



Training and Capacity Building for Wetlands Management

Training and capacity building to improve human and technical capacity in wetlands biodiversity conservation is one of the key objectives of the Mekong Wetlands Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use Programme (MWBP). During 2005 programme staff and key partners were invited to participate in training activities which focused on developing knowledge and skills to reduce knowledge gaps; establish an information base; raise awareness; and develop mechanisms for programme management. All the training activities, which were translated from the training strategy of phase A, were conducted at three levels (regional, national and provincial) by respective responsible officers (regional training coordinator, national and communication coordinators, and outreach officers).

Regional Training Activities

Each regional training activity was conducted to serve the specific requirement of the participants, examples are:

- The Financial & Administration Management training was attended by Programme Management Unit (PMU) staff, National Programme Coordinators (NPCs), Site Managers, and all financial officers of the programme, resulting in all offices being trained to effectively apply all financial and administrative tools and systems of the programme.
- The Capacity Building Workshop was best matched for team leaders including Regional Communications & Networks Coordinator, Regional Training Coordinator, National Communications and Training Coordinators, Outreach officers, and site managers to ensure better implementation of the training component (e.g. training strategy development and action plan, training need assessment, identifying trainer, trainees, and training topics etc.).
- Biodiversity and Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) training courses, as well as Internal Association of Impact Assessment (IAIA) Conference in the USA provided opportunities for one senior manager of each country to further their knowledge about the linkages between biodiversity and EIA, EIA steps, case study, and related topics of the conferences. Each participant later presented their learning to their fellow colleagues.
- Training of Trainers (TOT) on Wetland Management Training took place in Stung Treng, Cambodia from 6 to 10 June 2005, and was facilitated by the Regional Training Coordinator who attended this course at Wageningen, the Netherlands in September/October 2004. It aimed to transfer knowledge and skills gained on curriculum development in the field of wetlands management to 20 participants.
- Communications Training was facilitated by the Regional Communications and Networks Coordinator in Vientiane from 4-8 July 2005 for ten communications staff of the MWBP to build awareness of MWBP communication tools, protocols and approval processes; and strengthen basic communication skills.
- Monitoring and Evaluation training (M&E) was facilitated by the Ecosystem Management Officer, Programme Administrator and key trainer in Vientiane from 18-22 August 2005. The training provided new insights about the principles and theory of M&E and its relation to project planning, strengthen skills to facilitate planning and evaluation events, and increase knowledge of the MWBP M&E system. Twenty-five participants attended.

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- MWBP supported nine participants from four countries to attend the Mekong Wetlands Ecology and Management Training Course, held by The Mekong University Network in Vientiane from 3 to 24 August 2005 in order to expand and strengthen network of wetland ecology throughout the region. One full day seminar about the work of the MWBP was organised and contributed to the training event.
- Economic Valuation in related to Wetlands Management was facilitated by Environmental Economist and some guest trainers, for 25 participants (programme and counterpart staff) in Vientiane from 10 to 15 October 2005. The training focussed on assessment and valuation of wetland resources by different methods and techniques.
- Sixteen participants (four from PMU and 12 from the four national programme offices and government counterparts) attended the COP9 and study tour in Uganda from 8-20 2005. Participants learnt about COP9 (review the work of the Convention, discuss and adopt all draft resolutions, and plan the future activities; and develop wetland science and policy and management tools) and Uganda's effort to manage its wetland (in terms of a national wetland action plan; wetland legislation; wetland management; institutional aspects; local people involvement; financing etc.).
- The training course on Facilitation and Communication Skills was conducted for 20 participants from MWBP and counterparts at RECOFTC, Bangkok on 28 November to 3 December 2005. It aimed to improve basic facilitation and communication skills, and share experiences and problems in facilitating field process.
- Four participants (one from PMU and three from three national offices) successfully completed a four month self-learning online training course on Wetland Management (1 September – 30 December 2005) conducted by UNESCO-IHE, Institute for Water Education, Netherlands. The four key staff had opportunities to test new learning techniques and found that it was very useful to be able to learn the knowledge needed without leaving the office.

National and Provincial Training Activities

Besides attending and assisting in the selection of participants to attend the above regional training activities, the national training and communication coordinators, as well as the outreach officers, also played a major role in conducting many training events (two to five events) during 2005 in their respective country and province. The national and provincial training activities were applied using similar approaches and principles as at the regional level. Participants were invited from the MWBP, the government and counterpart NGOs, and priority courses were provided and conducted in their national languages.

Conclusion

During 2005 many training activities in all levels were conducted, which all contributed to the overall training strategy, which aims to increase the capacity of key persons to achieve sustainable wetlands management. All training officers of the MWBP were happy with their outputs. It is learnt that in general the training activities were logically sequenced and balanced between general and technical skills, as well as the training types applied (training, training-workshop, study tour, on-the job training). Most participants expressed a very positive outlook on the idea of training activities and the implementation strategy, and they want to see these activities conducted in their respective country and province, in their national languages rather than at the regional level in English language.