



Mekong Wetlands Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use Programme

The Cambodia – Lao PDR Trans-boundary Workshop for the Conservation and Management of the Mekong River Irrawaddy Dolphins

7-9 December 2004, Stung Treng, Cambodia
Alvin Lopez

A JOINT UNDP - IUCN - MRC GEF-FUNDED PROGRAMME



CAMBODIA



LAO PDR



THAILAND



VIETNAM



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The workshop would not have been possible without the effort of the following people: Prom Nga, Mao Kosal, Sok Vong, Pech Darong, Marcus Chambers, Seang, Sum Sochea, Sum Touch, Phim Sopheap, Phaivanh Phiapalath, Khamkhoun Khounboline, Somboon Phetphommasouk, Phonesavanh Luangsouphom, Doangkham Singhanouvong and Peter-John Meynell.

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SUMMARY AND KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

The Irrawaddy Dolphin subpopulation at the Cambodia – Lao PDR trans-boundary pool presents promising ecotourism potential but existing numbers of the species are too low to withstand even minimal pressure. To address the conservation and management of this subpopulation of dolphins, a total of 60 participants from Cambodia and Lao PDR convened to discuss issues at the Cambodia – Lao PDR Trans-boundary Workshop in December 2004. The workshop was held to build on existing cooperation frameworks and translate them into immediate action on the ground. Participants undertook detailed discussions and considerations with regard to the conservation and management of the dolphins at the Cambodia-Lao PDR trans-boundary pool. It was apparent that both Cambodia and Lao PDR had made substantial efforts in the past to address the conservation and management of the dolphins at the trans-boundary pool, however there were numerous reasons why these efforts had met limited success in the past. Possible solutions were identified.

Workshop participants agreed to make additional effort to address these urgent issues through existing mechanisms and the proposed establishment of a trans-boundary management committee for dolphins and other aquatic resources. The bilateral agreement between the two neighbouring provinces (Stung Treng and Champasak) will be used as a platform to establish this committee. There is no doubt that the establishment of such a committee will not happen overnight, however in the meantime, participants from the Government of Lao PDR committed to re-establishing the past dolphin protected areas and associated guidelines, while Cambodia agreed to continue to implement current efforts and enforce existing regulations associated with dolphin protected areas. Cambodia will also contribute to the process of establishing the joint committee to manage the trans-boundary pool.

The meeting therefore recommends that the process for establishing a joint-committee to deal with the issues affecting the trans-boundary population of the Mekong River Irrawaddy Dolphin commence as soon as possible in order to address the priority issues identified below.

Priority Issues for management of the Mekong River Irrawaddy Dolphin at the Cambodia – Lao PDR trans-boundary pool are:

- Urgent joint actions to address illegal fishing activities;
- Regulations for the use of gill nets including mesh size, locations and seasonal use;
- Increased tourism benefits to local people and more equitable sharing of benefits;
- Capacity building to enable increased participation by local people and relevant authorities;
- Mechanisms for raising funds and sustainability of interventions established at the local level as well as from external sources;
- Joint demarcation (both countries) and zoning of dolphin pool will need to be conducted;
- Establishment of joint local monitoring group as part of the joint committee;
- Ecotourism guidelines established and services improved;
- Stricter law enforcement from both parties;
- More public awareness about dolphin issues at the trans-boundary pool; and
- Increased information exchange and lessons learnt of the two countries using various types of media.

INTRODUCTION

A total of 60 participants (see Annex 1 for participant list) from concerned agencies of Cambodia and Lao PDR convened in Sok Sambath Hotel, Stung Treng, Cambodia on 7-9 December 2004 to discuss issues affecting the subpopulation of the Mekong River Irrawaddy Dolphin at the trans-boundary pool.

While the Irrawaddy Dolphin subpopulation at the trans-boundary pool (referred to as Anlong Choeuteal in Khmer and Veun Gngang in the Lao)(see Fig 1) presents promising ecotourism potential, existing numbers are too low to withstand even minimal pressure. Urgent management actions are necessary to avoid any further population decline. The various existing cooperation agreements between Cambodia and Lao PDR serve as a platform to address issues affecting the trans-boundary subpopulation of Irrawaddy Dolphins. This trans-boundary workshop was held to build on existing cooperation frameworks and translate it to immediate action on the ground.

