



Mekong Wetlands Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use Programme

QUARTERLY PROGRESS REPORT

FOURTH QUARTERLY PROGRESS REPORT APRIL – JUNE 2005

PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

Introduction

This is the fourth quarterly progress report for the MWBP, produced for the Programme Management Committee meeting on 8 July 2005. It covers the period from April to June 2005. The full progress report of activities taken from the database will follow once editing has been completed. This summary report highlights achievements and constraints experienced during the quarter.

Encouraging national ownership

Following the second Executive Regional Steering Committee, held in Pakse at the beginning of April 2005, there has been an emphasis on moving towards a greater national ownership of the programme. This has been encouraged as the national and provincial offices have become more established, both physically and institutionally with their counterpart government agencies. With an effective management training course held in April in Vientiane, they have been able to take on greater responsibilities for planning and financial management,

In addition, moves are being proposed for an annually rotating chairmanship between the four countries of both the Executive Regional Steering Committee and the Programme Management Committee. In each country there have been significant meetings and events which have strengthened an awareness of the programme and helped to advise and guide its direction. These have included:

- Cambodia – inter-ministerial meeting for guiding the establishment of the National Wetlands Committee, combined with presentation of the programme. This also served as an ad hoc NSC.
- Lao PDR – First NSC meeting held at end of March. Visit in June by the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture to Attapeu Province and holding of the first Provincial Management Board meeting
- Thailand – meeting within ONEP to discuss collaboration on the programme between different divisions, and especially with the DANIDA wetland support project. The documentation for establishing the NSC is in place and an NSC meeting is expected in the next quarter.
- Vietnam – meeting of the first National Steering Committee, and first Provincial Management Board meetings in Long An and Dong Thap Province.

Activity Highlights and Achievements

Wetland Policy – Guiding principles, Sectoral policy reviews and National Wetland Action Plans

- Over the period MRC have been gradually gathering various policy and legislative information and documents, especially with regard to obligations under the international conventions. This will feed into the development of the guiding principles
- A regional workshop was held to consider the reviews of legislation in each of the Mekong countries, (including China) on water development decision making frameworks, especially considering the application of guidelines on World Commission on Dams, ADB, World Bank and IHA guidelines



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- In Cambodia, the proposal for sectoral policy review (UNDP TRAC) funds is being finalised and national consultants to carry out an initial scoping of the sectoral policies and critical review of the NWAP are being sought.
- In Lao PDR, the sectoral policy review process will follow the studies already carried out on the accession to the Ramsar Convention
- In Thailand, discussions are being held within ONEP for a sectoral policy review process and review of the implementation of Ramsar.
- In Vietnam, this process has not yet started, but it is expected that there will be a linkage with the proposed Dutch funded National Wetlands Support Project.

Support to Ramsar Convention

- Institutional and Legal Assessment including costs and benefits of Lao PDR's accession into the Ramsar Convention completed.
- A "summary for decision makers" has been prepared based on this assessment and is currently being translated into Lao.
- Glossy information material on the functions and values of wetlands published in English and Lao.
- Final information sharing workshop organized to present the above outcomes with regard to Lao PDR's progress towards Ramsar accession.
- MWBP receives recognition as a regional wetland initiative at the Asian Ramsar meeting in Beijing (May 2005)
- At the regional level, a side meeting was organized during the Asian Ramsar meeting in Beijing. This was attended by Ramsar focal points and the need for development of a regional Ramsar initiative was confirmed.
- A concept note for the development of a regional Ramsar initiative has been prepared and a meeting involving Contracting Parties of the Mekong region is being proposed as a side event in Kampala during Ramsar COP 9.

Environmental flows

- The environmental flows work undertaken by the MRC has started with the first visits to the five key reaches on the mainstream of the Mekong by the large multidisciplinary team followed by a workshop to develop the methodology and indicators for changing flows. The discipline specialists are currently working at home to prepare their reports. A larger workshop is expected in November.
- In the Songkhram, a dialogue on environmental flows has been initiated and a group of researchers from Khon Kaen University commissioned to conduct a field study.

