

NEWSLETTER

Faculty of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University



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Picture of MAIDS staff and students with members of the Laos Center for HIV/AIDS in Vientiane.

2006 Laos Fieldtrip *by Robert Vaughan*

After a few early morning coffees and a pair of lost sunglasses, The MAIDS class touched down in Ubon Ratchathani and we found ourselves on our first day's adventure. We were greeted by an elderly lady and her grandson who had been involved in protesting against the construction of a dam through the Moon River. With Frank Sinatra singing along in my head, we heard how the power of the locals were able to get the Thai government and companies involved in construction to implement a policy that was more eco-friendly and sustainable to the local environment.

We moved quickly over the Thai border and onto Laos territory. We had an interesting meeting with some of the Laos officials about the construction of a new friendship bridge between Thailand and Laos, which would be the centre of a Special Economic Zone. Due to the political climate in Laos, we avoided high-level geopolitical questions and focused on the project itself. The bridge is part of a massive highway construction programme that will go through Vietnam, Laos, Thailand and Myanmar with the goal of allowing trade to move more efficiently. To our surprise, the Special Economic Zone managers did not seem too optimistic about the zone nor did they about its long-term development benefits. They argued the difficulty of Laotians to compete with Vietnamese labour wages. They did, however, like the idea of the golf course attached to the hotel complex next to the zone.

Master of Arts Programme
in
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(MAIDS)

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Robert Vaughan graduated from Huddersfield University in 2003 with an honours B.A. in combined Business studies. He specialized in Asian-Pacific business and business ethics and was nominated to represent his university in a European business competition. During his undergraduate years, he was actively involved in Politics, regularly writing articles on current world political affairs for his student newspaper.

Before joining the MAIDS second student cohort in 2005, Robert indulged in his passion for travel and culture by embarking on a world trip which saw him visit over 35 different countries in various regions of the world. He later enrolled in the MAIDS programme because he wanted to immerse himself in the culture of Thailand and gain a truly Eastern academic perspective, rather than opting for a continued Western style viewpoint.

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We took a long journey through some of the most beautiful countryside in the world to a World Bank endorsed Mega Hydro-Electric Dam project site. We were given a tour of the construction area while some of our questions on the sustainability of the project were answered. It seems 95% of the electricity produced will be sold to Thailand, and therefore, there will be massive economic benefits for Laos. The displaced villagers will be compensated for having to move and were asked to make sacrifices for the greater good.



We then travelled back to Savannakhet with a lively debate on which side of the fence we were all on. Did the economic benefits outweigh the social responsibilities? The debate got livelier as the beer Laos started to flow, and soon, we are all ready to hang up our hats for the night.

After a long drive we came to the Laotian capital Vientiane, a sleepy and enchanting city packed with friendly people and French architecture. Our first stop was at the Lao Women's Union. They develop and successfully implement micro-credit policies that benefit their communities. Moving from the main office, we pulled up to a small village with Hotel California blaring in the background. Certainly we must have looked like development tourists but - given the time constraints of our trip - we all took this in stride.

Finally, our group met the staff members from the Laos centre for HIV and AIDS and the office for victims of trafficking. Both organizations are equally faced with growing problems, which have serious consequences for a country of only six million. In the end, it seems Laos is not immune to the ill-effects of the global movement of people and the resulting social problems.

On a personal note, I think I speak for the entire MAIDS class when I give a warm thanks to the MAIDS administrative staff who organized the fieldtrip. It was a great bonding experience for the class and a good chance to get to know one another outside the classroom. The trip was highly enjoyable and I give full credit to Chulalongkorn University.

2006 Master's Thesis Seminars *by Visiting Lecturer Dr. Philippe Doney*

MAIDS students had the opportunity to present their research and preliminary findings to a public audience and invited experts on August 17th, 22nd, and 23rd, 2006. I had the privilege of being invited as a discussant to one of the student thesis seminars on August 22. In all, 22 presentations were divided into five sessions, namely: *The Role of Media and Development*, *Development and Marginalization*, *Politics of Participation*, *Economic Implications and Development*, and *Environment Issues and Development*. Each student gave a twenty-minute PowerPoint presentation followed by comments from two experts in the relevant fields and a general discussion with the audience. The experts were drawn from universities, UN agencies, NGOs and research institutes, and the audience was composed of students, scholars, NGO and labour union representatives, as well as UN and EU delegation officials.



