

MEKONG UPDATE & DIALOGUE



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The Australian Mekong Resource Centre

was established at the University of Sydney in 1997 to promote research, discussion and debate on development and environment issues in the Mekong Region. The AMRC is a focal point for information, dialogue and activities in support of an equitable and sustainable development path for the Mekong Region.

The *Mekong Update & Dialogue* provides:

- lead article on the key topic of the issue
- responses to the lead article
- news of current developments in the region
- news from the AMRC
- information on Mekong-related conferences and events in Australia

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READER CONTRIBUTIONS

The Mekong Update & Dialogue welcomes the comments of its readers on issues raised in the Feature article and in the Responses to the Feature. If you do wish to make comment please email us at mekong@mail.usyd.edu.au. Comments should be sent by early May and should be limited to 1-2 paragraphs.

EDITORIAL - The power of one

Activists, concerned scholars and others who want to make a difference are bound in a kind of existential dilemma. On the one hand, we tend to build into our analyses of power structural assumptions that put explanation beyond simple human agency and that look for causality and critique in the very nature of society, economy and political systems. On the other hand, by our very concerns, we assume or hope that there is some way to make a difference.

Some individuals seem to transcend this dilemma, making it quite irrelevant. Charlie Pahlman is one such individual. To paraphrase an expression that some will recognise as belonging to one of Charlie's Mekong sparring partners, not to act is not an option.

In this special issue of Mekong Update and Dialogue, we pay tribute to Charlie, whose untimely death in January 2005 still seems more of a bad dream than a reality. The fact that it happened in an offshore tropical paradise so soon after the tragedy of the tsunami only makes the event more poignant. And the fact that it happened to one who left such an indelible mark on most or all of those involved with AMRC, many in the non-governmental and people's organisations with which he worked, a fair few also in government positions in the Mekong and Australia, and many besides, only reinforces the difference that one person made for all of us.

Why should one Swedish-Australian make a difference to people and issues connected with development in the Mekong? For many involved with development and environment in the region, this is not a question to dwell on. For Charlie Pahlman, the question was central to his work and concerns, and it was one whose answer informed much of what he did and cared about. For Charlie, it was our interconnectedness, the simultaneous universality of certain values and respect for – or rather celebration of – cultural difference that drove much of his work. But above all, it was the understanding that involvement and influence brings with it responsibility and accountability that drove Charlie to focus his critique and his contribution in areas where Australian power, influence and assistance were implicated and involved in the Mekong.

For many returning to Australia after the number of years that Charlie spent in the region, there is a jolt and a dislocation. Not so for him. Charlie's work with ANTAR and the Greens was a seamless continuation of the work that had involved him with people and issues from remote communities to the corridors of power in Laos and Thailand.

Each of the tributes in this issue of Mekong Update and Dialogue tells a bit about Charlie's life and influence on people. For AMRC, he permeates our organisational soul. Such is the power of one to make a difference.



Tribute from Lee Rhiannon

Charlie Pahlman is still working for the people of the Mekong and its environment. Although Charlie died tragically on January 19 this year his legacy is that, through giving so much of his time, energy and talent, he generated more understanding for the complexity of Mekong issues. Charlie's friends and colleagues who only knew of his recent work in Australia on indigenous issues are now delving into his other great passion, the Mekong.

Charlie epitomised the power of one because he mobilised so many to take action in the name of justice and the environment. Charlie was extraordinarily generous with his time - explaining, listening and networking with friends and colleagues. He made a difference, he drew so many into educating and campaigning about the Mekong. When it came to standing up to those powerful forces which could not or would not hear this message Charlie had infinite courage. He achieved so much as he would take a stand and speak out, even if his was a lone voice, against the powerful development agencies, governments and corporations.

When I started working on Mekong issues it was a big unknown for AID/WATCH, the organisation I was working with. Charlie helped to expand our understanding of the region and the development challenges. Charlie was very clear on how we should and should not engage with the large development groups, particularly the multilateral agencies.

