



Mekong Wetlands Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use Programme

QUARTERLY PROGRESS REPORT

SEVENTH QUARTERLY PROGRESS REPORT

JANUARY – MARCH 2006

PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

Introduction

This is the seventh quarterly progress report for the MWBP covering the period from January to March 2006. This summary report highlights achievements and constraints experienced during the quarter. The full progress report of activities taken from the database provides additional details.

Activity Highlights and Achievements (arranged by “Story”)

A. Let the River Flow:

Environmental flows

- IBFM Phase 2 study database is now fully functional and presented. Phase 2 Specialist reports have been placed in the MRC EP Library.
- IBFM Phase 3 workplan was finalized and started in January 2006. Priorities of 2006 research are fisheries, geomorphology, hydrology and hydraulic study on sediment and modelling. A study of the Siphandone area is one of the priorities for carrying out the GIS work and the use of satellite images to identify and categorize islands and islets in the area, to identify channels and categorize the flow types and inundation for a set of known discharge levels in dry and wet season.
- Linkage between WUP Development of Preliminary Maintenance of Flow Procedure and IBFM Phase 3 has been identified.
- M-Power partners held their first inception meeting in Chiang Mai in February, bringing together 45 participants, research fellows and donors. IUCN WANI held side meetings on the upcoming multi-stakeholder dialogue and workshop in Kunming on watershed management and participation.

Lao PDR - Upper Mekong:

- The Upper Mekong synthesis report has been finalised and is currently with government for approval. Briefing to STEA on the progress of the Upper Mekong surveys presented in February 2006.
- Translation of the FLOW book into Lao language has started, and is progressing well.

Thailand –

- There have been joint information sharing and planning meetings for E-flow studies in Songkhram River Basin with participation from MRC IBFM staff, WUP-FIN, IUCN and others. A consultant from IWMI has been contracted to help guide the process,

A JOINT UNDP - IUCN - MRC GEF-FUNDED PROGRAMME



Vietnam

- The Fire and Water Management strategy work at Tram Chim has made good progress, continuing with the monthly monitoring process of hydrology, soils, water quality and vegetation, and experimental draw down of water levels.
- In collaboration with the US Forest Service, staff of Tram Chim worked to use the BEHAVE (fire behaviour) software, collecting field data for the model and how to conduct a prescribed burning experiment. Funds were provided for the Tram Chim NP to purchase fire combating equipment
- A national workshop was held to disseminate the Huong River E-Flow studies in Hue. A team for the translation of the FLOW book into Vietnamese has been appointed.

B. Flagships for Biodiversity

Species Conservation Action Planning:

- **Giant Mekong Catfish**
 - There has been significant media coverage about the Giant Mekong Catfish conservation efforts of MWBP and its partners.
 - A decision on establishing a moratorium on Giant Catfish fishing in Chiang Khong, Northern Thailand, has marked significant progress and meetings with fishers, DoF officials and conservation organisations over the past year. A scheme to compensate the fishers for their nets has been devised and funds raised both internationally and nationally.
 - The telemetry studies on the movements of the Giant Catfish and other large species has started in the Chiang Khong/Houieyay area
- **Irrawaddy Dolphins**
 - In partnership with WWF Cambodia and the Department of Fisheries, a range of activities are continuing in support of implementation of the Dolphin Strategy – ranging from policy to education and awareness, research and monitoring and community based dolphin conservation work.
 - Concern about the mortality of dolphins, especially of calves, is growing, and WCS have been coordinating laboratory analyses of tissue samples to determine possible causes of death. Fishing activities seem unlikely to be the cause of most deaths.
 - Further effort is required to strengthen community awareness and participation of dolphin conservation activities outside of Kampi DCZ. Recruitment of a community/awareness officer will help achieve these aims. Lack of human resources in the area around the trans-boundary pool (Lao/Cambodia) hampers its management for dolphin conservation.
- **Sarus Crane –**
 - The status reports of a number of large water birds and a preliminary action plan for the Sarus Crane is being compiled by International Crane Foundation, and several papers for scientific journals drafted
- **Siamese Crocodiles –**
 - The IUCN Regional Species Conservation Programme has been contracted to develop the Crocodile SCAP



- A national level stakeholder consultation was held in Vietnam to discuss options for dealing with the newly discovered population of wild Siamese Crocodiles at Song Hinh
- FFI in Cambodia are implementing some field work on crocodile populations in Cambodia and other discussions are being held with WCS for additional studies.

