



**Mekong Wetlands Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use Programme
(MWBP)**

**Report on World Wetlands Day (WWD)
6 February 2006
Koh Sneng Ramsar Site, Stung Treng, Cambodia**

Organised by the Provincial Department of Environment and MWBP

World Wetlands Day Report

06 February 2006 Koh Sneng/ Stung Treng, Cambodia

Introduction

The World Wetlands Day (WWD) was celebrated within the Ramsar Site at Koh Sneng commune in the Thalaborivat district of Stung Treng province, Cambodia, on 06 February 2006. It was organised by the Department of Environment Stung Treng (DoE) and the Mekong Wetlands Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use Programme (MWBP), with various support from PSF, CGA, Oxfam Australia, CEPA, SSP, UNICEF Sithkoma. It was attended by honourable delegates H.E. Tann Vutha, Secretary of State of Ministry of Environment, H.E. Nhem Samon, Deputy Provincial Governor of Stung Treng, H.E. Seng Hornsy Deputy General Administrative of Ministry of the Interior, Mr. Mao Kosal, MWBP Representative and Mr. Chea Kimsien, Stung Treng DoE Director.

The purposes of the WWD was to raise the awareness of local people, inter-governmental institutions and civil society on the values of wetlands biodiversity and the functions and importance of conservation and sustainable use of wetlands in and around the Stung Treng Ramsar site. Attendances totaled 2,800 from the provincial line departments of Stung Treng, NGO representatives, police, military, teachers, students, commune councils, commune and border police, border customs, Ramsar site rangers, community fisheries and forestry committees, monks and local villagers.

The schedule for World Wetland Day (Annex 1)

Results of the WWD 2006

The World Wetlands Day (WWD) programme was conducted smoothly in one day (6 February 2006). This was the third year that it had been celebrated in Stung Treng by the Provincial Department of Environment with support from MWBP, provincial, district and local authorities.

During celebrations of the WWD at Koh Sneng speeches were given by H.E. Tann Vutha, Secretary of State of Ministry of Environment, H.E. Nhem Samon, Deputy Provincial Governor of Stung Treng, H.E. Seng Hornsy, Deputy General Administrative of Ministry of the Interior, Mr. Mao Kosal, MWBP Representative, Mr. Hak Channy, Department of Nature Conservation and Protection Department Representative, Mr. Pech Darong, MWBP Co-Manager and Mr. Chea Kimsien, Stung Treng DoE Director.

The speeches emphasised wetlands values and issues, the history of the Ramsar convention, why WWD is celebrated in February, and provided information on Cambodia's three Ramsar sites. They also stressed strongly the roles of people, government institutions and civil societies at all levels in the conservation, management and wise use of wetlands.

The estimates of people attending the celebrations were:

- 09:00-11:30 (morning): 800 persons (female: 60 %)
- 14:00-18:00 (afternoon): 800 persons (female: 60%)
- 18:30-21:30 (night): 1200 persons (female: 70%)

A variety of materials were prepared and distributed or shown in the local language (Khmer):

- 400 T-shirts bearing the 2006 wetlands' slogans "In the face of poverty wetlands are lifelines" and, "Her future at risk"
- 900 copies of MWBP leaflets about Mekong Livelihoods, Wetlands Livelihoods
- 900 copies of MWBP leaflets about Wetlands in the Lower Mekong Basin

- 900 copies of MWBP leaflets on Wetlands and Biodiversity in the Lower Mekong Basin
- 900 copies of MWBP leaflets addressing the most critical issues of the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources in the Mekong wetlands, and on strengthening the capacity of organisations and people to develop sustainable livelihoods and manage wetland biodiversity resources wisely.
- 500 posters on Ramsar WWD 2006.
- 300 stickers on Ramsar WWD 2006.
- Video movies on:
 - WWD 2006 celebration in Phnom Penh on 2 February 2006
 - WWD 2006 celebration in Koh Sneng on 6 February 2006
 - Water management project of Koh Sneng primary school featuring a specially composed song
 - Wetlands management and use.

