

Mekong WET: Building Resilience of Wetlands in the Lower Mekong Region

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Wetlands in the Lower Mekong

Wetlands, such as marshes, rivers, peatlands, mangroves, coral reefs and other coastal and inland habitats, have many important functions. In the Lower Mekong region, millions of people rely on wetlands for their survival. The Lower Mekong Delta supports the world's most productive inland fisheries, valued at around USD 3 billion per year and providing local communities with up to 80% of their animal protein intake.

The region hosts globally important wetlands with the capacity to store more carbon than terrestrial forests. Regional wetlands reduce disaster risk by acting as natural buffers against flood, drought, erosion and the impact of floods, tsunamis and landslides. They are

critical for the development of ecosystem-based adaptation approaches to climate change. Wetlands also provide habitat for a wide variety of species of flora and fauna.

Recently, however, infrastructure development, deforestation, the expansion of irrigated agriculture and increasing urbanisation have led to a dramatic decline in the region's wetlands. This has resulted in the depletion of the ecosystem services provided by wetlands and is increasing the climate risk for wetlands communities and at national levels. Farmers are increasingly affected by saltwater intrusion, landslides and flash floods, intensified by climate change.

Mekong WET

Funded by the International Climate Initiative (IKI) of the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety (BMUB), the “*Mekong WET: Building Resilience of Wetlands in the Lower Mekong Region*” project aims to build climate resilience by harnessing the benefits of wetlands in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Viet Nam.

Mekong WET will help the four countries to address their commitments to the Ramsar Convention, an international treaty for the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands, and to achieve the Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

Through its focus on wetland ecosystems and adaptation to climate change, the project also supports governments in pursuing their commitments on climate change adaptation and mitigation under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and in implementing their National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) under the Convention on Biological Diversity.



Sarus cranes in Anlung Pring, Cambodia.

Mekong WET objectives

Mekong WET aims to:

- Conduct climate change vulnerability assessments and develop management plans in ten existing or potential new Ramsar sites, with a focus on climate change adaptation and resilience building.
- Improve regional collaboration and experience sharing on transboundary wetlands management.
- Build the knowledge and expertise of wetland management staff and

communities on climate change adaptation in wetland systems.

- Support pilot actions to build resilience and implement key activities identified in the management plans.



Wetlands in Beung Kiat Ngong Ramsar Site

Key achievements to date:

- The project supported the development of the Indo-Burma Ramsar Regional Initiative (IBRRI), created to provide a dialogue and learning platform for regional governance and implementation of the Ramsar Convention.
- IBRRI launched its 5-year strategic plan on World Wetlands Day in 2019.
- Ten climate change vulnerability assessments were conducted with local and national stakeholders to highlight climate change impacts on regional wetlands. The assessments will be used to develop local adaptation plans.
- A training programme was developed with Mekong Wetlands University Network to increase local wetland management capacity.
- A citizen journalism programme was initiated with the support of Thai PBS to empower local communities to raise awareness about the impact of climate change on wetlands.

For more information, please visit www.iucn.org/asia or contact:

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