I remember Charlie telling the Asian Development Bank that he would no longer go to any of their meetings if they insisted on promoting them as consultation sessions. Here Charlie was tackling a big problem that we were up against. These big agencies would use the fact that they had met with an NGO to argue that they had engaged in community consultation. Charlie's solution was to refuse to go to any meetings unless the ADB agreed to call their meetings with NGOs "information sessions" rather than "consultations".

I have used this example in many workshops I have given on campaigning, as what Charlie was tackling is as relevant here in Australia as it is in Southeast Asia. Charlie's exposure of this deception is a small but telling example of how at every moment in every way he would take a stand.

I find it very hard to believe that Charlie is no longer with us. Although I was with Charlie in person only a few times in my life we often talked on the phone when I worked on Mekong issues, and more recently on Greens issues. It was a great joy to me when I found out the Charlie had joined the Greens and was considering running for the party in the ACT elections. Like Charlie I love people and politics, and in life's journey we sometimes loose touch with old friends. So I was happy that our common commitment had brought us back in touch with each other.

It was good to again talk with Charlie about old times, lessons learnt, and how to further our work for social justice and the environment. Charlie was always so alive, so helpful, so positive, so analytical, so committed, so available. We have much to celebrate in what Charlie brought to all our lives, to the many campaigns he worked on and to the people he worked with.

We are very fortunate to have known Charlie.

Lee Rhiannon, NSW Greens Member of Parliament.

Charlie's river. Tribute from Margie Law

As I write letters to the World Bank, Asian Development Bank and Australian Government about their pending decisions on funding the Nam Theun 2 dam, which is proposed to be built in Laos, it feels strange, quiet, lonely, knowing that my constant companion in this work is no longer with us.

I first met Charlie Pahlman in 1995, almost exactly 10 years ago, when he was the country director for Community Aid Abroad (CAA) in Laos. He visited Tasmania because our Hydro Electric Company (HEC) was involved in building dams in Laos. We packed a lot into that visit: media; meetings with politicians and directors of the HEC; a public meeting; and the usual red wine pasta-eating socializing with CAA people. I organized that visit but I had no idea at the time that this man would have such an impact on my life. We became friends instantly. His passion and enthusiasm was contagious and I quickly read everything I could about dams, especially the then-proposed Xekaman 1 dam, and development in the Mekong Region more generally. Through Charlie's support and encouragement I went to work with Towards Ecological Recovery and Regional Alliance (TERRA) in 1999.

I am so glad that Charlie was on "our side", that he chose to fight for the rights of all people to their ancestral lands, to have clean water, to have access to food, to practise their culture. Charlie was not only quick to learn the heart of each issue he came across, he excelled at communicating these issues to a broad range of people including those he strongly disagreed with. While he'd make his opposition clear, he allowed the space for disagreement, to name it, shape it, and see if something could come out of it. But he would never compromise: the rights of the dispossessed, of villagers fighting for what is theirs, always came first.

When people talked of development, Charlie would ask: "Development of what and for whom?" As his constant starting point, this question allowed the most complex of issues to seem clear.

Charlie recognized that the people living along the Mekong River and its tributaries have a wealth of knowledge and technical expertise that is in tune with the ebb and flow of the river's seasons. Unlike proponents of mainstream development, Charlie recognized that development does not start with a blank sheet, there is something there already and that something has value. He was not against change but always fought for the rights of local people to determine their futures.

Charlie - in his Thai farmers' shirt, faded *yam* slung over his shoulder, jeans a little too short and thongs, having a beer at sunset in Vientiane gazing over the Mekong River, in a boat in Klong Dan Thailand, eating sticky rice with farmers in Isaan - Charlie was always chatting, listening and wondering how he might assist while ensuring that he didn't destroy the development of ideas and actions at the local level. His capacity for talking-sessions was second to none and was made longer the more beer or red wine that appeared.

Charlie made a difference in the Mekong because he cared, because he took time to learn, because he always assumed he would learn more than he could ever provide "expertise" and that it is through learning that good action and activism springs. Although his focus was on his own learning, he was a great teacher and there are many of us who carry with us Charlie-isms.

