

MAIDS NEWSLETTER



Faculty of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University

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*A man fishing in the Mekong River, Luang Prabang, Laos.
Photo: Giovanni Damiola © 24 January, 2010.
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/latiqi/sets/72157601906484049/>*

Public Forum Discusses How to Share the Mekong River

by Dr. Carl Middleton, Lecturer, MAIDS Program

On April 1, as the Mekong Region suffered its worse drought in decades and the region's Prime Ministers prepared for the First Mekong Summit in Hua Hin, over 190 representatives from academia, civil society, government, donor agencies, community organizations and the public joined a public forum at Chulalongkorn University to discuss recent development trends in the Mekong River basin and visions for the future of the river. The public forum was co-hosted by the MAIDS Program, the Mekong Studies Center, and the Center for Peace and Conflict Studies.

At the public forum, the causes and impacts of the low Mekong River levels, the roles and responsibilities of the Mekong River Commission, plans for dams on the Mekong River's mainstream, and choices for the river's future development were all vigorously discussed.

Professor Surichai Wun'gao, Chair Professor of the Faculty of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University opened the public forum with welcoming remarks that highlighted how the Mekong River is the lifeline for millions of people in the region. Professor Surichai observed that development of the Mekong River basin is becoming increasingly contradictory, with divergent visions emerging that range from working to protect the river's natural resources to plans for extensive hydropower development. Looking towards the upcoming Mekong Summit on April 5, Professor Surichai welcomed the anticipated new political commitments to share the Mekong River, but suggested it is important to determine what the basic values behind this new sharing will be. Professor Surichai speculatively questioned whether these...

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...values would promote more mega-projects, with an overall focus on economic-growth, or if they would affirm and support the current livelihoods of the people and listen to the peoples' voice.

In the forum's first session, Ms. Pham Thanh Hang of the MRC gave a presentation about the MRC's Basin Development Plan (BDP) process. Ms. Pham highlighted the need for participation, transparency and consensus-building, and discussed some of the challenges in bringing together different viewpoints when discussing divergent visions for the basin, including time and resource limitations. Mr. Witoon Permpongsacharoen of the Mekong Energy and Ecology Network questioned the region's governments' and the MRC's continued support for large hydropower dams, observing that the MRC has failed to take account of well-established flaws in Thailand's power planning process and emerging shortcomings in Vietnam's process that consistently overestimate power demand and don't prioritize modern renewable electricity generation technologies and energy efficiency measures.

In the second session, the public forum tackled head-on the controversy surrounding the causes of the low water levels in the Mekong River that have led to severe suffering for many fishers and farmers who depend on the river for their livelihoods, especially in Northern Laos, Thailand, southwest China and Viet Nam. Mr. Yao Wen of the Chinese Embassy told the forum that the low water levels in the Mekong River were caused by a lack of rainfall and not the operation of China's dams on the Lancang (Upper Mekong) River. Mr. Wen also emphasized China's cooperation with the MRC as a dialogue partner. Jeremy Bird, CEO of the MRC, said that their analysis also suggested drought was the cause of the low water levels. Mr. Bird also described how the river basin was changing rapidly in many ways, including



*Villager plowing rice paddies in the future reservoir area of the Xiowan Dam on the Lancang (China's upper Mekong) mainstream. The filling of this reservoir began in October 2009 and will take ten years to complete. The Xiowan has been the main point of the controversy surrounding China's speculated role in drought and water shortage in downstream countries.
Photo: Marcus Rhinelanders © 2005*

in land use, urbanization, hydropower, population, agro industry, and climate change, and summarized the MRC's program on climate change and on the Mekong mainstream dams. Ms. Pianporn Deetes of the NGO International Rivers described how dams built in the Mekong basin to date had greatly disturbed the river's ecosystems, resulting in a loss of fisheries, aquatic life, as well as flood and drought. Reflecting on her experience in Northern Thailand, Ms. Deetes described how the river had behaved unnaturally since dams were built upstream in China. She welcomed China's recent increase in the sharing of information, although highlighted that key information still needed to be publicly released. Ms. Deetes added that the downstream impacts in Northern Thailand and Laos caused by China's dam construction to date should be recognized and compensated for, and negotiations take place on how to minimize future downstream impacts.

In the afternoon, community and civil society representatives discussed the existing value of the Mekong River and its natural resources, and their vision for the future.