Wetland Mapping and Information Management

- Basinwide wetland maps have been revised and updated; distributed at PMC and ERSC in hard and soft copy.
- Coverage included in Wetland Map Service (WMS) of MRC portal in two levels of classification - now waiting for public access issues to portal to be resolved.
- Demonstration site wetland maps completed and distributed at PMC and ERSC in hard and soft copy.
- Coverage included in Wetland Map Service (WMS) of MRC portal
- Draft Basinwide Protected Area coverage produced – waiting for official data sets from line agencies so that this can be distributed.

Wetland Inventory, Assessment and Monitoring

Cambodia

- Concept note with output and strategy for Cambodia Rapid Wetland Assessment and Inventory have been produced and circulated to PMU and to relevant partners for comments and partnership to work on this. Institutional partner identified to do the Cambodia Rapid Wetland Assessment and Inventory.

Thailand

- Initial WIAM rapid assessment conducted with assistance from an international Wetlands consultant, MWBP Ecologist and a local wetlands plant expert. Overall condition was assessed and key local biodiversity hotspots in LSRB were identified between 13-18 March

Vietnam

- Research was carried out on the impacts of the high dyke upon fishery in Tram Chim NP, together with in-depth discussions with fishers on the behaviour of local fish and their distribution in the park.
- Bird research was also carried out in Tram Chim similar to studies carried out 10 years ago for comparative purposes

Technical Guides/Handbooks:

- Editing of Aquatic Freshwater Macro-Invertebrate Key has been completed – next step is to complete layout for publishing.

- Workplanning for volume 1 of the guide on Aquatic Vascular/Wetland Plants between Chiang Sean and Kratie is being finalised
- A French-Khmer-English botanical wordlist is being prepared by the Royal Botanic Gardens, Edinburgh and the Paris herbarium to facilitate non-French speakers using the existing botanical references such as Flore du Cambodge.

C. People using wetlands

Livelihoods

Stung Treng –

- Darwin project – the first planning workshop was held in Phnom Penh for this sub-project, which aims to develop methodologies for undertaking integrated biodiversity, livelihoods and economics assessments in Stung Treng, building on existing activities in the site. The focus is on the four Sala Phoum villages and on the deep-pool flooded forest ecosystem in the Ramsar Site.
- Sala Phoum - The community based resource assessment of Fisheries and Plants continued, with reports submitted and a progress workshop held.
- Health Unlimited recruited a nutritionist and health communicator and have started training on participatory methodology for community baselines and needs assessments. Some initial community mapping and PRAs have been undertaken. Research on water borne vectors and nutrition is being developed for inclusion in community health education curriculum.
- Reports on Silkworm Farming and ecotourism have been completed with recommendations for livelihood pilots. These will be discussed together with other reports with the provincial RDC in Stung Treng for incorporation into provincial development work.
- Sustainable Agriculture – study completed and report expected shortly
- Micro Credit – report received but required significant redrafting.

Attapeu

- **Community fisheries management** - assessing impacts and suitability of FCZ in three target villages as well as supporting village & community meetings, informal and formal community consultations, providing comments and associated support to drafting of community fisheries rules and regulations and assisting in delineating and signing FCZ areas. In addition, in response to a request from a neighbouring village (Ban Kaengxay) village to help support community management of a village wetland area two field visits were conducted supporting community consultations and information dissemination..
- **Feasibility surveys and proposal development** - A number of technical and social surveys were carried out in the areas of 1) rice field fishery, 2) community wetland management in Nong Lom, 3) Community and householder pond fish culture in Ban Kasom and river fisheries management (FCZs). These surveys conducted with provincial partners were then discussed and used to inform activity proposal development. Two meetings were held to agree upon activity plans and schedule.