On Charlie's return to Australia, he continued to work on Mekong issues and often returned to the region for intense working "holidays". The only time he stopped was one time he was hospitalized for typhoid fever. Even then, he still seemed to have more energy than me. From his home in Canberra Charlie organized study tours to the region and for Mekong colleagues to visit Australia, lobbied the Australian Government and our representatives to the World Bank and ADB, gave talks, wrote articles, attended strategy and planning meetings, and learnt. Charlie was particularly passionate about encouraging people in Australia to think about the impact of our actions on other people.

Charlie also gave of himself to other organizations in Australia. CAA, Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation and the ACT Council for Social Services all benefited from Charlie's clarity and enthusiasm and with each of these he helped create and nurture communities. I was excited when Charlie rang me to say he was running for the Greens. Of course, this came after years of debates over Green strategy and the need to strengthen and work with the Australian Labor Party (ALP). He would have been an exceptional politician, one with many friends hanging out in his warm campaigning office with space to do "salutes to the sun".

In death, Charlie continues to inspire through the grace of his family, through the coming together of his friends, from our shared experience of being touched by that complex soul.

Thank you Charlie.

Margie Law, environmental activist.

Tribute from Michael Simon

Charlie Pahlman put his life into his work. As a colleague at Oxfam Community Aid Abroad, Charlie was a leader and a source of inspiration. He took people on a journey, and this journey normally came back to a common source in the Mekong.

Charlie's work and his political analysis were instrumental in setting up OCAA's work on the Mekong and its campaign on the Asian Development Bank. Charlie brought a strong political analysis based on lived experience working with subsistence rural communities in Laos and Thailand. While he had a huge level of knowledge, Charlie retained a humility and a generosity of spirit that lacked ego. He was both a thinker and a doer. He was as comfortable developing strategies for ways to critique macro-economic arguments and regional development plans, as he was at organising and speaking at local community events. He was passionate and effective at both levels.

Oxfam Community Aid Abroad began its advocacy campaign on the Mekong in late 1997 – shortly after Charlie returned from living in the Mekong region. By 1999 the campaign had developed a head of steam, with strong partnerships being developed within Australia and internationally. Charlie was often the hub around which the international campaign came together. His contacts and friendships in the region and beyond helped build trust across disparate organisations, and led to the development of well-balanced strategies and a multi-pronged campaign.

In his home-town of Canberra, where Charlie was the OCAA community campaigner, Charlie was instrumental in setting up the ACT Mekong Group. He also provided great support and guidance to his fellow campaigners in other states in taking forward their campaign efforts on the ADB and the Mekong.

Charlie was also a key player in helping set up and guide the Australian Mekong Resource Centre. He was a steering committee member, but probably more importantly was a friend to many of the staff and associates within the AMRC and helped provide political comment and regional insights to some of the academic efforts of students, and to the outreach and advocacy efforts of the Centre.

While the Mekong was Charlie's passion, he was also committed to other social justice issues. He strongly supported the rights of indigenous Australians through work in ANTAR and for reconciliation between white and black Australia. He was also a strong advocate for environmental issues in Australia – especially when he saw that the Australian Government and Australian private sector were peddling similar environmentally questionable models for development internationally.

Charlie's death is a huge loss to many people, many movements and to social justice causes in many countries. He was a true friend to the AMRC and his wisdom will be sorely missed from the Steering Committee. My sympathies and well wishes to his family, the girls, Christine and Pam.

Michael Simon, Advocacy Coordinator, Oxfam Community Aid Abroad.

Tribute from Fiona Miller

Charlie was to me, like to so many, a friend, a guide and a mentor. He has guided so many of us in our work on the Mekong. He kept our eyes on the issue at the heart of our concern: community. He always encouraged us to keep focused on the people of the Mekong, their livelihoods, their ecosystems, their aspirations and their right to define development.