In a session titled "Community Visions for the Future of the Mekong Basin," Mr. Sangthong Inthong from Ubon Ratchathani Province, Thailand told the forum about the impact of the Pak Mun Dam and then reflected on plans to build the Ban Koum dam on the Mekong River's mainstream nearby. Mr. Inthong described how elder community members remembered that in the past they could get everything from the river, including fish, herbs, and vegetables, and that if the dam was built this would no longer be possible, so they have said that they don't want the proposed dam. Mr. Long Socheat from Pursat Province, Cambodia, who is head of the Cambodian Coalition of Fishers, described how the rich natural resources of Tonle Sap Lake, including its flooded forest and its fisheries, are important to Cambodian people and their food security, and expressed his concern over how upstream infrastructure development might affect these resources. Mr. Japhet from the Lahu National Development Organization described the situation faced by Akha and Lahu villagers in Eastern Shan State who live alongside the river, including how the rapids blasting by China since 2003 had affected the river's ecosystem and livelihoods. Mr. Ly Quoc Dang from Soc Trang Province of Vietnam's Mekong Delta said that nowadays it is much more difficult to fish and that fish have to be raised in ponds. Mr. Ly said that water from the river cannot deposit sediments on the land any more, which makes the land less fertile and forces farmers to use more pesticides. My Ly urged that more care be taken of the river.

In the final session, titled "Civil Society Perspectives on Future Visions for the Mekong Basin," Ms. Nguy Thi Khanh of the Vietnam Rivers Network (VRN) highlighted the key threats to rivers and sustainable livelihoods in Vietnam, including hydropower and mining developments, river pollution, and climate change. Ms. Khanh described how VRN ...

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... works to undertake research, share information, and tries to work with the relevant Government agencies to build a dialogue on water and energy issues. Mr. Om Savath from the Fisheries Action Coalition Team (FACT) in Cambodia outlined how his organization works so that fisher's voices are heard and listened to, and how he hopes that all Cambodian fishers will have their rights respected so that they can manage and utilize fishery resources to improve their lives. Mr. Niwat Roykaew from the Chiang Khong Conservation Group, Thailand described how seriously the drought was affecting Northern Thailand, and how the area had been affected by dam construction upstream in China since the 1990s. Mr. Roykaew explained how people in Northern Thailand are now working to create a people's network to manage their own resources using local knowledge, and how they had recently opened a fish sanctuary shared with communities across the river in Lao.

Charm Tong, of the Shan Women's Action Network Burma, explained how the country has been under military dictatorship for fifty years and that, although it is rich in natural resources including natural gas, hydropower, timber and minerals, it suffers extreme poverty because the military government sells off natural resources to build up their army instead of developing the country. Local communities suffer loss of livelihood and culture with no proper compensation. She described how military government attacks on ethnic civilians have displaced millions of people to other regions within Burma and to neighbouring countries. There is no rule of law in Burma, she said, with widespread instances of military personnel raping ethnic women with impunity. On March 14th, communities from both sides of the Salween River gathered to celebrate the International Day for Rivers. At the planned Myitsone Dam on the Irrawaddy River, local villagers have started to stand up to military generals and to speak out against the dam to the Northern Regional commanders during meetings. She concluded that the Mekong and Salween Rivers are international rivers, and that China must heed the voices of downstream communities.

Closing the public forum, Professor Vitit Muntarbhorn from the Faculty of Law of Chulalongkorn University noted that since 2008 the MRC has facilitated better participation in its programs, but that it is important to further broaden this effort to ensure even greater transparency. Professor Vitit also observed that none of the countries sharing the Mekong River have ratified the UN Convention on the Law of the Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses, but he recommended they should, and he also advised that Burma and China should become full members of the MRC. Professor Vitit offered five guiding principles for the future sharing of the Mekong River:

- *Responsibility sharing:* Bringing all countries onboard, including Burma and China, to share the Mekong River.
- *Resourceful Resourcing:* Use resources wisely, ensuring sustainable use not only of the water and the river, but also the ecosystem and people around it.
- *Review and Reform:* Release of complete data, transparent impact assessments, and sharing information
- *Root causes and redress:* Understand the root causes that lead to dam building and its consequences, and look to use alternative forms of clean energy generation, together with appropriate damage mitigation
- *Riparianization:* More local participation in the management of the river

The Public Forum on Sharing the Mekong River was widely covered by Thai and international media. The meeting opened up to public debate key issues that were subsequently discussed at an international conference organized by the MRC in Hua Hin on April 2 and 3, and at the First Mekong Summit between the Prime Ministers of Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam on April 5. A key message to emerge from the public forum was that the natural resources of the Mekong River are central to the livelihoods of millions of people throughout the Mekong region and contribute significantly to the region's economy, and any development project that would impact the river should be carefully and publicly considered before moving ahead.