- **Water & health (wells)** - Conducting a technical survey to determine geological formation, presence/absence of arsenic and other technical and logistical considerations. A consultant and the provincial water supply dept. have been recruited to carry out the drilling and equipment has been identified and ordered. Drilling is now underway.
- **Health and nutrition (facilitation training, CDX, study tour)** - conducting a villager facilitation training course to enable villagers to act as facilitators for community health and nutrition diagnosis and as a precursor to being able to assess, manage and monitor their own health and nutritional needs. Community diagnosis was undertaken as a follow up to the training course. A study tour to Cambodia was held, to learn from the PFD (partners for Development) Project.

Songkhram –

In the first quarter of 2006, project activities have been going at full speed ahead, continuing with existing initiatives, adapting some old ones and introducing new ones, as the National Project Office more closely coordinates its activities down to the Demo Site level. In particular, the Project has been busy in raising its profile at the Sub-District (Tambon) level, by engaging with 5 Tambons in Sri Songkhram District with a view to more close cooperation in future in assisting them in wiser, more participatory and integrated approaches to management of local natural resources. A range of highlight activities are listed below:

Community-based management established at key sites in LSRB

- Review activities for action planning at village level in Ban Pak Yam, Ban Uan , Ban Yang Ngoy and Ban Tha Bor
- Fish Conservation Zone management plans have been identified with the community
- Community Flooded Forest have been identified and selected pilot areas with the draft management planning.
- 2 Study tours of flooded forest conservation management in North East of Thailand Pa Tam Gut Beng in Mun River Basin near Rasi Salai were conducted for 80 villagers from 4 villages. The main goal of this trip was to allow all participants to learn from others about the process of forming a network of local community forest management.
- PPO Manager has been involved in 3 planning meetings of **Queen's Royal Project “ Humans and Community, live with water”**, at Ban Tha Kong , to develop a wetlands conservation management plan with the community and a core team of Nakhon Phanom provincial agencies.
- 2 sites of community flooded forest at Ban Yang Ngoy and Ban Tha Bo had already been mapped and inventoried by MWBP staff and the local people



- **Sustainable livelihood strategies promoted in LSRB** - Village representatives taken on Study tours to Ubon Ratchatani and Yasothon provinces to see local livelihood options being conducted by community groups elsewhere
- **Networks of resource users strengthened in LSRB** Continuing close involvement and support of project with Tai Baan research Network villagers

Plain of Reeds

- Members of Resource User Groups have been identified in Phu Duc and Phu Hiep communes around Tram Chim National Park
- An agreement has been reached amongst project partners on the processes to be used for natural resource management around Tram Chim and Lang Sen
- A comprehensive survey on existing livelihoods in the Tram Chim and Lang Sen areas to provide information and ideas for the formulation of business/production plans

D. Towards wise use of wetlands

Wetland Policy – Guiding principles,

- National consultation meetings were held in Lao PDR and Thailand - a combined meeting report will be distributed following the national meetings in Viet Nam and Cambodia to be held in late May.

Sectoral policy reviews and National Wetland Action Plans

Cambodia,

- Network analysis of wetland and water stakeholders: Identify current stakeholders: All active groups are defined and updated to the list for different fields such the fisheries working group, forestry and environmental working group, Agriculture and irrigation working group, water- working group, many other working groups, task forces and committees have been established.
- Support sub-group member: through co-financing of WANI, the Water Working Group meeting and field visit was organised to Stung Chinit Irrigation scheme. There were more than twenty participants from different partners which are the member of the water-working group. The NPC is involved directly to encourage the group participations and as the technical resource person for this working group.
- Review NWAP, Ramsar Implementation and other MEAS: (1) the NWAP is already translated into Khmer, (2) Agenda and work plan for review of NWAP, Ramsar Implementation and other MEAs have been layout. (3) Agreed process and methodologies for the reviews all of this have been discussed and prepared.
- Sectoral policy and IWRM: (1) Key institutions and peoples have been identified and contacted, with information sharing and action points. (2) Some partners have been built



through the contracts, work plan and action points such as CEDAC, CBNRM-LI, NGO-Forum, Worldfish Centre and DoF. (3) Field visits for exploration of local experiences on irrigation, land use and agriculture in some provinces have been conducted, (4) Water Working Group was established through the technical assistance of MWBP, and (5) Almost key related sectoral policies have been collected.

