

First Call for Papers

Mekong Actual Outcomes

International Conference on Post-Facto Evaluation of Official Development Assistance in the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS)

October 5-7, 2007

Northern Illinois University, De Kalb Illinois USA

Rationale

The Mekong River catchment encompasses most of Laos, much of Cambodia, and parts of China, Burma (Myanmar), Thailand, and Vietnam. In the three decades since the close of the Second Indochina War, hundreds of millions of dollars in multilateral and bilateral contributions — largely concessionary loans and grants — were allocated to ambitious projects within the Mekong basin, of which the objectives have specifically included biodiversity conservation; social and gender equity and sustainability in natural resources management; cultural preservation; and institutional development or “capacity building” of national and regional environmental agencies and NGOs.

There has been the widest range of successes and failures amongst these schemes, but formal initiatives and transparent mechanisms for comparing their intended with their actual results continue to be the exception, rather than the rule. (Likewise, *post-facto* recalculation of the cost/benefit analyses.) Why should this be so, given the phenomenal level of aggregate investment, and the onerous debt burden too often incurred in accepting it?

“Downstream review and learning” means that even unexpected and negative outcomes can be made positive in due course by systematically learning from mistakes and applying corrections.

The Northern Illinois University Center for Southeast Asian Studies www.niu.edu/cseas/ and the Ohio University (Athens) Center for International Studies/Southeast Asian Studies www.ohiou.edu/seas/ are pleased to announce joint sponsorship of an unprecedented international conference on Mekong-focused case studies and firsthand experience towards generalizable methodologies for assessing actual outcomes and for achieving downstream learning. The Conference publication will be a peer-reviewed interactive *e-book* of reality-based best practices.

As surely as “data is not the plural of anecdote,” neither are quantitative methodologies the sole legitimate approach to project evaluation. We intend this Conference as friendly to both camps.

Deadlines

May 15, 2007 is the deadline for panel proposals. For panel proposals, please provide the title of the panel and a brief paragraph describing its goal/rationale, participants' names, affiliations and email address, the titles of their presentations and a paragraph long abstract for each presentation. June 15, 2007 is the deadline for individual paper abstracts. For individual papers please provide no longer than a one page abstract with the title of abstract, author name(s), author affiliation and email address, and content. Informal expressions of interest solicited ASAP!

Read More

Topics for Panels and Individual Papers

- Sustainability as an idea whose time has come, or has already come and gone?
- Impediments — methodological and institutional — to routinized stringent review of implemented projects.
- State of the art of Environmental/Social Impact Assessment (EIA/SIA) and Environmental Action+Management Plans (EAMP); and conflicts-of-interest in consultancy practice.
- Ethical constraints and legal recourses for upper and lower riparians.
- Evaluation of mega-projects within and below the Lançang headwaters.
- Hydrological modelling of existing and proposed hydro-power, navigation, and irrigation schemes.
- Indicators of and accommodation to global climate change.
- Watershed forestry and silviculture.
- Fisheries and biodiversity conservation.
- Nutritional demands upon living aquatic resources.
- Evoking and/or suppressing local environmental constituencies.
- Cultural conservation benefits, beneficiaries and disbeneficiaries.
- The re-definition and functionality of NGOs.
- Tourism generally and ecotourism specifically.
- Training, capacity building and governance.
- The emerging digital toolbox for project documentation and institutional memory.

Venue

Northern Illinois University has long been a focal point for Southeast Asian Area Studies and proven an outstanding neutral venue for extra-regional symposia on potentially sensitive topics. “Mekong Actual Outcomes” will be held on-campus at the Holmes Student Center, at which a bloc of hotel rooms has also been reserved for Conference participants. De Kalb, Illinois — a university town of 35,000 — is located ca. 100 km west of Chicago, America’s “Second City,” with its extraordinary cultural attractions. Conference organizers can assist in local travel arrangements to and from O’Hare and Midway airports, and also for the commuter rail terminus at Elburn, only ca. 25 km from De Kalb. Early October is a particularly pleasant time to visit, as the weather is crisp with the autumnal colors approaching their peak in this part of the midwest.