Biodiversity

- MRC have provided mapped information to BDP on protected areas in the region, including wetland areas, This was based upon information from UNEP and WCS.
- Species Conservation Action Planning:
 - o Meetings organized with Dept of Fisheries Cambodia and proposal prepared for supporting the endangered species unit within DOF.
 - o **Crocodile** Species Group Review Mission report produced.
 - o Crocodile surveys carried out in Lao PDR led to a discovery of breeding populations of this Critically Endangered species.
 - o Press release on Siamese Crocodiles received global coverage.
 - o Crocodile surveys carried out in Vietnam



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- Draft regional Species Conservation Action Plan for the Mekong River Irrawaddy Dolphin produced
- **Dolphin** field surveys carried out in Vietnam
- Progressed discussion regarding tripartite arrangements between MWBP, WWF and WCS on supporting the implementation of the Cambodian Mekong Dolphin Conservation Strategy. A shift in project administration from WCS to WWF has resulted in the delay in finalizing the agreement.
- Prepared article on Dolphins for the MRC Fisheries programme publication in Lao PDR
- **Giant Catfish** - Participated and provided input to discussions in Chiang Kong on possible ban of Giant Catfish hunting and wider issues.
- Updated flyer on Giant Catfish produced.
- Article on Giant Catfish for the IUCN Asia Newsletter
- Made presentation on Giant Catfish at the MRC Fisheries Annual Meeting in Siem Reap.
- Partnership established with Darwin initiative project on Giant Catfish SCAP developed.
- Preparations made for **Sarus Crane** SCAP planning meeting in August.
- A draft report on the state of play with regard to **Invasive Alien Species** in the Mekong Region prepared.
- Consultant identified for development of a framework for **wetland inventory, assessment and monitoring** in the demonstration sites. Planning meeting scheduled for early August 2005
- **Wildlife trade** issues in the Demo Sites – further discussions held with TRAFFIC to implement scoping surveys in Stoeng Treng and Attapeu. Discussions with provincial government agencies in Attapeu have indicated a wet season survey to start in late August.

Livelihoods

Pending the confirmation and arrival of the additional Dutch funds for livelihoods work, it was decided to go ahead and to initiate livelihoods work in each of the demonstration sites. This has included:

- **Stung Treng** – developing and publicising contracts for six consultancies in livelihoods work including silk cultivation, ecotourism, finalising contract with Health Unlimited for health related livelihoods work. The SalaPhoum training was organised with a group from the Songkhram Thai Baan team, leading to development of workplan. Community fisheries study tour to Siem Reap organised with VSO.
- **Attapeu** - finalising contract with Health Unlimited for health related livelihoods work. A community fisheries study tour was organised for four villages in Attapeu to exchange experiences on aquatic resources management with villagers in Champassack. Discussions have been held to provide assistance on PRA training and small-scale aquaculture from RDC in Savanakheth, and also with WWF for collaboration in conducting livelihood assessments and village action plans.
- **Songkhram** – The final stage of the Thai Baan research was completed and results presented, and a publication produced. Informal discussions have been held on the expansion of the TB network into other villages. Initial discussions have been held to establish a local rivers museum/TB learning centre, and education activities in Lower Songkhram River Basin schools for Water Quality testing pilot project.
- **Plain of Reeds** – finalising contract with CARE in Vietnam, who have appointed two community development programme officers to be based in the Cau Lanh office. Initial



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discussions have been held around in the districts around Tram Chim and Lang Sen and a work plan is being developed.

Environmental Economics

The MWBP Environmental Economist, Dr. Madhu Bhattarai, from Nepal, joined the PMU in April, and has spent the quarter in familiarising himself with the programme and through a series of visits to the demonstration sites developing environmental economic initiatives. In particular, a joint project with the MRC Fisheries Programme has been started considering the costs and benefits of small scale fisheries and aquaculture in three sites (including Stung Treng) in Cambodia. This is being done together with IFREDI, with Dr. Madhu providing technical advice and guidance.

MRC have been having discussions leading to the development of the wetland economic studies, and are seeking to recruit riparian economists for these studies.

Linkages have also been developed with IWMI, and a series of small studies are being developed to look at the economic impacts of irrigation upon wetlands and use of wetland products. These studies will be conducted in Songkhram, in Attapeu and Stung Treng, and will lead to a larger proposal for more extensive work on wetland economic impacts of irrigation. These studies will also feed into the policy review process in each country.

In Tram Chim, Vietnam, the environmental economic component of the Fire and Water Strategy was started during the inception period, with a visit by the IUCN Vietnam economist.