The presentations demonstrated that students were not only well-informed about development issues that affect Asian societies but also determined to make their research relevant to solving current problems. Compared with students in the development programme I attended 15 years ago, students at MAIDS tend to show interests that go beyond the world of State agencies and development NGOs to include the role of the media, economic actors, labor unions and the importance of human rights as a precursor for sustainable development. Many presentations were also critical of the development process itself, trying to bridge an interest in solving vulnerabilities and inequalities with a healthy dose of skepticism towards development doctrines. Perhaps more unexpectedly, students did not hesitate to tackle the economic dimensions of development, covering issues such as special economic zones, Free Trade Agreements (FTA) and Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) that used to be - wrongly in my opinion - relegated to economists.

The session to which I was an invited discussant covered presentations under the heading of Development and Marginalization. As with other sessions, globalization was a central topic of discussion. All the presentations concerned either migrant or internally displaced populations in Asia, indicating a preoccupation with the increasing vulnerabilities created by rapid globalization for which individual states are either ill-equipped or unwilling to solve. The presentations made clear that issues of human security are particularly acute with respect to populations that often remain beyond the reach of state policies or development assistance.

Similarly, in another session, the presentations confirmed that the environment remains an important dimension of development. However, students went beyond the environmental impact of economic development to look at the environment as both the object and element of governance, participatory development and peace.

Some presentations on the role of the media and ICT also made clear that information is power and that development issues cannot be taken out of a political context, as the development discourses of the 60s and 70s suggest. Students clearly portrayed the role of media in fostering an environment conducive to development that is fair and just.

I was impressed with the range of interests that MAIDS students demonstrated and the challenging field research projects they had set for themselves in a very short timeframe, sometimes in difficult conditions. I had some concerns regarding methodology - especially having a clear research question - although nothing uncommon to new scholars conducting their first research project. However, this is where the seminars can play a useful role in helping students structure their thoughts and research findings during the final stretch before submitting their thesis.

Many students were able to draw on their rich professional experiences working for state agencies, firms, NGOs, media or other organizations in different countries prior to joining MAIDS. These experiences clearly enrich their research by providing students with a set of hypotheses derived from their professional observations. This, in turn, makes their whole research project particularly relevant and useful for development agencies and practitioners.

However, this whole event was not a one-way street. The audience - myself included - learned a lot about issues that are especially relevant to development in Asia; issues that are often forgotten by the national media or not entirely addressed by governments.

An Interview with Visiting Professor Dr. Jayant Lele *by Olivier Girard*



Jayant Lele is currently a professor at Queen's University in Canada. Dr. Lele has served as the President of the Canadian Association of South Asian Studies and as the Secretary Treasurer of the Asian Studies Association of Canada. He was the President of the Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute between 1996 and 1998. Dr. Lele has been the Convenor of the Evaluation Programme of the International Centre for the Advancement of Community-based Rehabilitation - ICACBR - (a CIDA Centre of Excellence) since 1992 and served as a member of its Board of Directors, on its Taskforce on Sustainability and is its representative on the Disability Subcommittee of the United Nations Regional Inter-organizational Committee for Asia and the Pacific (RICAP).

Lele's research interests include studies of rural and national politics in India and party politics in Canada, evaluation of public policy processes and community-based programmes, critical reinterpretation of the modernity of tradition as well as the political economy of India, Southeast Asia, and Canada. During his visit to Chulalongkorn University, Dr. Lele gave a series of eight lectures to MAIDS students with a focus on three areas: the relationship between state, civil society and the public sphere, the global political economy and its impact on public policy, and finally, innovations in public policy conceptions and practices. Excerpts from: <http://web.uvic.ca/~anp/Private/Contact%20Info%20and%20Bios.pdf>

Why have you taken an interest in the MAIDS programme here at Chulalongkorn University?

Primarily because of the MAIDS students. Most of them come from the region, and therefore, have a commitment to its development. At Queen's, the student population is not as diverse as it used to be, partly because of there are less scholarship opportunities.

Have you been able to discuss development issues with the MAIDS students?

Not all that much as of yet. Perhaps it is partially due to the Asian ethos regarding the student-professor relationship, which is one of respect and distance. I've gone through the same process as an undergraduate student in India. Breaking that barrier - which again is mostly cultural - is a difficult process.

Does having talkative Western students in the class help or hinder that process?