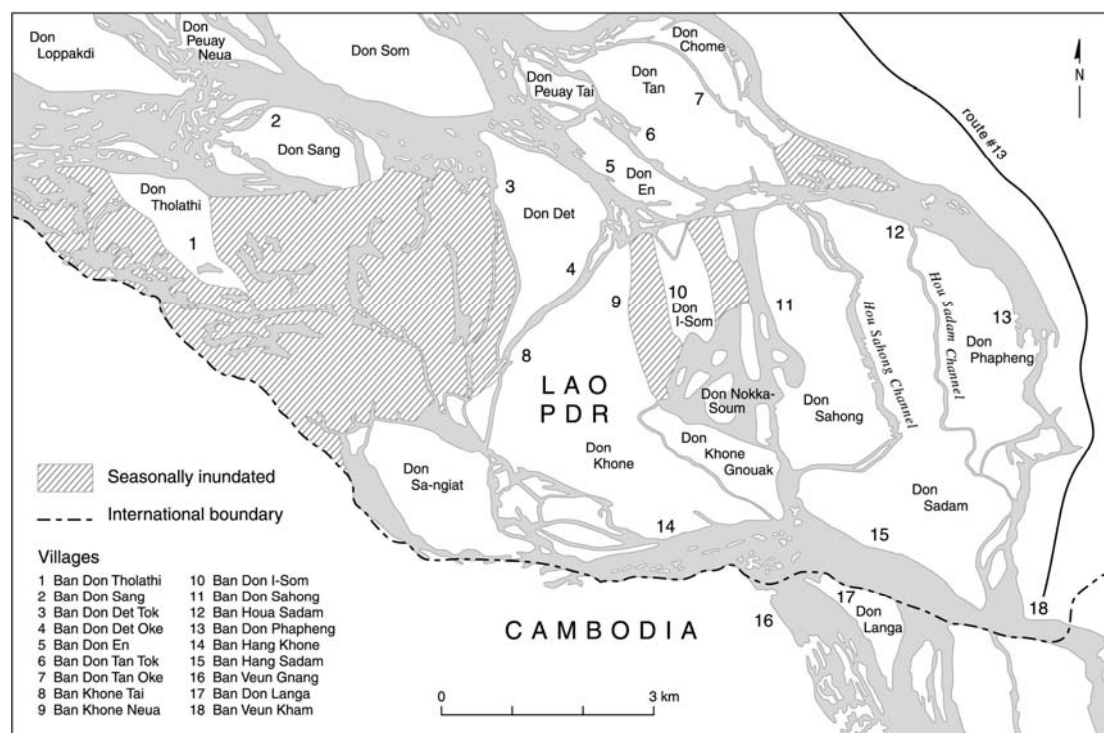


Figure 1: Map of the southern part of Khong District, and adjacent parts of Cambodia¹ (reproduced from Baird, 2004)

Participants included representatives from the national, provincial, district and village level from both countries. Also present throughout the workshop were Deputy Provincial Governors from Champasak (H.E. Sengkham Phumke), Lao PDR and Deputy Provincial Governors from Stung Treng, Cambodia (H.E. Long Phal).

Participants undertook detailed discussions and considerations with regard to the conservation and management of the dolphins at the Cambodia-Lao PDR trans-boundary pool. Additional background information on the issues affecting the trans-boundary dolphin sub population and workshop is provided in Annex 2. The main

¹ It should be noted that the international border marked on this map is only an estimate based on French maps. However, this has not been officially agreed upon between the Lao and Cambodian governments, and thus the international border between the two countries has not yet been finalized. Also, Veun Gngang is the Lao language name for Anlong Choeuteal in Khmer, and Don Langa (in Lao) is called Ko Langa in Khmer.

section of this report only focuses on the outcomes, including both short and long-term follow-up activities, that were identified at this workshop. The content of this report presents the outcomes of the report and discussions verbatim. This is based on the translated version of the results of the discussions prepared by the facilitators.

WORKSHOP OBJECTIVE

To provide a forum in which to identify joint immediate actions for trans-boundary management of the Irrawaddy Dolphin subpopulation.

