



International Media Dialogue Workshop

Water Security Risks and Narratives in Mekong Delta – Vietnam

Can Tho, May 29th – 30th, 2017

Workshop Overview

Located at the extreme southeastern end of the Mekong River where it approaches and empties into the South China Sea through a network of distributaries, the Mekong Delta has long been referred to as Vietnam's "rice bowl" which is characterized by dominant fertile agriculturally-rich low-lands and what may be called a "biological treasure trove." A majority of the Delta's 20 million, ethnically diverse population rely on the River's fish resources and rice production for their subsistence, with very little margin for error. As home to thousands of species of fish, bird, reptile, and mammal species, the Mekong Delta is one of the most biologically diverse areas in the world. Tens of endangered species, such as the largest bird, Sarus crane, and giant catfish, thrive in this maze of wetlands, swamps, arroyos, and canals too.

However, Vietnam's Mekong Delta is now one of the world's most fragile regions appearing most vulnerable to climate hazards, notably temperature rises and extreme drought followed by freshwater scarcity and salinity intrusion. More challenging is the fact that upstream dam-building and water diversion projects have caused severe and irreparable damage to the Delta, making the impacts of climate change become much more serious than what was assumed in prevailing climate change scenarios in Vietnam. As a result, the Delta has so much at stake due to huge water shortages, which in turn may lead to increased rate of salinity, inland ground depression, and humanitarian and other economic impacts.

From China to Vietnam, the mighty Mekong is the lifeblood of riparian states and offers a glimpse into the long history and diverse cultures of the region. The last decades have witnessed the sustained pace of economic development of those countries where rapid economic growth reveals the substantial trade-off between economic development and environmental protection. In a clash between riparian governments trying to meet huge demands for hydropower for a growing population in their energy-hungry urban centers, and the need to protect and preserve the Mekong's ecological riches and fisheries, conservation and water and food security are clearly losing. Despite growing concerns from downstream communities and huge biodiversity and agricultural losses, Mekong mainstream water transfers and dam building are moving forward faster than the completion of any environmental impact assessments needed to provide the evidence of significant impacts.

Political will and mitigation measures need to be built within Mekong basin countries to solve integrated water management challenges in the region. Yet, political will to take cooperative action on shared Mekong water issues is impeded by low levels of mutual understanding and a lack of information-sharing at the inter-state and inter-party levels, and the absence of available avenues for concerned citizens, especially those directly affected by dam-building and water diversion projects, to raise their voices on issues of national importance.

Objectives:

The workshop aims to:

- Raise awareness about dual impacts simultaneously caused by climate change and upper Mekong unsustainable development projects to Mekong Delta environment and water resources security;
- Built understanding across regional journalists of the Mekong water security risks and their implications for regional and international communities from ground-up and interdisciplinary perspectives;
- Promote better communication and media practice on environmental security matters of Mekong Delta and Mekong River as a whole;
- Enhance information-sharing and networking among journalists across the region.

Participants: 70 delegates, including government officials, scientists, NGOs, community, regional and local reporters, and university students.

Duration: 2 days

Approach: Dialogue, sharing information, field visit

Location:

- Learning Resource Centre, Can Tho University, Can Tho city (Workshop)
- U Minh Thuong national park, Kien Giang province (field visit)

Languages: English and Vietnamese

Tentative Agenda

Monday May 29th, 2017	Workshop: <i>Water Security Risks and Narratives in Mekong Delta – Vietnam</i> Learning Resource Centre, Can Tho University,
08:00 – 08:30	Registration
08:30 – 08:40	<i>Welcome remarks</i> Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ha Thanh Toan <i>Rector of Can Tho University</i> Ms. Victoria Rhodin Sandström <i>Second Secretary Migration and Consular and Political Affairs,</i> <i>Swedish Ambassador to Vietnam</i>
08:40 – 09:00	Plenary session <u>Keynote addresses:</u> <i>Water security in Mekong Delta Discourse</i> Assoc. Prof. Dr. Le Anh Tuan, <i>Deputy director of the DRAGON Institute – Can Tho University</i> <i>Green politics and Growing Environmental Activism in Lower Mekong Delta:</i> <i>The roles of journalism and social media</i> Mr. Adam Hunt <i>Senior Consultant: Media, Communications & Program Development, Earth</i> <i>Journalism Network - Internews</i> Mr. Nguyen Minh Quang, <i>Lecturer and freelance journalist at Can Tho University, focusing on politics, conflict</i> <i>studies and Mekong environmental security issues</i>

