

The Mekong

The Mekong River is one of the great river systems of the world. Rising in the Tibetan Plateau and discharging into the South China Sea some 4,800 kilometres later, it is ranked as the 12th longest of the world's rivers and runs through six countries – China, Myanmar, Thailand, Lao PDR, Cambodia and Viet Nam.

The Mekong River Basin is home to over 70 million people and supports many unique ecosystems including a wide array of globally-threatened species such as the Irrawaddy Dolphin, Siamese Crocodile, Giant Catfish and Sarus Crane.

High levels of human population and usage have led to increasing unplanned development pressures within the basin, causing many direct threats to most of the important ecosystems and endangered species for which the region is renowned. This poses a significant threat to biodiversity and environmental sustainability, and thereby to the livelihoods of the Mekong peoples.

MWBP is working with the four riparian governments to address the most critical issues of the Mekong. With the regional office based in Vientiane, Lao PDR, MWBP has National Programme Offices and Demonstration Sites in each of the four Lower Mekong countries – Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Viet Nam.

Vision: Wise use and coordinated management of wetland resources in the Lower Mekong Region

Where we work



Mekong Wetlands
Biodiversity Conservation and
Sustainable Use Programme

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The Mekong Wetlands Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use Programme (MWBP) is a joint programme of the four riparian governments of the Lower Mekong Basin – Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Viet Nam – managed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Conservation Union (IUCN) and the Mekong River Commission (MRC), in collaboration with other key stakeholders. With funding from the Global Environment Facility (GEF), UNDP, The Royal Netherlands Government, MRCS, the Water and Nature Initiative (WANI) and other donors, the programme tries to address the most critical issues for the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources in the Mekong wetlands.

The programme aims to strengthen the capacity of organisations and people to develop sustainable livelihoods and manage wetland biodiversity resources wisely.

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Addressing the most critical issues for the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources in the Mekong wetlands, by strengthening the capacity of organisations and people to develop sustainable livelihoods and manage wetland biodiversity resources wisely.

A JOINT UNDP - IUCN - MRC GEF-FUNDED PROGRAMME





Cambodia

Hosted by the Ministry of Environment, MWBP in Cambodia has a National Programme Office in Phnom Penh which oversees management planning, and encourages a multi-sectoral approach through building capacity and increasing public involvement. Contributing to the information base needed to support sound wetland policy, planning and management decision-making is also a main focus.

At the local level, MWBP works at the Stung Treng Ramsar Site to demonstrate Ramsar management planning and integrate community development for biodiversity conservation, agriculture and other related sectors. Emphasis is placed on alternative livelihoods projects, access to finance and developing local capacity to benefit from increased opportunities.



Lao PDR

Hosted by The Living Aquatic Resources Research Centre (LARReC), with representation from the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry of the Government of Lao PDR, MWBP works in Attapeu Province to support local livelihoods and develop the capacity of the Provincial Government to sustainably manage wetland resources. This approach is cross-cut by a poverty focus which aims to include poorer and more vulnerable groups in project activities. Backed by the National Office in Vientiane, MWBP's work will contribute greatly to the realisation of government policy in combating poverty and achieving wise management of wetland resources.



Thailand

In collaboration with the Government of Thailand, the National Office of MWBP, based in Bangkok, works with the Office of Natural Resources and Environmental Policy and Planning (ONEP) to distribute information to key decision makers and build support at the policy level, while the demonstration site works in the Lower Songkhram River Basin to coordinate programme implementation at the local levels.

One successful initiative of the demonstration site, which is coordinated with external partners, is the village based research "Thai Baan". Thai Baan participatory resource research involves community-based documentation of local resources and their importance to village livelihoods. The research demonstrates the power of local people to improve livelihoods, conservation and natural resource use. This method is now a model of other countries in the programme to integrate local knowledge and participation with science to conserve and improve natural resource management.



Viet Nam

The last two remnants of the Plain of Reeds wetland ecosystem have been chosen as the demonstration sites for MWBP in Viet Nam. Tram Chim National Park boasts tremendous biodiversity and is home to about 60% of the world's Sarus Crane population (the tallest flying bird). Lang Sen is also rich in biodiversity and where the natural forest along the channels in the Plain of Reeds is found.

Working in partnership with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, MWBP Viet Nam aims to overcome obstacles to wise wetland management, posed by varying interests, lack of understanding, exclusion of local people in planning and weak legal frameworks. The National office in Ha Noi coordinates with the demonstration site to help strengthen Viet Nam's Ramsar Convention, conduct training, engage experts and provide recommendations for wetland management.