Dr. Carl Middleton is a lecturer at MAIDS. He teaches courses on environmental policy and politics, and development theory and practice, with a focus on the Mekong region. Before joining MAIDS in September 2009, Dr. Middleton spent seven years working with international and local civil society organizations throughout the Mekong Region on issues related to sustainable development, including on control over and access to natural resources, regionalization, large infrastructure development and financing, and energy policy and planning.



In March 2010, over 200 villagers from the Thai and Lao sides of the Mekong River (Chiang Rai and Huai Xai, respectively) organized a Buddhist ceremony to declare the first transboundary fish sanctuary on the Mekong River. Photo: Pianporn Deetes © 2010

Congratulations MAIDS Class of 2009 Graduates!



MAIDS students from the 2008-2009 Academic Year attended their graduation ceremony on July 9th, 2010. The students pictured here with MAIDS Program Director Ajarn Naruemon Thabchumpon (Center) are (Left to Right): Rukka Sombolinggi, Ben Harkins, Marly Bacaron, Khen Suan Khai, and San Latt Phyu. The MAIDS faculty, staff, and current students would like to congratulate the entire class of 2009 and to wish them success and happiness in all of their future endeavors.

MAIDS Alumni Updates

Selected stories from some of last year's students about what they have been doing since graduation.

Marly Bacaron, 2008-2009

ASEAN Foundation Scholarship Winner from the Philippines

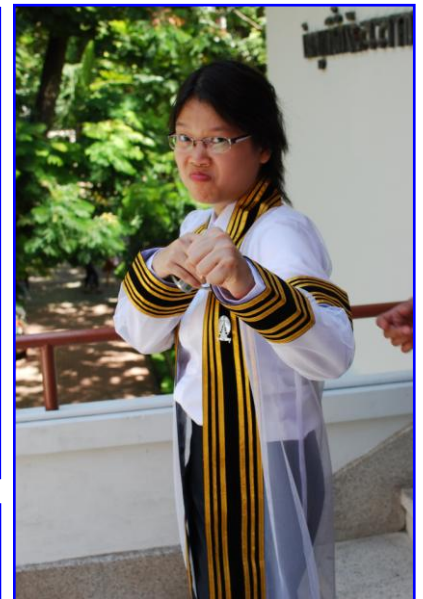
"I was told by some MAIDS faculty and alumni when I was still under the program that securing an internship gave you a better perspective and depth on the thesis you are planning to write about...but I never thought that the internship I secured under UNAIDS in Cambodia as their Partner Fellow would lead me to getting a job in the country. I had believed that I would be working in the area of peace-building and post-conflict states either back home in the Philippines or other areas in Southeast Asia when I got back from Thailand. Yet, I'm now in my ninth month here in Cambodia working on the issues of governance, decentralization and social accountability under the World Bank. The learning curve has been steep, considering the context, but my world is stretching and expanding – I look back and marvel! Who would have thought it would have all been possible?"

Otto von Feigenblatt, 2006-2007 MAIDS Student from Costa Rica

"Recently I was elected Academician of Social Science of the Accademia Costantiniana di Lettere, Arti e Scienze (Palermo, Italy). I was *Elected for Life* on December 12, 2009. This is a rare honor for someone as young as myself. Italy recognizes the Constantinian Academy as one of its national academies and recognizes Academicians as holders of the title of full professors. I want to share this with the program and Chulalongkorn University in general because I feel that I owe a lot to the program and to the professors who shaped me as a scholar."

Naomi Swickard, 2008-2009 MAIDS Student from the United States

"I now work for the Voluntary Carbon Standard Association as the Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use (AFOLU) Program Coordinator, where I manage the AFOLU program. The VCS provides a rigorous global standard and program for approval of voluntary carbon offsets. The AFOLU program covers the requirements for the development and approval of voluntary forest and agricultural carbon offset projects, including REDD. My position involves working on U.S. and international climate change policy, taking steps to expand the scope of the AFOLU program, and promoting the development of methodologies and projects that bring co-benefits to local communities."