Schoolchildren from the four Ramsar site primary schools (Samaki, Koh Sneng, O'Svay and Preah Rumkel communes) did a great job. Each school raised awareness on conservation and protection of wetlands and wildlife by using a variety of techniques such as story telling, poems and short action plays with entertainment. Prizes were prepared and handed over to the winners by the delegates.

Art competition winners:

- 1- Samaki Primary School (art competition, first prize)
- 2- Koh Sneng Primary School (art competition second prize)
- 3- O'Svay Primary School (art competition joint third prize)
- 4- Preah Rumkel Primary School (art competition joint third prize)

The same four schools also entered the art competition on the theme of the wise use of wetland resources. Drawing materials were provided by the MWBP. According to the evaluation committee, the first prize went to Samaki, the second to Koh Sneng and the third to Preah Rumkel and O'Svay. The video educational movie show finished at 9:30pm. The entertainment then continued with a dance organised by the commune council for WWD delegates and villagers. Like all the other activities this was held in the grounds of the village Buddhist temple. Government and NGO officials from Stung Treng went to and stayed with the villagers.

Conclusions

The World Wetlands Day celebrations were highly appreciated by all government institutions, armed forces and civil societies and local villagers. Participants attending the WWD celebrations readily captured and understood issues on conservation, management and wise use of wetlands, particularly local villagers who cannot always read and write. Participatory communication tools such as quizzes, story-telling plays, t-shirts, stickers, posters, leaflets, art competitions and educational videos were most effective. Local villagers had the chance to attend and see their children perform in plays about wetlands' resource conservation and sustainable use. Furthermore, all speeches given by delegates strongly stressed the significance of wetlands, wetlands' management, their sustainable and wise use as well as calling for all people to participate in environment and natural resource protection, particularly those of wetlands.

Evaluation

This section provides part of interviews with people who joined in the World Wetlands Day (WWD), 02 February, 2006, celebrated in Koh Sneng village, Koh Sneng Commune, Thalaborivath district, Stung Treng Province.

Mr. Dourng Lean, Chief of Commune Council of Koh Sneng, said: I realised on WWD that it was very important to build up capacities of people for wetlands conservation and flooded forest, fish, dolphin, bird, and many other kind of living things in the wetlands. WWD builds up capacities and responsibility in wetland management and preservation to sustain natural resources for the people in future.

We know already that wetlands are very important for many people all level and agriculture has a long history in Cambodia. Moreover, wetlands are very important for transportation, tourism, irrigation, aquaculture, and dam construction.

Miss Chea Seila, Volunteer of CEPA base in Stung Treng Province, said: the organising of WWD this year for me it very interesting and I now understand about wetlands, especially Ramsar site of Mekong River in Stung Treng. It is a part of the heart of the Kingdom of Cambodia and very important for livelihood. I observe that all participants are happy and active, especially in the question and answer forum. I would like to suggest the next time should organise WWD in local level better than organise in province because it can build up capacity and improve more knowledge to local people and local authority.

Mr. Oum Sopho, Staff of Environment Department, said: WWD celebrating is very interesting and improves the knowledge of government staff and local people on values and function of wetland. This is motivating from many countries in the world for organising the World Wetland Day every year. This is opportunity for Cambodia started for conservation, preservation and awareness directly to many people in local level.

Mr. Kham Leam, Chief of commune council of Preah Romkil, said: The World Wetland Day this year was bigger than last year (2004, 2005) because people understand and are interested in the wetland Ramsar site. According to my opinion, it is a chance to improve knowledge to local people and pupil by use of slogan, banner, and Question and Answer forum. It means that education is taking place to keep understand more about the importance of wetland.