09:00 – 10:15	<p>Session 1: <i>Dual impacts on water resources in Mekong Delta</i> <u>Key sub-themes:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pressures on water resources security in Mekong Delta: causes, impacts and implications for regional community. - Potential threats of water conversion projects in Mekong Delta. - Facts and updates on hydropower development in upper Mekong River. <p><u>Moderator:</u> Dr. Le Anh Tuan <u>Speakers/Commentators:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dr. Duong Van Ni – <i>Can Tho University</i> - Dr. Thanapon Piman - <i>Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI) in Thailand</i> - Mr. Nguyen Nhan Quang – <i>River basin management expert</i> - Ms. Maureen Harris - <i>Regional Director of International River</i>
10:15 – 10:30	<p><i>Tea break</i> <i>Group Photo</i></p>
10:30– 10:45	<p>Welcome speech by H.E. Pereric Hogberg – Swedish Ambassador to Vietnam</p>
10:45 – 12:00	<p>Session 2: <i>Local concerns on water security risks in Mekong Delta</i> <u>Key sub-themes:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Impacts from environmental changes and water shortages in local farmers’ subsistence and agricultural production. - Concerns from local authorities and community about water security. - Dangers challenging rice and fishery production in Mekong Delta. <p><u>Moderator:</u> Mr. Nguyen Minh Quang <u>Speakers/Commentators:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dr. Mai Thanh Phung <i>National Agriculture Extension Center</i> - Mr. Nguyen Minh Nhi <i>Former President of An Giang Provincial People’s Committee</i>
12:00 – 13:30	<p><i>Lunch break</i></p>
13:30 – 15:00	<p>Session 3: <i>Sustainable exploitation of water resources: Solutions and Policy Recommendations</i> <u>Key sub-themes:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pros and Challenges to management of water resource in Mekong Delta - Regional dialogues on water resources in relation to Mekong Delta - Shared river basin management paradigms and lessons learned - Responses from various stakeholders – local governments, educators, etc: Effectives and Challenges. - Recommendations from experts and initiatives from communities <p><u>Moderator:</u> Dr. Duong Van Ni <i>Independent expert on Mekong ecology and wetlands</i> <u>Speakers/Commentators:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mr. Tran Quang Tho

	<p><i>Deputy Manager of Science and Technology Division, Southern Institute of Water Resources Planning</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mr. Nguyen Nhan Quang <i>River basin management expert</i> - Dr. Nguyen Tran Thien Khanh <i>Deputy Manager of Science and Technology Division, Sustainable Development Department, An Giang University</i> - Teacher and students from Vinh Xuong Secondary school, An Giang province - Ms. Ho Thi Thu Ho <i>Deputy director of Pedagogy Development Center, expert on community education, School of Education, Can Tho University</i>
15:00 – 15:15	Tea break
15:15 – 16:15	<p>Session 4: <i>Experience sharing on reporting water security and climate change matters</i></p> <p><u>Key sub-themes:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Challenges to reporters writing on water and climate change matters - Journalistic skills and experience-sharing <p><u>Moderator:</u> Mr. Hoang Quoc Dzung, <i>Journalist, Executive Deputy President cum General Secretary of Vietnam Forum for Environmental Journalists.</i></p> <p><u>Speakers/Commentators:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mr. Adam Hunt – <i>Earth Journalism Network</i> - Ms. Margita Boström – <i>Asia Correspondent of Swedish National Radio</i> - Ms. Paritta Wangkiat – <i>President of Thai Society of Environmental Journalists</i> - Ms. Tran Thuy Binh – <i>Hanoi Television</i>
16:15 – 16:30	<p>Field trip overview</p> <p><u>Facilitated by:</u> Mr. Nguyen Minh Quang</p>
Tuesday May 30th, 2017	<p>Field visit to U Minh Thuong National Park, Kien Giang province <i>(for concerned media reporters and scholars only – registration required)</i></p> <p><u>Participants:</u> 40 reporters and experts</p>
06:20	Departure from Phuong Dong hotel
09:00 – 12:30	<p>Field work in U Minh Thuong national park</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Meet U Minh Thuong national park’s board of management - Visit the Park by boats
12:30 – 13:30	Lunch break
13:30-15:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Community interviews - Open discussions and concluding remarks
15:30	Back to Can Tho
19:00	Gala dinner

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