MAIDS Grads like San Latt Phyu are disciplined, hard-working, and ready to take on the world!



MAIDS Alumni at the UNDP Project for Sustainable Solutions to the Displaced Person Situation on the Thai-Burma Border

By Ben Harkins, MAIDS Student 2008-2009.

MAIDS alumnus Ben Harkins earned his B.A. degree in Cultural Studies at New College of California. After that he spent a decade working and volunteering in the San Francisco region. He was highly involved with a variety of projects: community building, promoting equitable access to the arts, advocating for tenants' rights, and serving as Director of Home Delivered Meals for Meals on Wheels of San Francisco. Ben enrolled in the MAIDS Program in 2008 and completed a thesis entitled "Re-Evaluating "Pro-Poor": A Model for Monitoring of the Universal Coverage Scheme in Thailand". In the following article, Ben describes the work he has been doing at the Asian Research Centre for Migration since graduating from MAIDS.

One concern that is often as true for recent grad students as for recent undergrads is how exactly to go about finding a job in your chosen field after completing your studies. As anyone who has spent much time pounding the pavement looking for a job can tell you, practical working experience is king for most human resources departments and no matter how great your thesis or GPA were at university, it's tough to get your foot in the door without it. With this in mind, some current or recent MAIDS graduates may take an interest in the circumstances of the 3 recent MAIDS graduates—San Latt Phyu, Bea Moraras, and myself—who are currently working on a UNDP funded research project related to Burmese refugees in Thailand.

The project was proposed by the UNDP to address the difficult living conditions for Burmese refugees in Thailand. Protracted conflict within the Nation of Burma has forced large scale displacement of ethnic minority groups across the border into Thailand. Since their establishment in 1984, the inhabitants of the 9 camps along the Thai-Burma border now form the largest population of long-term displaced people in East Asia. The registered camp population as of December 2009 was approximately 107,000 residents and there are estimated to be an additional 50,000 unregistered inhabitants in the camps who may or may not meet the criteria established by the Royal Thai Government for refugee status.

Thailand is not a signatory country of the 1951 UN convention or the companion 1967 protocol related to the status of refugees. Therefore, the registered inhabitants of the border camps are officially referred to in Thailand as "displaced persons" rather than refugees and are only considered as such if they are explicitly fleeing from armed conflict. Technically, these groups are defined as illegal immigrants under Thai law as they have entered the country without permission and are considered a national security risk as well as a threat to diplomatic relations between Thailand and Burma. Though not formally abiding by the convention mandate for treatment of refugees, the Royal Thai Government has permitted the establishment of "temporary shelters" for the displaced persons and allowed humanitarian organizations to provide necessary basic assistance to the camp populations.

Since their beginnings, the shelters have operated under a closed camp policy, reflecting the Thai government's concern with national security in relation to the flows of displaced persons from Burma. However, the last several years have seen a significant shift in policy by the government towards a more solutions-oriented approach for the situation. The RTG and UNHCR have established more formalized engagement procedures for reception, status determination, and registration of displaced persons in the camps as well as permitting the execution of a large scale third country resettlement program. Additionally, access to education has been expanded beyond basic levels as have vocational training opportunities in the camps.

Despite this liberalization of policy however, movement and employment for displaced persons outside of the camps is still officially prohibited. The negative impacts of restricting the refugees to the camp environment for over 25 years, with very limited social and livelihood opportunities, have been well documented. High incidence of domestic and sexual violence, psychological problems, unplanned pregnancies, and a variety of other social problems are now manifest among the camp population. Additionally, dependency on external assistance has begun to take a toll on the camp inhabitants' capabilities for future self-sufficiency outside of the camps.

In response to these concerns, a UNDP funded project has been contracted to the Asian Research Center for Migration at Chulalongkorn University that is designed to generate evidence-based alternative policy options to support sustainable solutions for the situation. The three MAIDS alumni currently working on the project are playing an active role in the study of policy, resettlement, social welfare, and social security in the camps, as well as in overall administration for the project. Perhaps noteworthy for current and future MAIDS students, who may likely find themselves in the position of job searching after they complete the MAIDS program, all three of the MAIDS alumni found their current positions through contacts they established during their studies at MAIDS. It is worth keeping in mind for all MAIDS students interested in remaining in Southeast Asia after the program for work that the contacts you make during your studies, be it with your thesis supervisor, at your internship, with your professors, and even with your fellow classmates, may eventually lead to opportunities for future employment.