Charlie's passion for community also meant his enthusiasm for bringing people together and making everyone feel a part of something important and worthwhile. Charlie was so inclusive in his relations with people, and his generosity was truly inspiring. No matter if people were new to an issue or an "ol' timer" to it, he would make them feel a part of the group and as if their perspective mattered. He was generous with his time, his ideas, his home and his love. For someone so busy and with so many commitments, Charlie had an amazing capacity to make all his friends feel special and valued.

I was always inspired by his ability to argue clearly and passionately without aggression or ego. He had an empathy that allowed him to reach across gulfs. He was always eager to try and persuade, but always open to hearing others' perspectives. His clarity of vision and enthusiasm was infectious.

I observed Charlie in a number of situations where he so persuasively argued his case that, instead of engaging with the issues he raised, the response was to polarize the debate and personally attack him. In the face of Charlie's strong critique, that people have the right to determine their own futures and development paths, cynical 'development' consultants would grow exasperated and try to paint him as a naïve, romanticist opposed to development. I saw this happen time and time again. They would totally miss the point that the kind of 'development' they were promoting was not what people were demanding.

He bonded so many of us together in our shared principles and beliefs. He gave many of us the strength to take on life's challenges. Often whenever I struggle with a difficult issue I think: what would Charlie think? What would he consider the most appropriate thing to do? I know Charlie's voice will continue to echo in my head.

I think the reason why Charlie has touched so many and is respected by so many is because he lived his philosophy. He was completely sincere in his words *and* his actions; he had such conviction and passion for his beliefs. He would never resort to pessimism, the issues at stake were too important for that. This gave me, and I know many others, hope.

The world, more than ever, needs people who share Charlie's passion for community and concern for justice. He would want us to keep our eyes on these things. We will all miss you Charlie.

Fiona Miller, Research Fellow, Stockholm Environment Institute, Sweden.

In memory of Charlie Pahlman and the Mekong. Tribute from Premrudee Daoroung

On March 14, 2005, hundreds of local people suffering from the effects of Pak Mun dam marched to the World Bank office in Bangkok urging the Bank to back off from the *Nam Theun 2* Dam Project in Laos. Two protesters carrying a sign, "*World Bank, what did you learn from Pak Mun dam?*", said to each other: "If (we) don't help Laos brothers, who else would we?" They laughed with sweating faces and kept moving with exhausted feet in their dusty flip-flops.

If Charlie Pahlman could have had the opportunity to join this particular event, people would have seen his smiling face, enthusiasm and high spirit; that would have drawn more people to join this march. Unfortunately, this opportunity never happened as the protest event, which was of some significance as far as the Bank is concerned, came nearly two months after his death. Charlie's friends know that among his secrets in making things different were his sincerity, endless supportiveness and enormous perseverance.

Charlie's Mekong years began around the late 1980s. At that time he was working as an agriculture volunteer for CUSO, a Canadian-based international development organization, based in Nan, Thailand, where many good friends of his still remain active in alternative agriculture issues. He then moved to Laos where he lived for several years working as CUSO staff and achieved several worthwhile things. In 1992, for instance, he put a lot of effort into initiating a government-NGO joint "community forest" project; this was followed by the establishment of a "Community Forest Support Unit (CFSU)" within the Department of Forestry in Vientiane. After some years many NGOs became fed up amidst a strong current of debate and sweeping changes in the government's forest policy, but Charlie remained tireless. He kept inspiring both his friends and the CFSU team to continue the struggle. It was rare to see Charlie say "no" to things his friends asked him to do. His friends realized that he was always there as a last resort to help get things done, whether it was chores like editing papers or serious matters like approaching some high-ranking official to get a project moving.

Today, though CFSU exists no more, most of the people formerly involved remain committed to its mandate. Many have now been elevated to higher-ranking positions in the forest unit and support greater and more effective participation of local people in forest protection and utilization all over Laos.