WORKSHOP STRUCTURE

The workshop was structured as follows:

1. exposure to issues on the ground (field trip);
2. formal overview of the main issues (through plenary presentations);
3. discussion in group breakouts and in plenary; and
4. finally an agreement on the way forward to resolve the trans-boundary dolphin management issues.

More detailed background information and workshop programme is included in Annex 2.

To enable total participation and comprehension, simultaneous translation facilities were made available throughout the workshop during presentations and discussions in plenary.

Day One: 7 December 2004 - Field Trip to the Trans-boundary Dolphin Pool

Participants gathered at the border guesthouse for lunch before proceeding to the trans-boundary pool for dolphin observations. An initial briefing of the situation and programme was given by Mr Alvin Lopez, at the border guesthouse. At the trans-boundary pool, observations were made from a sand-island on the Cambodian side and Mr Phay Somany from the Department of Fisheries Cambodia (DOF)/Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) provided an overview of the current situation at the pool. The purpose of the field trip was to enable participants to visualise the situation on site. Dolphin observations were made and participants then proceeded by boat to the Sok Sambat Hotel in Stung Treng.

Day Two: 8 December 2004 - Workshop

The workshop convened at 8.30am with speeches by dignitaries followed by presentations. Mr Meng Monyrak (Mekong River Commission) provided an overview of the trans-boundary natural resource management issues. Mr Phay Somany (DOF-WCS) then made a presentation about the management of the Mekong River Irrawaddy Dolphins in Cambodia. This was followed by a presentation by Mr Bounma Luang Amath (Department of Livestock and Fisheries, Lao PDR) regarding dolphin conservation and management in Lao PDR. Issues affecting the subpopulation of the dolphins at the Cambodia – Lao border were presented by Alvin Lopez. The afternoon discussions followed a structured format and focused on challenges and major issues that affect the dolphins and lead to their decline at the Cambodia – Lao border. A total of four parallel discussions took place. The participants then reported the outcomes of their discussions and engaged in plenary discussions.

Day Three: 9 December 2004 – Workshop and Conclusion

The third day began with Alvin Lopez summarising the main outcomes of day two and presenting a document that contains the identified agreed priority interventions to address the issues affecting the dolphin subpopulation at the Cambodia-Lao border. These were then adopted by the participants and some additions were made. Further discussion focused on who was going to implement the actions and how it was going

to be done. The workshop came to an end at 12.00pm with a closing speech by H.E. Long Phal, Deputy Provincial Governor of Stung Treng Province.

KEY OUTCOMES OF GROUP DISCUSSIONS

There was no debate on the fact that numbers of dolphins at the trans-boundary pool are declining. Through the presentations and discussions participants became aware that both sides had made significant efforts in the past and present to address the situation of the dolphins at the trans-boundary pool. From the onset, and throughout, participants were reminded that the workshop was not meant to serve as yet another forum where people came and spoke about the dolphin situation at the trans-boundary pool and provide ideas on why it was declining. The workshop was held to identify what immediate actions can be taken and how we can implement the solutions that are identified.

The following section summarises the outcomes of the group discussions.

Causes for decline in the trans-boundary pool:

- Illegal fishing (electro-fishing and non seasonal fishing).
- Harassment from tourist boats, fishing boats and passenger boats in the dolphin areas.
- No dolphin management committee.
- Gill nets (especially large mesh size).
- Over fishing and increase in numbers of fishers (especially large scale commercial fisheries).
- Loss of food sources and prey for dolphins.
- The use of explosives/ bombs.
- Deep pool becoming shallower due to sedimentation and habitat change.
- Water pollution – from oil and mining.
- Noise problems with fast boats and tourist boats.
- Boat collision with dolphins.
- Migration of dolphins to other areas.
- Lack of funds and support for community fisheries.
- Natural death as part of their life cycles (30-40 years).

Possible Solutions and Recommendations from Group Discussions

The following solutions were proposed through discussions to address the above identified causes for decline in the dolphin population.