Contested Political Networks: The Study of the Yellow and the Red in Thai Politics

Paper Extract by Naruemon Thabchumpon, MAIDS Program Director

Ajarn Naruemon recently submitted a paper to the International Workshop on Political Networks in Asia, an event organized under the Global Center of Excellence framework. The specific theme of this workshop—which took place of May 14th, 2010 at the National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies (GRIPS), Tokyo, Japan—was “The Transferability of East Asian Developmental Strategies and State Building”.

To understand the establishment of the two contesting networks: the People’s Alliance for Democracy (PAD) and the United Front for Democracy Against Dictatorship (UDD), this paper examines the ‘unfinished business’ of representative democracy after the May 1992 uprising and the 1997 political reform campaign. It argues that the political consequences of the 1997 economic crisis, the increasing of mass politics and people’s participation after the 1997 constitution, and the social frustration arriving after the 2006 coup are significant in contemporary Thai politics because most people saw this dynamic as reflecting problems of both political and economic governance, and because they explain why the reform agenda—which aimed to create greater legitimacy for the representative democratic system—remains an unfinished project

According to Duncan McCargo (*Media and Politics in Pacific Asia*, 2003: 137-138), there are two modes of legitimacy, electoral and technocratic, that any government that wants to survive in Thai politics has to contend with. The former concerns forming the government, and its legitimacy in Thailand has long been in question because political parties, in order to gain the highest number of seats in an election, made a practice of targeting mainly rural areas, which were notorious for the practice of vote-buying. The latter relates to a party’s technocratic expertise in the eyes of the urban middle-classes. Both types of legitimacy are closely connected with the project of making the politics of representation work.

In the Thai case, it can be argued that many political crises have demonstrated the persistent characters of Thai politics: strong military, weak political parties, personalised leadership, lack of “democratic consciousness” on the part of public at large and an important role for rumours and opinions put out by the press. Also, another unspeakable factor in Thailand’s politics is the political role of the country’s traditional institutions, which has been evident since the 1958 coup and continues to be influential in Thai politics.

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In terms of the political context of networks, political conflicts and contested arguments between the PAD and the UDD networks can be considered as a tension between electoral politics and popular control over each network’s perception of democracy, which is mainly related to their sources of legitimacy. For example, there is a point of contention as to whether the essence of democracy should be seen as governance by elected representatives acting in the name of the people or if democracy is embodied only by the people themselves. On one side, the UDD supports liberal reform advocates who consider democracy as a legalistic and formal process of political institutions (such as political parties, elections and legislative capacity). On the other side, the PAD favours proponents who argue that elections are meaningless unless people are aware of the real choices and the meaning of those choices, as well as having full information on policies that will affect them.

Moreover, there is a clear civil society polarization between these two networks along ‘elite-urban’ and ‘rural-popular’ lines. This civil society divide can be seen throughout the various arguments, political discourses and different interpretations of the meaning of democratic legitimacy proposed by each network. For example, the middle class and urban-based civic groups, which are the PAD’s supporters, have argued that the priority of the country is to repair the damage done by political corruption and money politics. In comparison, the rural networks of those living in the provinces who are the UDD’s supporters feel that their voices were not considered in the formulating of state policy up until the 2001 election and the introduction of the decentralisation scheme. Their positive response to the Thai Rak Thai’s political marketing scheme of a thirty-baht flat free health plan across the country and a one-million-baht revolving fund for every village can be seen as a political indicator of the widespread demand for governmental economic planning and a fiscal policy aimed at boosting domestic consumption and hence the domestic economy.