Lao PDR,

- Ways forward on how to review the national wetland management policy and regulations were discussed in the national consultation meeting, which was held on 30 January in Vientiane Province, organised with the Department of Livestock and Fisheries.

Provincial planning (EIA case studies & PESAP)

- An international consultant recruited to assist the PPO in facilitating a "Writeshop" to help trainees structure, organise, analyse and report on four environmental assessment case studies. Draft case studies reviewed and sent to an editor
- 1st Provincial PEC meeting in Attapeu was supported by the PPO and the Provincial Environmental Strategy and Action Plan (PESAP) was reviewed and commented upon. Agreement from the PEC for the PPO to assist PSTEO to update draft PESAP to reflect wetland and fishery concerns.

Thailand,

Integrated planning processes for the Lower Songkhram Basin strengthened

- Preparing a draft proposal for Strengthen capacity of 5 TAOs wetlands management planning with TEI
- Activity Progress has been sharing in the monthly Nakhon Phanom official meeting.
- Significant steps have been taken to establish a Nakhon Phanom Provincial Wetlands Committee, coordinated by Co-Manager. Discussions held with Provincial Governor and key agencies in the province to develop roles and functions of this new committee. It will strengthen the provincial authorities coordination and ability to make informed decisions about development issues related to wetlands

Vietnam,

- Review of Wetlands and IWRM Policies has been completed
- Proposal for development of tools for implementation of National wetlands action plan is under review with a expert working group meeting held to discuss the contents;
- The first draft of a new national wetlands classification system has been completed and at a consultative workshop in March 2006

Support to Ramsar Convention

- Information is being collected for preparation of the proposal of Siphandone as Lao's first Ramsar Site. Site visits and mapping have been carried out by MRC and IUCN, and draft Ramsar Information Sheet prepared.



- Discussions have started to consider the nomination of Tram Chim, Vietnam as a Ramsar site

Wetland Economics

- Finalization of detailed study on “irrigation impacts on wetland resources” in Attapeu and in Songkhram demonstration sites. This includes finalization of study places in each of the demonstration site, selection of local collaborative partners (from the national agencies) to initiate field work. This a 3-country regional project. The Env. Economist of MWBP and a water scientist from IWMI carried out a field visit and consultation meetings in Attapeu.
- A grant project proposal on “*Irrigation impacts study on That Luang wetlands*” was finalized after incorporating comments of the external reviewers. This project is being led by Dr. Phouphet, Sr. Lecturer of NUOL, Vientiane, and is being done in collaboration with MWBP-PMU. Environmental Economist of PMU is advisor of the research project. The field work under this project will be jointly done by the two institutes of NUOL and MWBP. Funding for this project is basically approved from EEPSEA/IDRC.
- The draft strategy paper on “Economics policy issues of MWBP” was finalized and presented at the PMC meeting in Vientiane during first week of Feb, 2006. Comments from Senior Economists from IUCN-Asia program have been incorporated.
- Developed 3 fact sheets on different aspects of Economics component related activities of MWBP.

E. Programme implementation and cross-cutting issues

Strengthening national ownership – various Steering Committees

- During the quarter, National Steering Committees were held in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Vietnam. The national workplans and budgets were presented and approved in Thailand and Cambodia. Additional information was requested in Lao and Vietnam, to clarify the presentation and the linkages between national and provincial activities.
- In preparation for the various steering committees the PMC meeting was held in Vientiane on 7th February. This was followed by a site visit to That Luang Marsh, Venetiane, together with a briefing about a proposed collaborative environmental economic study by MWBP and University.
- The 3rd Executive Regional Steering Committee was held in Phnom Penh on 28 February 2006. The programme workplan and budget was presented and approved pending further clarifications with the national steering committees. Also discussed was the TOR for the mid-term evaluation and proposals for developing and resourcing Phase B.
- In Vietnam, the terms of reference and the key members of the Wetlands Technical Advisory Group has been developed to support the national and provincial work, reporting to the National Steering Committee

Training

- Training course on Conflict Management for Natural Resource Management was conducted for 21 participants from MWBP and counterparts at Dong Thap, Vietnam on 13



to 19 February 2006. It is aimed to improve understanding and knowledge about conflicts and why they arise; to provide skills, tools, and processes for managing conflicts; and to share experiences and ideas on conflict management.