- Establishment of joint local committee and monitoring group (with official recognition and financial support).
- Joint demarcation and zoning of dolphin pool.
- Stronger cooperation between relevant authorities.
- Limit boat speed and noise (boat regulations).
- Enhance the law enforcement.
- Develop regulations for tourists watching dolphins.
- Prohibit illegal fishing (electro-fishing and non seasonal fishing).
- Enhance public awareness, information exchange, media and lessons learnt between the two countries.
- Research and establish a breeding program of dolphins in natural pools (long term – i.e. future possible option).
- Explore options for integrating dolphin management into existing community fisheries committee.
- Provide benefits of tourism to communities.

- Promote fish raising, animal husbandry and provide opportunities for alternative livelihoods.
- Enhance the enforcement on guidelines of exporting fish.
- Prevention and precaution on dissemination of dangerous chemicals.
- Strengthen the juridical system (long term).
- Stop clearing of flooded forest and riverine forest.
- Strengthen cooperation for solving wider issues (hydropower).
- Establish institution for work on restoration of dolphin habitat.
- Eliminate small mesh size gill nets (apparently cause for decline in dolphin prey).
- Reduce sources of water pollution (fertilizer, pesticide and waste).
- Conduct detailed studies of all associated dolphin data associated e.g. migration patters, preys, water flows and socio-economics as well as costs and benefits of dolphin conservation.
- Community fishing management as setting regulations with determining conservation zones and type of gill net selection.
- Formal education for villagers and children (long-term).
- Capacity building of local community for implementation of dolphin management measures.
- Conduct regular monitoring and evaluation.
- Seek mechanism for funding sustainability.

PAST AND PRESENT SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGES

It was acknowledged that both Cambodia and Lao PDR had made substantial efforts in the past to address the conservation and management of the dolphins at the trans-boundary pool, however, there were numerous reasons why this effort had met limited success in the past. The focus of this discussion was to establish an understanding of what the successes of past efforts were and why others failed. The outcomes of the group breakouts, according to efforts in each country, are presented below. It should be noted that the information presented below is based on the understanding, knowledge and consensus of the participants in the groups (i.e. the key stakeholders). For the purposes of this report, all information is presented even if technical knowledge and available data might contradict.

Cambodia

Successes in dolphin conservation and management with specific reference to the trans-boundary pool were reported as following:

- Amendment of Cambodian Fisheries law.
- A Royal Decree on Dolphin Protection and Conservation has been established.
- A Conservation Strategy for the Mekong River Irrawaddy Dolphin has been prepared.
- Community fisheries initiatives have been established.
- Awareness raising activities via posters, information boards etc. has been conducted
- The importance of dolphin extension activities is recognised.
- The dolphin is very symbolic at O'Chheu Teal Commune.
- A communal decision to prohibit use of gill nets (at Preah Romkel Commune) has been made.
- Involvement of local authorities and some NGOs is taking place.
- Cooperation has been initiated with the neighbouring commune between Cambodia and Lao PDR.
- Demarcation of fishing areas using buoys.

Some of the main challenges and obstacles faced by Cambodia in the management of the dolphin population at the trans-boundary pool were reported as:

- Lack of dolphin mechanism/framework for managing the dolphin population at the trans-boundary pool.
- Lack of staff and human resources.
- Lack of public participation in dolphin conservation activities – i.e. limited involvement of local authorities and others (no incentives, lack of capacity and personal interest).
- Limited understanding at the community level on dolphin conservation issues.
- Lack of alternative sources of income, therefore high dependency on fisheries and use of large mesh size gill nets. (No skills, no capital investment and no opportunity).
- Limited understanding of issues and broader implications to fisheries management as whole due to limited education.
- Inadequate law enforcement (occurrence of corruption and lack of incentives for law enforcement).
- Limited involvement of competent agencies (lack of equipment and budget).
- Limited research on dolphin biology and habitat (lack of resource person and expertise, budget and equipment).
- Limited regional involvement in dolphin conservation efforts (lack of communication and interest from regional initiatives).

Lao PDR

Successes in dolphin conservation and management with specific reference to the trans-boundary pool were reported as:

1. The Community Fisheries and Dolphin Conservation Project 1993-1997
2. The Siphandone Wetlands Project (1997-1999)

Participants reported that as part of the above projects, a total of 62 fish conservation zones were established along with appropriate regulations. Conservation groups were established in 59 villages and education and awareness activities were conducted throughout the Khone Falls area. Preliminary data on dolphin were collected and management measures were taken. Small scale livelihood development projects were initiated.

