



Mekong Wetlands Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use Programme

MEDIA RELEASE

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Global Water Project Turns Spotlight on Children of the Mekong

Children and their relationship with water will be the focus of an international film crew and photographer who will visit the Mekong Region from 4 – 18 December 2005, as part of the global project Tales of Water.

The global project **Tales of Water - A Child's View** tells the exciting story of the many challenges facing water management through the eyes of children. This multimedia project is coordinated and managed by The World Conservation Union (IUCN) and undertaken by the Tales of Water Foundation. It focuses on children living in river basins in the Middle East, Africa, Central and South America, Europe and Asia (project countries of the Mekong River Basin include Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and Viet Nam).

Tales of Water will record the children's ways of seeing, feeling and experiencing water in their daily life, and explore some of their fantasies. The project aims to show the challenges that face children from around the world and to demonstrate how children have their own ways of dealing with water. Through the eyes of children and working with children, Tales of Water shows the essential functions water has as a product, as a service, and above all, as a vital condition for life.

The project will result in a series of video products (e.g. commercials, documentaries, short film), a glossy photo book, a website (<http://www.talesofwater.com>) with photos taken by children, and a pavilion at the 4th World Water Forum. The products will help the 4th World Water Forum audience to have a continuous identification with children from around the world together with their water-symbols and actions.

In the Mekong region the Tales of Water project is supported by the Mekong Wetlands Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use Programme (MWBP)*, The World Conservation Union (IUCN), the Water and Nature Initiative (WANI) of IUCN, and the governments of Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Viet Nam. 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), which aims to strengthen the capacity of organisations and people to develop sustainable livelihoods and manage wetland biodiversity resources wisely.

The Mekong region sites chosen for the project to visit are the demonstration sites of the Mekong Wetlands Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use Programme. The overall Mekong region theme for the Tales Project is Family, Friends, Fun and Future, and footage and images will be collated to reflect this theme. The schedule for the Tales of Water in the Mekong region is:

- 4 - 8 December 2005, Lang Sen, Long An Province, Viet Nam
- 8 - 12 December 2005, Stung Treng, Cambodia
- 12 – 15 December 2005, Attapeu Province, Lao PDR
- 15 – 18 December 2005, Lower Songkhram River Basin, Thailand

The Mekong River is one of the great river systems of the world. The biodiversity of the Mekong River Basin is immense and of truly exceptional significance to international biodiversity conservation, even in comparison with other parts of tropical Asia. This biodiversity is fundamental to the viability of natural resource based rural livelihoods of a population of 55 million people living in the Lower Mekong Basin – a

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population equivalent to more than 90 per cent of the entire Mekong Basin, and about one third of the total population of Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Viet Nam combined.

For more information about the Tales of Water project in the Mekong Region please contact:

Ms Sarah Wood
Regional Communications & Networks Coordinator
Mekong Wetlands Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use Programme (MWBP)
Tel: +856 (0)240 904 Ext 105
Mobile: +856 (0)20 78 11 545
Email: sarah.mwbp@iucnlao.org
Website: www.mekongwetlands.org

Ms Kate Lazarus
Senior Programme Officer
Regional Wetlands and Water Programme
The World Conservation Union (IUCN)
Tel: +856 (0)240 904 Ext 115
Mobile: +856 (0)20 224 3155
Email: kate@iucnlao.org
Website: www.iucn.org

Ms Claire Warmenbol
Tales of Water Communications
IUCN Water Programme
Tel: +41 22 999 0188
Fax: +41 22 364 9720
Email: Claire.warmenbol@iucn.org
Website: www.iucn.org

* 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 addresses the most critical issues for the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources in the Mekong wetlands. MWBP aims to strengthen the capacity of organisations and people to develop sustainable livelihoods and manage wetland biodiversity resources wisely. It is a five-year (2004-2009) intervention at three levels – regional, national and local – with demonstration wetland areas in each of the four countries: in the Songkhram river basin, Thailand; in Attapeu province in southern Lao PDR; in Stung Treng, Cambodia; and in the Plain of Reeds in the Mekong Delta, Viet Nam.

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