Mareth
Minister, Ministry of Environment
Donor Representatives
Distinguished Participants
Ladies and Gentlemen

It is a great honor and pleasure to welcome you to this important workshop on “Review of Protected Areas and Development in the four countries in the Lower Mekong Basin. On behalf of the Mekong River Commission, I wish to extend a warm welcome to our partner organizations, participants from Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, Vietnam, Myanmar and China, and to NGOs and International Organizations. I would like to thank the International Center for Environment and Management (ICEM), IUCN and other partners for assisting with organizing this workshop.

Distinguished participants
Ladies and Gentlemen

The Mekong River Commission was established under an agreement signed in 1995 between Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Viet Nam where the four countries agreed to cooperate in the sustainable development of the Mekong Basin. They now coordinate their development for the mutual benefit of all four riparian states, and work together to protect the environment from the harmful effects of poorly planned development activity.

In Viet Nam, around 40% of national food requirements come from the Mekong Delta. In Cambodia, close to 80% of the population depend in some way on the River and its associated waterways. In Lao PDR much of the population depends on the Mekong and its tributaries for food and livelihoods. Many of these people are among the poorest in the world. For them development is vital if they are to have the opportunity to escape from poverty. But they are also the most dependant on the natural resources of the region, which can sometimes be threatened by development that is not carefully planned.

The MRC has recently commenced the implementation of a regional development process for the lower Mekong basin. It will involve a process of basin wide planning, and produce the first integrated basin wide development plan. The inception report will be presented in Ho Chi Minh City next week. It will outline a participatory planning process, which will draw on the expertise of government agencies from all four countries as well as the work of the MRC sector programmes. The planning process will seek ways to promote economic development. At the same time it will ensure that access to the natural services and products that are obtained from the environment is maintained.

One way that these two parallel goals can be achieved at the same time is through the wise use of protected areas.

The countries of the region have already identified the implementation of protected areas as a development strategy. Almost 15% of the lower Mekong region contains protected areas of various kinds. This represents a very large commitment of resources, and a new perception of what constitutes wise development. An increasing range of development sectors, such as Forestry, fisheries and tourism are all making increasing use of protected areas.

This workshop is built around the national reviews of protected areas being undertaken by MRC’s four member countries. The national consultative processes have now been running for six months so this is

an opportune time to bring together the national teams and begin to distil common approaches and possible regional strategies.

The initial reviews of national lessons and field studies have been completed, and we will be hearing of them over the next two days. This will lead to the preparation of national reports that set out options for the future. Importantly for the MRC Basin Development Programme it will also lead to a regional report that will input to the planning process.

I opened my talk by welcoming you to this important forum by emphasising development and protection. Our discussions are about protected areas, but they are equally about development, and the vital role protected areas will play in meeting the future economic and social aspirations of the people of the Mekong.

**Distinguished participants
Ladies and Gentlemen**

Once again, on behalf of the Mekong River Commission, I would like to wish all the participants, facilitators and workshop organiser a very successful workshop and a pleasant stay in Phnom Penh.

Now I have the honor to declare the first regional workshop on “Review of Protected Areas and Development in the Lower Mekong Basin” open.

Thank you for your kind attention.

Annex 5

Closing Remarks by Joern Kristensen, Chief Executive Office Mekong River Commission

For the First Regional Workshop on Review of protected areas and development in the four countries of the

Lower Mekong region”, 6-7 May, 2002

Excellencies

Distinguished participants

Ladies and Gentlemen

This has been an intensive and rich meeting, reporting on six months of work. The presentations of the field studies and national assessments of experience have been very impressive indeed. The discussions and working groups have produced a wide range of useful ideas and suggestions, which will add greatly to the review outputs.

In fact, so much ground has been covered that it is difficult to summarise all issues. However, I have identified some points, which stood out in the discussions.

As I mentioned in my opening speech, this meeting on protected areas is as much about development as it is about conservation, and it is clear that protected areas, already recognised as conservation assets, are becoming a part of the development strategies for all countries in the region. A fundamental shift is taking place from viewing these areas as isolated pockets of rare and endangered species, to see them as centres of development – which provide services and products essential to the growing economies.

A second point is that we need to understand and express these values in economic terms. They need to be promoted and marketed, since this is the only way they can effectively be integrated in the national accounts and socio-economic development plans.

While we want to increase demand for protected areas products and services, we need to ensure that the uses of them are sustainable and appropriate. To do this we must conserve, maintain and enhance the natural capital held in protected areas, as this will bring the greatest development returns over the long term.

To achieve this, higher levels of investment are needed following the guiding principle of “let the user pay”. Whether users are government sector, private sector or even local communities – if they use protected area services or products, they should pay for the privilege.

Distinguished participants

Ladies and Gentlemen

The Vision for the development of the Mekong River Basin is an “Economically Prosperous, Socially Just and Environmentally Sound Basin”. Considering this goal we are rightly worried about what happens to local communities in this new business of protected areas management. We must avoid a situation in which those least able to compete become the losers. We need to have systems of support, subsidies and compensation to local communities living around protected areas. Revenue going to manage and safeguard protected areas must also safeguard and enhance the well being of the people in local communities.

It was concluded that it is especially difficult to apply the “user pays” principle in upstream – downstream relationships between those managing natural assets and users. For example, where rural communities conserve watersheds so urban centres downstream are supplied with clean and reliable water. The further away from a protected area the user is, the more difficult it is to get them to pay up for the benefits they receive. But, this is changing and it requires both regulation and economic incentives to work. In international situations, it requires commitment to international agreements. The Kyoto Protocol on climate changes was mentioned as an example, and the potential for trading in carbon storage.

Finally, the existing protected areas systems require comprehensive national policy and legal frameworks that clearly define responsibilities, categories and uses, and the linkages with development sectors. Equally important is the need to adjust those systems to ensure they fulfil their purpose in covering representative and viable samples of all our natural systems and habitats. This will require all sectors embracing regimes of protection as an essential part of their own development strategies.

These were but a few of the many important issues, which I gained from your presentations and discussion. They provide a framework and philosophy to guide the review.

Where do we go from here? As explained this morning, the next steps involve the preparation of national reports setting out policy options for consideration by governments; a second round of national meetings, and a second regional workshop. As I mentioned when opening this meeting, the analysis and the final regional report will feed into the MRC Basin Development Planning process, and will be important in helping to shape Basin Development Plan.

**Distinguished Participants
Ladies and Gentlemen**

I can say without hesitation that this first regional workshop has been a success. I thank you for your hard work and congratulate you on such a productive outcome. I look forward with great interest to the national review consultations, but most important, I look forward with pleasure to seeing you again at the second regional workshop to consider the regional report.

On this note I have the honour to close this first regional workshop on “Review of Protected areas and development in the Lower Mekong Basin”.

Thank you for your kind attention.