Some of the main challenges and obstacles faced by Lao PDR in the management of the dolphin population at the trans-boundary pool were also discussed. The above initiatives for the conservation and management of the dolphins however only lasted for the duration of the various projects as there was no mechanism for self sustainability in place. Monitoring programmes established through the project were also reported to have stopped when the project ended. The lack of cooperation from parties beyond the Lao jurisdictional boundaries also resulted in the Lao side feeling that their efforts were worthless. There was no clear framework to enable trans-boundary cooperation for management of the dolphins and other aquatic resources.

DISCUSSION AND NEXT STEPS

Despite overwhelming evidence that gill net entanglement (especially the use of large-meshed gill nets) is the main cause of dolphin mortality in the Mekong River Basin (Baird *et al.*, 1994; Baird and Mounsouphom, 1994; 1997; Beasley, pers. comm.), representatives from the Lao side (especially those from the site) claimed otherwise at this workshop. One participant even claimed that the last dolphin to die of gill net entanglement was 20 years ago. Instead, the Lao participants claimed that

the loss of prey species (which resulted in dolphins migrating to other areas) was the main cause of decline in numbers of dolphins at the trans-boundary pool. It would be worthwhile noting that *Pangasius krempfi* and *Probarbus spp.* Fisheries, which utilise 12-16cm and 18-25cm mesh size gill nets respectively, are both important to the livelihoods of the people in Hang Khone village (see Roberts and Baird 1995; Baird *et al.*, 1999; Baird and Flaherty 2000; Baird *et al.* 2000; Hogan *et al.* 2004) adjacent to the trans-boundary dolphin pool.)

Based on the outcomes of the discussions there was general consensus of the major urgent issues affecting the dolphins at the trans-boundary pool. Participants agreed to make additional efforts to address these urgent issues through existing mechanisms and also through the proposed establishment of a trans-boundary management committee for dolphins and other aquatic resources. The major urgent issues are described in the opening section, Summary and Key Recommendations.

Despite all the increased awareness of issues, discussions and commitments the questions that still remained were – “What can we do tomorrow?”, “How do we do it?” and “Who is going to do it?”.

The meeting therefore ended with a general consensus that a trans-boundary dolphin (and other aquatic resources) management committee be established to address the above urgent issues affecting the dolphins. Both Deputy Provincial Governors from Stung Treng and Champasak were of the opinion that the bilateral agreement between the two neighbouring provinces be used as a platform to establish this committee. There is no doubt that the establishment of such a committee would not happen overnight, however, in the meantime, participants from the Government of Lao PDR committed to re-establishing the past dolphin protected areas and associated guidelines. It was noted that significant support at the site level is required to facilitate the process. Cambodia on the other hand agreed to continue to implement current efforts and enforce existing regulations associated with dolphin protected areas. Cambodia will also contribute to the process of establishing the joint committee to manage the trans-boundary pool.

The overall meeting recommendation was that the establishment of a joint-committee to deal with the issues affecting the Mekong River Irrawaddy Dolphin commence as soon as possible to address the issues identified above. The Mekong Wetlands Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use Programme will support and facilitate the first meeting of the joint-committee in the first quarter of 2005.

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ANNEX 1: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

| No. | Name | Agencies/ Departments | Functions |
|-----|---------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1 | Mr. Chea Thavrith | Thalaborivath District | Deputy governor |
| 2 | Mr. Or Sary | Department of Tourism | Deputy |
| 3 | Mr. Hak Vimean | Department of Environment | Deputy |
| 4 | Mr. Suy Vanno | Salakhet | Deputy of General Secretary |
| 5 | Mr. Tep Bounarith | CEPA | Director |
| 6 | Mr. Ngin Ann | OCAA | CP |
| 7 | Mr. Tek Kimsong | DAFF | Staff |
| 8 | Mr. Eng Pirong | DoE | Deputy |
| 9 | Mr. Sous Sivutha | CEPA | Coordinator |
| 10 | Mr. Chea Kimsean | DoE | Director |
| 11 | Mr. Srey Sunleang | MoE | Specialist Officer |
| 12 | Mr. Manivong | NAFRI | Head of Division |
| 13 | Mr. Meng Monirak | MRC | Program Officer |
| 14 | Mr. Kham Khoun | MWBP/Lao | Manager |
| 15 | Mr. Phainvanh | IUCN/Lao | Program Officer |
| 16 | Mr. Chan Thane | LARREC/Lao | Officer |
| 17 | Mr. Vone Phasao | STEA | Technical |
| 18 | Mr. Marcus Chambers | MWBP/IUCN | Technical Advisor |
| 19 | Mr. Srun Limsong | DoF/IFReDI | Director |
| 20 | Mr. Sok Vong | MWBP | Coordinator |
| 21 | Mr Pech Darong | MWBP | Outreach Officer |
| 22 | Mr. Alvin Lopez | IUCN-MWBP | Wetland Ecologist |
| 23 | Mr. Somboun | IUCN-MWBP | NPC |
| 24 | Mr. Mr. Phay Somany | DoF/WCS | Project manager |
| 25 | Mr. Sum Sochea | MWBP | Adm/Finan Officer |