- Assisted all trained people to complete self-training assessment in their respective offices, then all reports were compiled to be the report of the programme as the whole (self-training assessment of MWBP 2005).
- A small sub-project has been accepted for funding by the IUCN Netherlands Committee for four 5-day training courses on preparation of wetland project proposals to be held in each of the four countries and open to government and non-government partner organisations. These will be held in third quarter 2006

Cambodia

- 5 staff from partners took part in the Darwin Initiative project in preparation for biodiversity, livelihoods and economic valuation surveys in Stung Treng.

Thailand

- Discussions with Nakhon Phanom Educational Office for conducting local curriculum workshop Tai Baan is now to be included in local curriculum and Final workshop on Water quality testing in schools to be held in early April. Walai Rukavej BRI and MWBP staff have visited participating schools to check up on progress and prepare them for the final workshop

Vietnam

- Conflict management course organised in Tram Chim with participation from all four countries
- Ecosystem approach training workshop held in Cao Lanh in March with participation of the IUCN Commission on Ecosystem Management and a national workshop is being planned
- Training on presentation skills organised by NPO in Hanoi, with 12 participants from partners and training provided by AITCV.
- In co-operation with Forest Protection Technical Centre #3 of FPD, a training was provided on forest fire prevention and combating for 35 park staff and rangers at Tram Chim, including legal regulations, annual fire control workplanning, fire science and prevention and combating methods, safety and usage of fire combating equipment

Communications

- Twelve fact sheets produced for the evaluation (minor editing still required)
- First MWBP networking discussion paper sent out to over 1,000 people internationally, regionally and locally
- Eight media releases distributed in four languages
- MWBP notebooks and pens produced and distributed
- MWBP acronym reference list produced and distributed



- Website completely updated. New pages include MWBP Media coverage, MWBP media releases and Lao PPO stories and staff profiles uploaded to the website
- Vulnerability Assessments finalised and uploaded to website
- Thailand Networking Action Plan finalised
- Lao Networking Report – second draft produced and reviewed
- Final draft of Viet Nam Communications Strategy completed (final approval 3 April 2006)

Cambodia

- Advocacy Strategy: Consulted and drafted the national advocacy strategy, consulted and agreed by the PMU, in particular the Regional Communication Coordinator.
- About 500 persons took part in the World Wetland Day celebrations in Phnom Penh on 2nd February

Lao PDR

- National wetland specialist network establishment was started, database development, field survey and data analysis were completed and draft report is now available for comments at NPO.
- Drafting a provincial communication strategy and discussing ways to seek integration with the national strategy as well as determining yr. 2006 activities.
- World Wetland Day was celebrated with around four hundred people. Activities included a boat trip to observe gold dredging activities along the Xe Kong (for decision makers), a children's quiz, treasure hunt, musical show, fishing games and poem competition.

Thailand

- Thai language website under development. An agreement has been reached with ONEP to continue the Thai/English newsletter that had been produced under the DANIDA project.
- World Wetland day celebrations in Ban Pak Yam were bigger and better than in previous years and coincided with the launch of the Tai Baan Fish Book. Poster displays, information booths, cultural displays, art competitions, fish stocking in village FCZ. over 500 people attending, including many school children. Also invited were a large contingent of journalists from Thai media, some of which led to positive press articles for the project.

Vietnam

- The first meeting of the expert network was held in Hanoi in March with 94 experts and 16 organisations identified. They have been classified into 3 groups - Wetlands Biodiversity, Wetlands Management and Wetlands Livelihoods, with 3 chapters – for the north, centre and south of the country
- World Wetland Day was celebrated on 25 February, with a media briefing in Hanoi, followed by field visit and celebrations at Xuan Thuy Ramsar Site
- A 4-day study tour was organised for 9 or the 14 members of the National Steering Committee to the Plain of Reeds to coincide with World Wetlands Day celebrations in the Dong Thap and Long An provinces



Office operations and staffing

Office Operations

All offices report satisfactory operation, with no major constraints. There have been some minor staff changes in the Attapeu office. In the PMU the Executive Secretary and Driver have tendered resignations and will leave at end of April.

Developing workplans for 2006

Work plans budgets for 2006 have been developed and presented at National and Regional steering committees.

