

Charlie Pahlman - Message from Towards Ecological Recovery and Regional Alliance

Since the late 1980s, Charlie Pahlman worked alongside the Bangkok-based Towards Ecological Recovery and Regional Alliance (TERRA) to support the network of people's organizations in the Mekong region.

Charlie loved the Mekong River. During the time he lived in Thailand and Laos, he developed a rich understanding of the threats facing the communities who live along the river. When people talked of development, Charlie would ask, development of what and for whom. He 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. He was not against change, but always fought for the rights of local people to determine their futures.

Charlie worked tirelessly to help the local communities in their struggles. He helped facilitate meetings between villagers and development banks; he wrote articles for a wide range of magazines; he gave talks at international seminars; he organized international study tours to link local communities together; he photocopied information sheets for forums; he read and debated development ideology. But, most of all, Charlie talked with local people and listened.

It was because of Charlie's great energy, empathy for all people, enthusiasm for debate, constructive outrage and love of life that Terra and the people of the Mekong region are now mourning the loss of a great friend, colleague and advocate.

We offer our condolences to his family and hope that we all may carry on with a little bit of Charlie-spirit within.

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