| No. | Name | Agencies/ Departments | Functions |
|-----|------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| 26 | Mr. Mao Kosal | IUCN | C&TC/MWBP |
| 27 | Mr. Prom Nga | IUCN | PM |
| 28 | Mr. In Hong | IUCN/Lao | Translator |
| 29 | Mr. Hak Socheat | CNMC/Cambodia | Program Officer |
| 30 | Mr. Sophonh | DAFO/Lao | DAFO Kong |
| 31 | Mr. Boun Leap | Department of education/ Lao | Education Chief Office |
| 32 | Mr. Thou Sond | | Head of Village |
| 33 | Mr. Phet Samone | Khong Village/Lao | Head of Village |
| 34 | Mr. Bounma | DLF | Chief of Conservation of fisheries |
| 35 | Mr. Bouaphan | Department of Forestry/Lao | Head Technical Unit |
| 36 | Mr. Lon Kham | LNMC | Technical |
| 37 | Mr. Som Savanh | MAF/Lao | DSK Officer |
| 38 | Mr. Kim Sokha | DoF/WCS | Officer |
| 39 | Mr. Amp Hine | PAFO/Lao | Deputy Head of Forestry/ Section |
| 40 | Mr. Sananh | Khong District/Lao | Head Office |
| 41 | Mr. Norasen | Lao | |
| 42 | Mr. Kham Leam | Prehromkel Commune | Commune Chief |
| 43 | Mss. Ty Ratana | CRDT | Staff |
| 44 | Mr. Or Channy | CRDT | Team Leader |
| 45 | Mr. Dy Phone | Leu Village/ Prehromkel Commune | Head of Village |
| 46 | Mr. Singdam | Onlong Svay Village/ Prehromkel Commune | Head of Village |
| 47 | Mr. Kham Phao | Hang Sadam Village | Head of Village |
| 48 | Mr. Som Sith | Hangkone Village | Head of Village |
| 49 | Mr. May | Veunekham Village | Head of Village |
| 50 | Mr. Phin Sopheap | MNBP | Technical |
| 51 | Mr. Man Lihor | Osvay commune | Chief of Commune |

| No. | Name | Agencies/ Departments | Functions |
|-----|----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| 52 | Mr. Tor Mesa | DAFF/Cambodia | Staff |
| 53 | Mr. Vixith | Tourism/Lao | |
| 54 | Mr. Phouvin | Champasak | Add Office |
| 55 | Mr. Nou Khammai | Leu Village | Head of Village |
| 56 | Mr. Lim Huy | Headphone | |
| 57 | Mrs. Pov Pheng Seang | MWBP | Secretary |
| 58 | Mr. Ung Samoeurn | Stung Treng Commune | Commune Chief |
| 59 | Mr. Seng Kham Phomke | Champasak | Deputy of Governor |
| 60 | Mr. Vorn Savuth | OCAA | Project manager |

ANNEX 2: BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON WORKSHOP AND PROGRAMME

Background and Introduction

The Mekong River Irrawaddy Dolphin (*Orcaella brevirostris*) population is currently very small – numbering only 80 – 100 individuals; however the potential of successful conservation activities and mitigation of threats is significant. Due to the restricted nature of the dolphins' critical habitat (particularly during the dry season), increasing concern by local communities and significant government support, there is an opportunity for effective conservation measures to be successfully implemented.