Charlie was among the first generation of foreign development workers in Laos when he took on a position as coordinator for CUSO/Canada and Community Aid Abroad (Oxfam Australia). He was also one of those throwing full support behind the Lao people to take over the roles of foreigners. He constantly encouraged his Lao colleagues to work and respond directly to what happening in Laos and adopt a sense of dignity and pride in their own society and people.

Charlie always had love and good will. He never pressed his friends on anything. His relation with others was similar, giving full honor and recognition and being open-minded with them. People were amazed by Charlie's never-ending effort in explaining, even to those supporting such disastrous projects, the

impacts of large dams and tree plantations, the structural problems of international financial institutions, and so forth. The sincerity that Charlie always demonstrated tended to make people listen to him longer than they usually did to others.

Charlie's spirit had much in common with those rallying for their Laos brothers. Let us imagine a scene - had he been part of the march to the Bank building - in which he has put on his Laos cotton shirt and is walking with the Pak Mun people in his flip-flops. We might even have heard his loud laughter and his strong words about what Australia and other developed countries should do to make the Bank more responsible to local peoples and the environment of the Mekong region.

The Mekong River flow may never return. But Charlie's spirit will never flow away from the Mekong.

Premrudee Daoroung is director of TERRA, a Bangkok-based NGO.



NEWS FROM THE REGION

Nam Theun 2 update from Andrew Wyatt

Nam Theun 2 approved by World Bank board

After more than a decade of study and contestation, the US\$1.2 billion Nam Theun 2 project was approved by the World Bank's Board of Directors on the 31 March. The ADB's Board of Directors will similarly vote on whether to approve the project in coming weeks. The Bank's approval of the provision of partial risk guarantees and concessional loans for the Lao Government's share-holding will allow the project to move forward by catalysing private sector funding from international banks and financiers for the project consortium. The World Bank's approval of Nam Theun 2 is a profound global event signifying a return to the funding of large scale infrastructure after more than a decade in which the Bank has taken a more cautious and even studious (in supporting the WCD process) approach to large scale infrastructure. It signifies a recommitment to a 'high risk, high return' approach with potentially costly social and environmental consequences.

Australian Government supports Nam Theun 2 project

In conducting its own due diligence with regards to its vote of approval on the World Bank's Board (and the forthcoming ADB Board), the Australian government commissioned its own independent consultants in early 2005 to review the project documentation for the Nam Theun 2 project. The review found that the project in general met with WCD recommendations, did not breach World Bank and ADB policy guidelines, and that there would be significant economic returns from the project. At the same time, the review had 'critical concerns' over a number of the project's mitigation and compensation plans which were found to be unrealistic and inadequate. The major recommendation to rectify these shortcomings was the adoption of an adaptive management framework to manage the project's impacts. The review can be found at http://www.ausaid.gov.au/publications/pdf/nt2_hydro_report.pdf.

Controversial World Bank economic least-cost report for Nam Theun 2

In the lead-up to the Board decision on NT2, World Bank and ADB managers, donor governments, and INGOs have conducted their own due diligence over the economic, social and environmental benefits and costs. Much of this work was complete by mid-March and released publicly save for a crucial final draft of a World Bank commissioned economic least-cost analysis which was released in the week before the Board decision, leaving little time for independent scrutiny. This analysis determines NT2's economic value in relation to other options for supplying the most cost-effective electricity to Thailand. Thai NGOs and academics have argued and provided analysis that Thailand has cheaper available sources of electricity from gas-fired power stations and demand-side-management measures.

In a sensational 11th hour development, a group of independent energy economists based in Thailand, who reviewed the final draft and compared it with an earlier publicly released draft,

have reported large, critical, but unexplained changes in the assumptions and input factors for the economic modelling. This economic modelling has maintained NT2's favourable position in comparison to other sources of power available to Thailand, despite a reported 17% increase in the economic cost of capital for the NT2 project. If the allegations prove to be true, the analysis of the Thai based energy economists must, in the context of the late delivery of the final WB analyses, raise questions as to the credibility and integrity of the report preparation process, WB consultants, and WB managers who were overseeing the preparation of the final report for the Board to consider. The Thai based economists have called for an independent review of the Bank's analysis.