Database, Monitoring and Evaluation

TORs for the Mid-term evaluation have been prepared and agreed at the Regional Steering Committee. The consultant positions have been advertised and the mission is due to start by the end of May 2006.

The MWBP database has been simplified to ease reporting processes. On-the-job training in reporting skills at three demonstration site offices (Stung Treng, Attapeu, Songkhram). was organised successfully.

Support from IUCN Asia Regional Office

IUCN ARO has continued to provide support in various aspects that have included:

- Ongoing support for resourcing co-finance for Phase B
- Preparation of contracts development and management
- Preparation of sub-project proposals
- Editing of reports and preparation of materials for the mid-term evaluation

Issues and Constraints

• Funding issues

The position on the availability of GEF funding for Phase B remained unclear during the quarter although the concept of establishing four national Medium sized projects under the GEF biodiversity window together with a regional coordinating Medium sized project under the Adaptation to Climate Change window was discussed. IUCN ARO prepared a Resourcing Strategy which was discussed at the PMC and Regional Steering Committee. Nevertheless, the uncertainty of the Phase B funding situation and how to address it has required additional attention of the Team Leader, and causes concern about continuity of the programme amongst the staff.

• Financial reporting

The financial reporting of activities and tasks is very complicated for a programme with nine different offices. Data capture and allocation of expenditure to the appropriate tasks is sometimes



misclassified and therefore requires a lengthy process of checking and reallocation. This has led to delays submissions of expenditures. Development of the TOR for the annual audit and briefing of finance and admin staff for this audit was carried out together with compliance checks.

- **Administration in PMU**

Support for admin systems and filing from IUCN ARO have been continued during the quarter. A contracts database has been established within the PMU, which will enable closer tracking of contracts and institutional agreements.

- **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.

Signed

Peter-John Meynell
UNDP Team Leader

1/5/2006

Annex: Media Coverage for January – March 2006 (all on website)

MWBP Holds Workshop for Incorporating Traditional Knowledge into Local Curriculum
Thai News PRD, 30 March 2006 (Thai)

For Our Nation: Coordinating Conservation of Wetlands Across the Lower Mekong Basin
Khaosod Newspaper, 27 March 2006 (Thai)

World Water Day Highlights Storages



The Vientiane Times, 23 March 2006

MWBP Celebrates World Water Day

Khaosod Newspaper, 22 March 2006 (Thai)

Rare Aquatic Animals Face Extinction Threat

The Bangkok Post, 06 March 2006 (English)

Policies Critical to Solving Wetland Management Woes

The Bangkok Post, 5 March 2006 (English)

Youth Programme for Wetlands Conservation Activities

The Education and Age Newspaper, 2 March 2006 (Vietnamese)

We Need to Use Wetlands Wisely

The Science and Development Newspaper, No9, 2-8 March 2006

Viet Nam Marks World Wetlands Day by Encouraging Environmental Preservation

Viet Nam News, 1 March 2006 (English)

Ramsar Convention and Conservation in Thailand 4: Investment in the Agriculture Industry Causes Loss of Wetlands

Daily News, 10 February 2006 (Thai)

Ramsar Convention and Conservation in Thailand 3: Weirs and destruction of the Songkhram River

Daily News, 09 February 2006 (Thai)

Ramsar Convention and Conservation in Thailand 2: Demonstration site in the Lower Songkhram River Basin

Daily News, 08 February 2006 (Thai)

Ramsar Convention and Conservation in Thailand 1: Follow up to World Wetlands Day

Daily News, 07 February 2006 (Thai)

Worldwide Destruction of Wetlands

Originally published in Tribune, 05 February 2006 (English)

Wetlands - Poverty Alleviation Tool

VEPA magazine, No1 2006 (Vietnamese)

Status of the Giant Catfish in the Mekong River

VEPA magazine, No1 2006 (Vietnamese)

Irrawaddy Dolphins Bowing Out

Inter Press Service News Agency, 02 February 2006 (English)

Environmental Review VN Wetland Conservation Efforts

VNS, 18 January 2006 (English)

Report on Viet Nam's Wetlands Released

Viet Nam News Agency (VNA), 17 January 2006 (English)