2009-2010 MAIDS Thesis Topics

Student Name	Topic
1. Aishath Noora Mohamed	'Home Building and Place Making': Responses to Cultural Alienation by Migrant Domestic Workers in the Maldives
2. Anne Songdej	Cambodian Child Beggars in Thailand Reconciling Needs and Rights Based Approaches in Policy Implementation
3. Ben Alex Manser	Community Needs Assessment Livelihood Portfolio and Health Care Needs of Chin: ABC Medical Clinic, Saikom Village, Mizoram State, India-Burma Border
4. Betti Rosita Sari	The Impact of Organic Rice Contract Farming on Farmers' Livelihood and Land Tenure in Cambodia: A Case Study in Kampong Speu Province
5. Eunkyong Park	Application of the Human Security Framework to the Impact Assessment of the Sambor Dam Project in Cambodia
6. Mac Albert Gordon Shaw	Making Humanitarian Action Accountable and the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership, Dan Church Aid And Thailand Burma Border Consortium
6. My Lo	Do existing protection mechanisms provide refugees the protection they need and want at various implementing stages of a durable solution?
7. Burmese Student	Sustainability And Outreach Of A Kachin Church Microfinance Institution In Burma
8. Burmese Student	Burmese Migrant Workers, Nationality Verification Process and the Protection of Workers' Rights
9. Sothonsinee Supanusorn	Dynamism of Judicial Process in Community's Natural Resource Management in Northern Thailand
10. Steven Siblesz	An Analysis of the Effectiveness of Public Participation Under Health Impact Assessment of Thailand: The Case Study of the Gold Mining Project at Ban Na Nong Bong, Loei Province
11. Write T. Khumalo	Transport in Development: In what ways have capital developments involving the MRT and BTS rail transport, had an impact on Bangkok residents' socio-economic development?

MAIDS Fieldtrip to Cambodia: February 28th – March 5th 2010

This March, the MAIDS students, professors, and staff travelled to Cambodia for a six day academic fieldtrip that, as you will gather from the itinerary, was truly a jam-packed visit!

Over the course of the trip, the MAIDS group was exposed to a diverse range of opinions and perspectives on development in Cambodia. We met with representatives from non-governmental organizations such as the NGO Forum on Cambodia and Mith Samlanh as well as from government ministries like the Ministry of Environment and the Siem Reap Province Department of Fisheries. We had a chance to pose questions to an economist working for the World Bank's Cambodia office and a few days later we learned about the lives and livelihoods of local fisher people during a visit to Kampong Phluk Village. In between scheduled appointments or at the end of each day, the MAIDS students and professors engaged in talk-back sessions where they discussed their immediate impressions, related the trip's events to theories or case studies previously explored in class, and fleshed out the particularities of development in the Cambodian context. And, of course, we left time on the final day for an exploration of Angkor Wat and the surrounding temples! In this sense, we returned to Bangkok with an improved understanding of Cambodia's present situation, its possible future directions, and both its recent *and* ancient past.



Fieldtrip Itinerary	
Day 1 – Sunday, February 28th	
Arrival in Phnom Penh on Sunday afternoon	
Dinner as a group, next to the Mekong River	
Exploration of the Night Market	
Rest and Relaxation	
Day 2 – Monday, March 1st	
Visit to <i>Toul Sleng</i> , a Khmer Rouge era prison camp	
Meeting with Youk Chhang, Director of the <i>Documentation Center of Cambodia</i> to discuss Khmer Rouge Tribunal	
Meeting with <i>The NGO Forum on Cambodia</i>	
Free exploration of Phnom Penh	
Day 3 – Tuesday, March 2nd	
Meeting with development economist at <i>Cambodia World Bank Office</i>	
Meeting with representatives from Cambodia's <i>Ministry of Environment</i>	
Presentation and tour of <i>Mith Samlanh</i> , a local NGO dedicated to training street children in various trades	
Visit to the <i>Royal Palace</i>	
Day 4 – Wednesday, March 3rd	
5 hour journey from Phnom Penh to Siem Reap by bus	
Meeting with <i>Siem Reap Tourism Authority</i> about the effects of tourism on development	
Day 5 – Thursday, March 4th	
Presentation and tour of <i>Kampong Phluk Village</i> , where community fishing is threatened by commercial overfishing, habitat destruction, and other factors.	
Meeting with <i>Siem Reap Province Department of Fisheries</i> about Tonle Sap community fisheries	
Day 6 – Friday, March 5th	
Visit to <i>Angkor Wat Temple Complex</i>	
Departure to Bangkok on Friday afternoon	

On this page: Benny Manser and Betti Rosita Sari show their love for fellow MAIDS students Seng San L (Left) and Matoom Supanusorn (Right) while touring Angkor Wat.