(See www.mekong.es.usyd.edu.au for a copy of the letter from the group of Thai based economists).

Bird flu epidemic

Since the end of 2003 Asian countries from Japan to Indonesia have been hit by bird flu. Many millions of chickens and ducks have either died or have been culled. Some human deaths have occurred. The Thai government has been accused of a cover-up to protect the interests of large poultry firms. Although Vietnam declared an end to bird flu in March 2004, a fresh outbreak occurred in June in Bac Lieu Province in the south and subsequently spread to the north of the country. There is concern that the disease could eventually spread easily among humans and turn into an influenza pandemic.

In February more than delegates from more than 30 countries gathered in Ho Chi Minh City for the second regional conference on avian influenza control. This was an opportunity for regional experts to share experiences in bird flu control.

-- 2004 "Fresh outbreak of flu kills 5,000 birds in Vietnam", New China News Agency, 30 June 2004

Delforge, I. 2004 "Government and business connive over avian flu outbreak", *Le Monde Diplomatique*, 5 July 2004

-- 2005 "Regional experts discuss bird flu control measures", Vietnam News List, 25 February 2005

Dams update

Nam Mang 3 dam opens

After three years of construction the 40MW Nam Mang 3 dam in Laos was officially opened in January. The dam is located in Phou Khao Khuay National Biodiversity Conservation Area, about 60 kilometres northwest of Vientiane. The hydropower project cost approximately US\$63million, funded by EXIM Bank and Electricite du Laos (EDL).

Viengsavanh Phengphachan 2005 "Nam Mang 3 hydropower plant opens", *Vientiane Times*, 18 January 2005

Xekatom dam project commences

An agreement has been signed between the Lao government and Kansai Electric Power Company of Japan for the construction of a 57MW hydroelectric power project in Champassak province, Laos. The initial 18 months of the project will entail environmental and economic feasibility studies.

Keoxomphou Sakdavong 2004 "Japan to invest in southern Xekatom dam", *Vientiane Times*, 1 October 2004

Se San 4 dam soon to start

Electricity of Vietnam (EVN) will commence construction of the 360MW Se San 4 hydropower dam in Vietnam's central highlands (Gia Lai and Kon Tum provinces) later this year. The project cost will be US\$353million.

-- 2004 "Vietnam to build Se San 4 power plant later this year", NGO Forum email, 12 November 2004

World Bank involvement in Cambodian logging

The London-based NGO, Global Witness, has criticized the World Bank for supporting the continuation of the corrupt and environmentally destructive forest concession system in Cambodia. The concession system started in the mid-1990s under the joint Hun Sen/Prince Norodom Ranariddh regime. Concessionaires have been accused of abuses ranging from timber laundering and bribery to murder. There are several recent instances of the granting of concessions to log and develop protected areas in Cambodia. Despite an independent Forest Sector Review that has recommended scrapping the concession system, the World Bank's Forest Concession Management and Control Pilot project has allowed renewed logging for another 25 years by six forest concessionaires with very dubious credentials. Recently the World Bank succeeded in having a three-year ban on the transport of illegally cut logs lifted - a move which will assist concessionaires.

Bettinger, K. 2004 "The death of Cambodia's forests", *Asia Times Online*, 23 November 2004

-- 2004 "World Bank forestry project desperate to justify industrial logging in Cambodia", *Global Witness Press Release*, 29 July 2004

-- 2005 "World Bank facilitates transport of illegally cut logs in Cambodia", *Global Witness Press Release*, 10 February 2005