Training

- **Training strategy** was presented at PMC and RSC, 1 April 2005
- The definition of the specifications for the identification guide for **Aquatic Vegetation** in the Mekong is being developed and discussions are being held by MRC with key international expertise, e.g. Royal Botanic Gardens in Edinburgh, UK.
- MRC are finalising the identification guide for **Aquatic Invertebrates** ready for publication. A possible joint publication with a commercial publisher is being explored.
- **An Introduction EIA Workshop** was conducted for Attapeu provincial government and local people (around 50 participants) at Attapeu province, 4-6 April 2005. This used the field trip of the gold mining operations in the Sekong River as a case study, helping to raise awareness of the impacts of gold mining. A second follow-up **EIA training** focussed on the structure and content of an EIA with special reference to the hydropower sector.
- **PMU Meeting and Financial & Administration Management Training** was conducted for concerned PMU staff (30 participants) at Vientiane, 26-29 April 2005
- **RECOFTC Workshop on Capacity Building** was conducted for Programme Staff training and communication team and government counterparts (17 participants) at RECOFTC, Bangkok, Thailand, 23-24 May 2005.
- **Regional Training of Trainers on Wetlands Management** was conducted for Programme Staff training and communication team and concerned government and non-government counterparts (21 participants) at Stung Treng, Cambodia, 6-10 June 2005.
- Arranged five participants (1 from PMU and 4 government staff from four riparian countries) to attend **Biodiversity and EIA training course** and IAIA Conference at USA, 29 May to 3 June 2005. UNDP Team leader made several contributions to this training and conference and follow-up presentations by each of the participants to their colleagues are planned.
- Preparation process for 9 participants (2 or 3 government counterparts from each riparian country) to attend **Mekong Wetland Ecology and Management Training Course** which



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will be held at Vientiane, 3-24 August 2005. A follow-up presentation by the previous year's participants from Vietnam was made in Tram Chim.

- Preparation process for 15 participants (4 from PMU and 11 from four national program office and government counterparts) to attend **COP9 and Uganda Wetland Policy study tour** in Uganda which will be held on 8 – 15, 16-19 November 2005

Communications

- The MWBP was represented at a global Water and Nature Initiative meeting in Botswana, and a DGIS mid-term review of WANI was conducted with a visit to both Songkhram and Vientiane by the reviewers. A list of the MWBP/WANI publications is attached
- In association with the **Networks Action Plan**, a Regional Networks Analysis was commenced. The analysis aims to profile all the regional existing networks that relate to the work of MWBP. The analysis is being conducted through staff surveys and contacting external audiences directly. To assist the communications team a Networks Framework was developed and distributed. The first draft of the Networks Action Plan was also submitted for comment. This draft, once finalised, will be combined with the results of the Regional Networks Analysis to form the final Networks Action Plan for MWBP, and define MWBP's direct for networking. (Activity 1.2)
- The **MWBP Branding Guide** was completed and distributed. The Guide provides guidelines and templates for MWBP Branding and will assist greatly in communication work, consistency of brand and building the profile of MWBP. The Guide also contains a template for the MWBP Newsletter. (Activity 1.2 task #636)
- The **MWBP website** was redesigned and updated. The design now focuses on the site-work of the programme and increases ease of usability. The site is currently being updated at least once a week (Activity 1.2 task #850)
- Other communication initiatives that have been achieved throughout the last quarter include:
 - o MWBP Media Guide
 - o World Environment Day celebrations in Saisetha district in Attapeu
 - o Siamese Crocodile Media Release gaining international coverage
 - o Staff surveying for communications and networks
 - o Draft 1 of the Internal Communications Strategy commenced
 - o Giant Catfish fact sheet
 - o Contributions to IUCN Asia Newsletter (May and June) and MRC Newsletter
 - o Editing of numerous programme reports and documents

Office operations and staffing

Database, Monitoring and Evaluation

The MWBP database and M & E system has continued to be refined and expanded to include other information, e.g. deliverables, media, publications, meetings and trip reports. The indicator monitoring system is now established and will be used for the first time during this quarter. An analysis of the constraints reported upon previously has been carried out and is reported on below.



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PMU

The PMU is fully operational. The IUCN Financial Manager, Anthony Princesa has now moved to Vientiane, and a financial audit for 2004 was completed in April. Ms Kate Lazarus has been appointed as senior Programme Officer for WANI Mekong and arrived in May 2005. With the increase in staff in the PMU, recruitment is being undertaken for additional secretarial and administrative support.

Cambodia

The NPO within the MoE and PPO in Stoeng Treng are fully operational. At the end of May, the Project Co-Manager in Stung Treng, Prom Nga resigned to take up a significant position in Phnom Penh after two years of establishing the programme in Stung Treng. Recruitment process for his replacement was set up and interviews held in late June. The final decision on the recruitment is pending, but we are trying to maintain continuity of the programme as well as strengthening the technical presence there, through the appointment of a Cambodian biodiversity consultant/adviser to be based in Stung Treng. The MOU with the Ministry of Environment has been signed for the operation of both offices.