Opposite page (clockwise from top left):

1. MAIDS students and staff listen to Ajarn Puangthong during a visit to Toul Sleng Prison Camp.
2. Kampong Phluk Village, a fishing community near Tonle Sap Lake.
3. MAIDS students and staff take part in a talk-back session in Phnom Penh.
4. MAIDS student Anne Songdej presents a gift of thanks to Mr. Youk Chhang, Director of the Documentation Center of Cambodia after his informative and inspiring talk.
5. MAIDS students enjoying some local cuisine.
6. Pen Raingsey from NGO Forum on Cambodia explains his organization's work to the MAIDS group.



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MAIDS Migration Class Fieldtrip: March 24th – 25th 2010

By Chris Gusen, MAIDS Program Officer, with notes from MAIDS Student Betti Rosita Sari

In late March of this year, MAIDS Professor Jerrold Huguet took his *Migration as a Development Issues* class on a field trip to Samut Sakhon province—which borders Bangkok—to observe and engage with some of the migrant labour issues they had been discussing throughout the semester.

The MAIDS students started their trip with a visit to the Labour Rights Promotion Network (LPN), a Thai NGO which “aims to promote quality of life for workers,” a mission that includes “rights-protection, promoting equality, self-reliance, and peaceful living together in society.” The LPN has an office in Samut Sakhon and much of its work is focused on that region. 40 percent of Thailand’s shrimp are processed in the province, making it one of the largest industrial clusters of shrimp and seafood processing in the country. The concentration of shrimp and seafood factories requires a large population of cheap, unskilled labour, and this makes it a key destination for migrant workers, principally from Burma/Myanmar. The push factors driving people out of Burma are significant, and there is a well-established system of brokers, human trafficking agents, complicit officials and employers who facilitate and profit from their migration into Thailand. The LPN’s 2010 data puts the number of Burmese migrants in Samut Sakhon at approximately 120,000 documented and 300,000 undocumented individuals. These migrant workers are highly vulnerable to exploitation and human trafficking crimes because they do not know their basic rights, have little knowledge of how to access the Thai legal system, and cannot communicate in the Thai language.

After meeting with the LPN, the MAIDS group visited a shrimp processing plant and a seafood loading pier. This gave the students a chance to speak with both the factory workers and the factory owner. The workers in this factory, like those in many others, were paid per kilogram of shrimp peeled, not by the hour. One of the workers estimated that she peeled 50 kilograms of shrimp per day, standing up from 6 AM to 6 PM with a short break for lunch. As MAIDS student Betti Rosita Sari pointed out in her report on the trip, “with pay pegged to the amount of shrimp a worker can process, health and safety concerns are put aside in the fast pace of the processing lines”.

In their 2009 paper entitled *Corruption, Human Trafficking, and Human Rights: The Case of Labor and Sex Trafficking in Thailand*, Malinvisa Sakdiyakorn and Sutthana Vichitrananda explain that “there is systematic and institutional exploitation of Burmese migrants in Samut Sakhon and neighbouring provinces often through debt bondage and exploitation without accountability through subcontracting.” Indeed, the owner of the factory visited by the MAIDS class freely admitted to confiscating his workers’ passports and other legal documents to prevent them from seeking employment elsewhere. This is a commonly accepted strategy, he explained, that factory owners use to protect their investment in migrant labour.

In some factories, managers also demand months of unpaid work from employees, citing debts to labour agents/brokers (whose fees are usually excessive), cost of basic safety equipment, rent for in-factory housing, even food and medicine. The International Labour Organization (ILO) defines this practice as *Debt Bondage*, “a situation that arises when a person provides loans to another and uses his/her labour, or those of another person over whom the debtor has control, to pay the debt. When the value of the work, as reasonably assessed, is not applied towards the liquidation of debt, the situation becomes one of debt bondage.” Debt bondage is a common method of exploiting migrant workers because it makes them vulnerable to further extortion and even forced labour for months and years before they can earn any extra money to support their families. Labour Rights Promotion Network estimated, in a 2007 report, that 80-90% of the 200,000 migrant workers in Samut Sakhon province are in a debt bondage situation.



A group of MAIDS students join Professor Huguet (Right) in interviewing two migrant workers at one of Samut Sakhon's many shrimp processing factories.

Debt bondage is a common method of exploiting migrant workers because it makes them vulnerable to further extortion and even forced labour for months and years before they can earn any extra money to support their families. Labour Rights Promotion Network estimated, in a 2007 report, that 80-90% of the 200,000 migrant workers in Samut Sakhon province are in a debt bondage situation.