The Mekong River Irrawaddy Dolphin has been selected as one of the flagship species of the Mekong Wetlands Biodiversity Programme (MWBP). Building on past and on-going initiatives, the MWBP will address the issues affecting this species through the development and implementation of a Species Conservation Action Plan.

The Mekong Dolphin Conservation Project (MDCP) in collaboration with the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) Cambodia and the Cambodian Department of Fisheries had recently developed a draft five-year (2004-2008) Management Plan for the Conservation and Management of the Mekong River Irrawaddy Dolphin. This was presented at a workshop in September 2004 in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. The management plan contains key recommendations and proposed actions for the conservation and management of the Mekong River Irrawaddy Dolphin. One of the key issues identified is the need for urgent action for the conservation and management of the trans-boundary Irrawaddy Dolphin subpopulation.

While the trans-boundary Irrawaddy Dolphin subpopulation presents a promising ecotourism potential, existing numbers are too low to withstand even minimal pressure. Urgent management actions are necessary to avoid any further population decline. The various existing cooperation agreements between Cambodia and Lao PDR serve as a platform to address issues affecting the trans-boundary subpopulation of Irrawaddy Dolphins. This proposed trans-boundary workshop aims to build on existing cooperation frameworks and translate it to immediate action on the ground.

A trans-boundary issue

The trans-boundary dolphin pool is located on the Lao/Cambodian border. The pool is small – approximately two km². Irrawaddy Dolphins have been known to inhabit this area (and particularly the pool) for many years. Research on the dolphins began in 1994 through the Lao Community Fisheries and Dolphin Protection Project. The project subsequently recorded very high mortality rates in the area. Dolphin-watching tourism began in the area approximately six years ago by the Lao villagers. Currently very minimal tourism exists on the Cambodian side.

It is estimated that no more than 9 dolphins are present in trans-boundary pool. In January 2004, the MDCP observed two newborn calves in this pool. Given the low numbers of dolphins in the pool, these calves may represent the last chance for dolphins to survive at this trans-boundary Pool.

Current threats affecting the trans-boundary dolphin subpopulation

- Entanglement in nylon gillnets (both large and small mesh-size)

- Noise problems with very fast CK boats
- Boat collision between dolphins and tourist boats/CK boats
- Harassment by the tourist boats, eager to please clients by getting too close and chasing the dolphins within the pool.

Past and current efforts at the trans-boundary pool

- Lao Community Fisheries and Dolphin Protection Project – previously worked with local Lao fisherman to manage dolphins and fisheries.
- The MDCP facilitated discussions with both Cambodian and Lao villagers and made effort made to establish buoys to demarcate the important dolphin area for dry season. These buoys were removed in the wet season due to rising water levels. There are plans to re-establish them in the dry season.
- An MoU was signed on 11 March 2004, between the Cambodian Department of Fisheries and the Department of Livestock and Fisheries, Lao PDR, regarding co-operation with trans-boundary fisheries issues and dolphin conservation.
- An MoU exists between IFReDI (Cambodia) and LARReC (Lao PDR) on cooperation in research on aquatic resources.
- An agreement between the Provinces of Stung Treng and Champasak has been signed. This includes the need for better management of shared aquatic resources.
- A Royal decree on the Protection of Dolphins has been approved by Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Cambodia. This Decree is now with the Council of Ministers for final approval.
- Community Aid Abroad (CAA) previously facilitated the establishment of a Community Fisheries Committee at Chheuteal Village in early 2000. This community fisheries committee has recently been working with MDCP to manage the area. Local villagers have been removing nets in important dolphin areas.
- In order to encourage community support for dolphin conservation activities, the Cambodian Rural Development Team (CRDT), have begun project planning to initiate rural development activities at Chiteal and Koh Lngor Villages. CAA had facilitated the establishment of this committee.
- Resulting from four years of research, a draft Mekong Dolphin Conservation Strategy has been developed by MDCP in collaboration with the Department of Fisheries, Cambodia. The issues affecting the trans-boundary subpopulation are an element of this conservation strategy. This strategy/plan was presented at a meeting in the Department of Fisheries on September 2004, supported by WCS and has been formally adopted by the Department.