NEWS FROM THE CENTRE

Mekong Learning Initiative

The revamped Mekong Learning Initiative was launched in Bangkok on 24 March 2005. MLI is a collaboration between nine Mekong universities being coordinated by AMRC to develop curriculum materials, do collaborative research and engage in joint analysis relevant to environment, natural resource management and rural social change in the Mekong. AMRC's regional research program officer Nattaya Tubtim is the MLI coordinator, based in Chiangmai. The Launch took place during a mobile workshop on Regional Institutions, Policy and Decision Making that saw the group visit agencies in Vientiane and Bangkok: Mekong River Commission, Asian Development Bank, Lao National Mekong Committee, IUCN Mekong Wetlands Biodiversity program, Worldwide Fund for Nature Living Mekong Initiative, Lao National Mekong Committee, RMR Consultants, Thai Senate Foreign Relations Committee, IUCN Wetlands and Nature Initiative, World Bank Regional Office, Thai Department of Water Resources and Foundation for Ecological Recovery. Participants will draw up an analysis of regional decision making frameworks and develop ways to incorporate this into research and teaching.

Southeast Asia Field School

Phil Hirsch led 22 Sydney University undergraduates on a five week field school in Vietnam, Laos and Thailand in January-February 2005. The Field School involves joint activities with staff and students from Can Tho University, National University of Laos, Pakse Southern Agricultural College, Ubonratchathani University and Silpakorn Universities. In each case, students carry out both classroom work and joint village-based fieldwork around themes of environment, natural resource management and development. Lindsay Soutar and Nattaya Tubtim assisted with the program.

Cambodia Research Group

AMRC is part of a University of Sydney initiative to develop research support activities in Cambodia. The program will involve partnerships with the Cambodia Development Resource Institute and other partners such as Royal University of Phnom Penh. Phil Hirsch and a number of other Sydney University academics visited Phnom Penh and Siem Reap in February 2005 to scope the program, which is likely to involve AusAID support for development-related collaborative research.

Youth Ambassador movements

AMRC is Australian Partner Organisation (APO) for a number Australian Youth Ambassador for Development (AYAD) placements. In March 2005, Emily Hunter completed her 12 month AYAD placement at the National University of Laos, where she has provided outreach assistance for the ongoing IDRC/NUOL research support program and has also helped anchor some of the ongoing MLI work in which NUOL is involved. AMRC will support Emily to continue at NUOL for up to another year, during which time she will also engage in research on social aspects of land titling in Lao PDR. Natalia Scurrah is active in her AYAD placement at Ubonratchathani University, helping to organise a regional conference on transboundary issues in the Mekong that will take place 30 June – 2 July 2005. Natalia also helps anchor MLI activities at Ubon. Meanwhile, AYAD has accepted two new AYAD placements for which AMRC serves as the APO: Khon Kaen University and Yunnan University, both in connection with the MLI program. The placements will commence in September and will see Lindsay Soutar and Rachael Stein-Holmes spend 12 months in each of their respective host institutions.

UPCOMING EVENTS

IVth MMSEA Conference: Sustainable Use of Natural Resources & Poverty Dialogue in Mainland Montane South-east Asia

16-19 May 2005, Sa Pa, Vietnam

Contact: Ms Malita Allan & Ms Trinh Thi Khanh Chi,
Administrators, IV MMSEA,
8 Ngo 198, Le Trong Tan,
Khuong Mai, Thanh Xuan,
Ha Noi, Viet Nam
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<http://www.emwg.org.vn>

International Conference: "Trans-border Issues in the Greater Mekong Sub-Region"

30 June - 2 July 2005, Ubon Ratchathani, Thailand

Contact: Surasom Krisnachuta, Mekong Sub-region
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The events listed above are changed with each issue of Mekong Update & Dialogue. For a complete list of upcoming events please go to our website at www.mekong.es.usyd.edu.au. For submission of new events please contact the AMRC Administrator at mekong@mail.usyd.edu.au



Charlie with Lao villagers. (Source: www.charlie.pahlman.com/images)

Donations to continue Charlie's work on Mekong issues in Australia can be made by contacting The Charlie Pahlman Mekong Fund mekongfund@pahlman.com



Charlie translating during a meeting with villagers in southern Laos. This was part of a study tour to Thailand and Laos conducted by Charlie in 1998 for the CAA ACT Mekong Group. (Photo: Pam Boyer)

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