The trip ended with a visit to Suan Peung, Ratchaburi Province and a nearby village occupied mainly by migrants from various parts of Burma. The students listened to the villagers’ stories and met with community leaders before making the journey back to Bangkok.

MAIDS Welcomes 11 New Scholarship-Funded Students in 2010

The MAIDS faculty, staff, and students would like to express our enormous gratitude for the funding provided by our scholarship partners: The **ASEAN Foundation**, the **Heinrich Böll Foundation**, the **SCG Foundation**, the **Asia Pacific Scholarship Consortium**, and **Thabyay Education Network**.

Thanks to their support, MAIDS welcomes a record eleven scholarship-funded students this year: five from Burma/Myanmar, two from Cambodia, two from Thailand, one from Vietnam, and one from Indonesia. Without these generous donors our unique student body, which brings together passionate individuals from all over Southeast Asia and the world, would simply not exist.

Call for Scholarship Applicants: MAIDS 2011-2012 Academic Year



The Asia Pacific Scholarship Consortium (APSC) Masters Scholarship for Individuals from Myanmar, Cambodia, and Lao PDR

- Co-Funded by the APSC and the ASEAN Foundation
- Available to candidates from Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos
- Application deadline is **December 1st, 2010**
- Visit www.apscconsortium.org for application form, complete eligibility information, and scholarship coverage information.



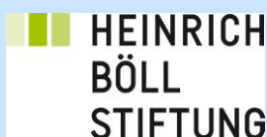
The SCG Foundation – ASEAN Foundation MAIDS Scholarship

- Co-Funded by the SCG Foundation and ASEAN Foundation
- Available to candidates from select countries in the ASEAN region. Number of scholarships and target countries may vary; please check the MAIDS website before applying.
- Application deadline is **March 31st, 2010**
- Applications to this scholarship should be sent to MAIDS along with standard application to the MAIDS Program.
- Visit www.ids.polsci.chula.ac.th in **early December** for application form, complete eligibility information, and scholarship coverage information.



The Heinrich Böll Stiftung (HBS) Scholarship Program for Master of Arts Studies at Universities in Thailand

- Funded and administered by the Southeast Asia office of HBS
- Available to candidates from Myanmar/Burma
- Application deadline is **March 31st, 2010**
- Applications to this scholarship should be sent to MAIDS along with standard application to the MAIDS Program
- Visit www.boell-southeastasia.org for application form, complete eligibility information, and scholarship coverage info.



Please email us at maids@chula.ac.th with any scholarship questions!

Master of Arts Program in International Development Studies (MAIDS)

2011-2012 ACADEMIC YEAR

Application Deadline: March 31st 2011

The Master of Arts in International Development Studies, known for short as MAIDS, is intended for people who are making, or have the potential to make, a meaningful contribution as researchers, practitioners, and leaders in the field of international development. The programme expects applicants to possess an undergraduate degree and some work or volunteer experience in international development, generally in the non-profit or governmental sector. The program particularly encourages applications from citizens and residents of the Greater Mekong Sub-region countries.

The Program is looking for individuals with sensitivity to and involvement in issues such as the promotion of social change, human rights, local community development, media freedom and humanitarian aid. The curriculum combines the study of a rigorous theoretical framework with field experience. Students have the opportunity to network with a wide range of practitioners working with government, international and civil society organizations. The thesis project allows the student to develop expertise in a particular area of interest.

MAIDS offers comprehensive and flexible training for, either for a career in international development, or further studies at the doctorate level. **The application form is available to download from our website.**

Program Structure

The M.A. in International Development Studies is a full-time, one-year (Oct – Sep) program divided in three four-month trimesters. The first two trimesters consist of four compulsory and four elective courses (3 credits each; totalling 24 credits). The third trimester is spent on thesis work in the student's area of interest (12 credits). Upon successful completion of the program (36 credits) the student is awarded a Master of Arts degree in International Development Studies. The M.A. program in International Development Studies is taught in English.

Compulsory Courses

- Development Theory and Practice
- Globalization and Development in Asia and the Pacific
- Politics of Public Policy
- Research Methodology in Development Studies

Elective Courses

- Communication, Democratization, and Development
- Conflict Resolution
- Development Project Management
- Human Rights and Gender Problems in Asia and the Pacific
- Migration as a Development Issue
- Selected Topics in Development and Economy
- Environmental Politics and Policy
- Development Practicum

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