Lao PDR

The NPO in LARReC and the PPO in Attapeu are fully operational. There have been changes in staff in both offices during the quarter, and it is hoped that in the process both offices have been strengthened. Mr Singha Ouniyom, originally recruited as the National Communications and Training Coordinator, was promoted to become the National Programme Coordinator, upon the resignation of Mr Somboon. The process of appointing a replacement NCTC is progressing and it is hoped that an appointment will be made shortly. The new Project Co-Manager, Mr Souksavanh Sisouvong, joined the project in May, as did the newly appointed Outreach Officer for Attapeu, Mr Phutavong Ladouanglerd. Mr Mark Dubois, the Attapeu Technical Adviser joined in April. The MoUs for both offices are still under discussion.

Thailand

The NPO in ONEP in Bangkok and the PPO in Sri Songkhram are fully operational. There have been problems with the appointment of staff in the NPO. The appointment of the proposed NPC in March was set back by the appointee indicating that he no longer wanted the job since he had an international position in Myanmar. Recruitment was started again and the new NPC, Mr. Tawatchai Ratanasorn finally arrived at the beginning of June. Ms Panjit Tansom was appointed as NCTC and arrived in May. The Secretary and Finance and Admin Officer are now in place. The Outreach Officer, Mr Sophon Naruchaikusol, took up his position in Songkhram in May.

Vietnam

The NPO, located within VEPA is now fully operational. The setting up of the PPO in Cau Lanh town was delayed due to provincial approval processes, but any issues have now been sorted and the office is currently being refurbished and equipped. It should be operational by mid-July. The staffing in the NPO is complete and Ms Nguyen Phuong as NPC, and Ms Tham Hong Phuong together with Secretary and Finance and Admin Officer now in place. In the PPO, Mr Churchill Cordero, VSO, joined in April, and Ms Vu Thi Bich joined in May. Secretary and Finance and Admin Officer are also appointed. Two community development officers from CARE will also join the office when it is completed. The MOUs with VEPA and the two provincial governments have been finalized.



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Issues and Constraints

- **Availability of Funds**

With a programme such as the MWBP, one of the constant issues is that unlike most projects, it is not fully funded. A number of outputs or activities do not yet have any funds allocated from the GEF or other donors, and there is an ongoing task of being creative with the activities that contribute to several outputs some of which are funded and some of which are not. Some unfunded activities have to be undertaken by allocation of staff time from programme staff at all levels in order to have some progress on these activities. At the same time the programme staff are constantly on the look out for other sources of funding for particular activities, and for co-finance from or through other collaborating organisations. Whilst this shortage of funds for certain activities does represent a constant challenge and may at times divert the attention from getting on with the job, it does provide an awareness of other opportunities and a requirement for some entrepreneurial skills.

The following table illustrates the new co-finance or parallel finance that has been identified since the start of the programme. It is proposed that during the latter part of the year an international consultant will be engaged to develop a funding strategy and proposals for the programme.

Name of source	Contributing to which outputs	Direct funding	Approx. Co-finance and parallel finance
Dutch Livelihood proposal	Outputs x.8, x.9, x.10 in each demo site	\$600,000	
DANIDA, through CARE in Vietnam	Outputs 5.8, 5.9		\$125,000
Darwin Initiative, through IUCN	Outputs 2.7, 2.8, 2.12		\$150,000
Darwin Initiative, through Imperial College London	Giant Catfish SCAP		\$80,000
Collaboration with WWF and WCS	Dolphin SCAP		\$80,000
CBBIA project, with IUCN	Training for Incorporating biodiversity in impact assessment – x.3 and x.4, x.13		\$25,000
Proposed collaboration with IWMI	Economic influence of irrigation upon wetlands in Songkram, Attapeu and Stung Treng, 2.12, 3.12, 4.12		\$30,000
TOTAL		\$ 600,000	\$490,000



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- **Secretarial assistance in PMU**

With the expansion of work in the PMU, and with all the technical staff on board, it has become apparent that additional secretarial and administrative assistance is required. A recruitment process has been started for this.

- **Communications**

In the early days of the programme and until the recruited staff were effectively in place and oriented toward the programme, communications has not always been as good as it might be especially with partners and host agencies. This has led to some confusion over the management of the programme, especially in regard to Direct Execution modalities as opposed to National Execution. There has also been incomplete communication on the development of workplans etc. Many of the particular instances arose out of lack of the appropriate staff in the offices. With virtually all the national and provincial staff in place and beginning to operate effectively, this issue should resolve itself. In addition much greater emphasis will be paid on regular workplanning and reporting meetings with partner organizations.

- **Continuing need for orientation of staff and partners**

Despite regular orientation presentations at trainings and meetings this continues to be a requirement for a programme as complex as MWBP.

- **Financial reporting**

Refinement of the financial system is required to ensure timely reporting on expenditures at national and regional levels

Signed

Peter-John Meynell
UNDP Team Leader

3/7/2005