Objective of the workshop

To provide a forum to identify joint immediate actions for trans-boundary management of the Irrawaddy Dolphin subpopulation.

Expected outputs

1. An in-depth understanding of past and current challenges in management of the trans-boundary dolphin subpopulation.
2. A resolution that both parties (Cambodia and Lao) develop (or refine) to define joint interim management measures (including dolphin-watching tourism guidelines) to prevent further decline in the trans-boundary Dolphin subpopulation.
3. An outline of key tasks required for a monitoring programme at the trans-boundary pool and agreement for implementation.

Activities at the workshop

- Field visit
 - A field trip to the trans-boundary pool will be organized on the first day to provide an overview of on-the-ground issues.
- On the second day, presentations and discussions will cover the following:
 - Brief overview on the status of the Irrawaddy Dolphin globally, with specific focus on the Mekong River population.
 - On-going efforts by the Governments of Lao and Cambodia towards Dolphin Conservation and potential mechanisms and frameworks for co-operation.
 - Management issues affecting the trans-boundary population – identifying key challenges and proposed solutions.
- Group breakouts (discussion)
 - It is proposed that 2 groups are formed for discussions – Lao and Cambodia. The facilitators (native speakers) will describe the known issues and obtain feedback regarding new challenges/threats by conducting a rapid threat analysis.
 - Obvious options for solutions will be tabled and concerns from key stakeholders will be assessed
 - Immediate acceptable solutions will be proposed and adopted, while actions requiring further site consultation will be noted.
- Plenary discussion:
 - A joint resolution will be adopted and immediate follow up activities (e.g. further village level consultations) will be identified. Prioritization of proposed activities.
 - Key components for establishing a simple monitoring programme at the trans-boundary pool will be developed and stakeholders and resources required for implementing this programme identified. Who will be responsible for monitoring?
 - Options for institutional arrangements for managing the trans-boundary pool explored and necessary follow up consultations identified.

Programme

6 December 2004 (Monday)

- Cambodian participants from Phnom Penh arrive at Sok Sambat Hotel, Stung Treng

7 December 2004 (Tuesday)

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|-------------|--|
| 1000 – 1030 | Lao participants arrive at Lao-Cambodia border |
| 1030 – 1200 | Field Trip to Trans-boundary Pool |
| 1200 – 1400 | Lunch at Cambodia-Lao border |
| 1400 – 1600 | Travel to Sok Sambat Hotel, Stung Treng |
| 1600 – 1700 | Registration and check in |
| 1900 – 2100 | Dinner (Venue to be determined) |

8 December 2004 (Wednesday)

- 0800 – 0830 Registration
- 0830 – 0840 Welcoming and Opening remarks (MC)
- 0840 – 0855 Speech by Director, Department of Fisheries, Cambodia
- 0855 – 0910 Speech by Stung Treng Provincial Governor
- 0910 – 0925 Speech by Champasak Provincial Governor
- 0925 – 0945 Speech by Peter-John Meynell – Intro to MWBP
- 0945 – 1000 Trans-boundary natural resource management (Presentation by MRC)
- 1000 – 1020 Coffee break
- 1020 – 1040 Presentation by DOF Cambodia – Dolphin Conservation and Management in Cambodia
- 1040 – 1100 Presentation by Department of Livestock and Fisheries – Dolphin Conservation and Management in Lao PDR
- 1100 – 1130 Overview of the trans-boundary Dolphin Management Issues – Alvin Lopez (MWBP)
- 1130 – 1200 Discussion and preparation for afternoon breakout sessions
- 1200 – 1400 Lunch break
- 1400 – 1600 Group Breakouts: Discussion – challenges and major issues of concern (past and current) with regard to trans-boundary Dolphin management.
- 1600 – 1730 Plenary: Presentation of issues arising from group breakouts and discussion

9 December 2004 (Thursday)

- 0815 – 0830 Presentation of Day 1 outcomes
- 0830 – 1030 Group breakouts – Discuss draft resolution (including a monitoring programme) and identify institutional responsibilities and resource requirements for implementing
- 1030 – 1130 Plenary presentation and adoption of trans-boundary Dolphin Management Resolution.
- 1130 – 1200 Closing remarks (Governor – Stung Treng Province)