Miss. Taiy Khamporn, Teacher at Koh Sneng Primary School, said: I am very happy participating World Wetland Day 2006, because I motivate pupils to draw picture and organise the role play. This year it is easier than last year because all of them have experience and knowledge of wetlands. I observe that the World Wetland Day this year (2006) all of the participants are happy and well understanding the importance of World Wetland Day every year.

Mr. Leang Chann, Chief of Koh Sneng village, said: For me, I observed that most families in Koh Sneng Commune participated in WWD. Even though, they are busy with their livelihood, but they want to understand and know more about World Wetland Day. The picture, song, poem, and role play are based on value and function of WWD.

Mr. Kong Chanth, Representative of Community Fishery of O'Run village, said: For me I realised that on WWD it is very good for providing opportunity to many local people, for example, the people from O'Run village said that "...this is a chance for us to get new

information, knowledge and all message speak about situation and issues on wetland in Mekong River.”

Mr. Chea Kimsean, Director of Environment Department and Co-Manager of Mekong Wetland Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use Programme, said: I hope and strongly believe that WWD 2006 is a way to improve the awareness of local people for preservation and sustainable conservation in wetland management. Moreover, this is a sensitive knowledge to villagers and pupils about advantages and disadvantages of lost wetland resources. If we using wetlands sustainably this means that provide opportunity for children in future.

Mr. Pech Darong, Co-Manager of Mekong Wetland Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use Programme, said: I would like to summarise about the background of World Wetland Day which is conducted on 2 February every year. This is third time ceremonies were organized in Ramsar site, Stung Treng Province. In WWD, all of us can learn and know about the value and function of the wetland. I do hope that all villages, government officials, and NGOs agencies have increased awareness of wetland values though exhibition, short role play, traditional dances, competition and questions and answers.

Recommendation

According to the people and teachers: This is the third time that the World Wetland Day was conducted here but they have strongly believe that next year (2007) the World Wetland day will be conducted in Samaky Commune because it is the last commune in the Ramsar site.

According to Ms. Nin Sophearot sub-director of Hang Khousourn Primary School: We need the World Wetlands Day conducted in my commune because this ceremony is very importance to us and can improve our knowledge base on the wetlands. I always see these ceremonies conducted in the province and that people and students participating learn a lot of knowledge from these celebrations. Finally, we suggest to have the World Wetland Day will be conducted in Samaki Commune next year 2007 because we want to make our people that living in this commune learn more knowledge about the wetland.

Annex 1

The WWD programme:

6:00-7:00	Delegates and participants arrive at the boat port, Stung Treng
7:00-9:00	Transport to Koh Sneng village
9:00-9:15	Guest and delegation arrivals, Koh Sneng
9:15-9:30	Welcoming and introduction to the day's activities
9:30-9:35	National anthem
9:35-9:40	Dancing to wish well by Samaki Primary School
9:40-10:00	Welcoming speech of the commune head of Koh Sneng
10:00-10:15	Speech of the Stung Treng Department of Environment
10:15-10:30	Speech of MWBP representative by Mr. Pech Darong, Speech of Department of Nature Conservation and Protection representative by Mr. Hak Channy
10:30-10:50	Speech of H.E. Nhem Samon, Deputy Governor of Stung Treng
10:50-11:10	Speech of H.E. Tann Vutha, Ministry of Environment
11:10-11:20	Poems on wetlands management by students from Regional Teacher Training College
11:20-11:30	Visits to the art exhibition
11:30-14:00	Lunch Break
14:00-14:20	Introduction to the afternoon's activities
14:20-16:50	Plays by local schoolchildren – 4 primary schools from the Ramsar site (demonstrating wetlands issues and/or wise use)
15:50-17:00	Judging of the art exhibition and prize distribution
17:00-18:00	Dinner at Koh Sneng
18:00-19:30	Video shows for local people on: - WWD 2006 celebration in Phnom Penh on 2 February 2006 - Video from Tales of Water project
19:30- 22:00	Question and answer forum on wetlands issues