I think it cuts both ways. On the one hand, it can make it more difficult for Asian students to assert themselves, especially if English is their second language. But, on the other, the questions and issues raised by Westerners are relevant, not only to them but to Asian students as well.

To increase the participation of shy Asian students, perhaps you could increase the marks given to participation, and give a lower score to those who don't speak in class. Otherwise MAIDS could organize 'talk sessions' where the main objective is to have students talk to each other in a more informal environment.

What are the main similarities and differences you see between the International Development Studies programme you founded at Queen's, and this programme here at Chulalongkorn?

The main common challenge is definitely financial. Getting sufficient funding to sustain a good programme is a very difficult task. When we started at Queen's, we were cash-strapped. We didn't have any secretarial staff; I chaired the program with only a slight reduction in my normal course load; we had no faculty specifically assigned to the programme. In fact, we had to piece together courses and faculty from different departments. The funding eventually came, mostly, as a result of student pressure.

The other day I was browsing the website of UCLA's International Institute, and I was quite amazed to see them recommending to undergraduates majoring in IDS and considering going to graduate school to choose a specific field, like economics, public health, geography, or urban planning, rather than a graduate IDS program. How would you respond to that?

This is the old debate between generalists and specialists. I belong to the generalist camp. When you approach development projects, people's lives are not compartmentalized. You have to be able to understand the bigger picture. For example, my wife works as an independent consultant on international development projects, specializing in social and gender aspects of energy projects. That specialization first came as a result of her research on community forestry as part of her M.A., then later, through various work assignments such as with the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). In the end, both approaches are legitimate. The best result would probably be a combination of both.

Mekong Region Waters Dialogue: Exploring Water Futures Together

Conference Overview by Jill Lawler



Jill Lawler graduated from Oklahoma State University in 2003, earning three separate degrees with honours: Political Science, Sociology and Psychology. In 2002, she completed an internship with the political section of the United States Mission to the UN in New York. She later worked as a Project Coordinator for Earth Media – a private political and media consultancy based in New York.

Before beginning her studies at MAIDS in 2005, Jill earned a Master's in International Affairs from the University of Ghana where she was the recipient of a Rotary Ambassadorial Scholarship. There, she engaged in development activities with the Budumburam Liberian refugee camp and environmental NGOs working on sustainable development issues. Upon her 2006 MAIDS graduation, Jill received an internship at the United Nations Development Programme in Bangkok.

Water is one of the most politicized natural resources. It plays a key role in nearly every function of life from basic health to irrigation and food production, generating energy through hydropower development, and sustaining diverse ecosystems. The Mekong Region, comprised of the territories, people and economies of Cambodia, Lao PDR, China's Yunnan Province, Thailand, Myanmar, and Vietnam, is one of the most diverse basins both in terms people and ecology, as well as the needs and uses for the water resources in the region. The Mekong's waters are increasingly relied upon by the basin's 260 million residents, as well as by the nation States within the basin, for irrigation and agriculture, fishery cultivation, aquaculture, and hydropower development, to name a few. Indeed, the river plays an increasingly important role in the resource management and economic development plans of all six riparian States. Communication and coordination amongst all stakeholders is needed to share knowledge regarding the benefits and risks of development projects, and to coordinate the multiple needs emerging within the basin, in order to mitigate harm and ensure the long-term health and vitality of the river and its people. Dialoguing amongst interested stakeholders is one way to improve governance of shared water resources and to coordinate sustainable development of the river in order to meet diverse needs.

The World Conservation Union (IUCN), Thailand Environment Institute (TEI), International Water Management Institute (IWMI), and the water governance network of M-POWER (Mekong Program on Water Environment & Resilience) convened the first stage of the Mekong Region Waters Dialogue in Vientiane, Lao PDR in July, 2006, bringing together representatives from government, international lending institutions, grassroots organizations, academics, and civil society, to name a few, to discuss issues involving the Mekong River and its resources, as well as to assess the water resource development strategies of the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank (ADB), and the Mekong River Commission (MRC). The July session marked the regional phase, which will be followed by national meetings from August-December, 2006.

Presentations given by representatives from the World Bank, the ADB, and the MRC during the first working session introduced each organization's ideology toward developing the Mekong. The World Bank and the ADB have launched the Mekong Water Resource Assistance Strategy (MWRAS), which may overlap with the MRC's own mandate to manage the Mekong's waters. The MRC introduced its 2006-2010 Strategic Plan. Break out sessions between conference delegates raised concern that the MWRAS and the Strategic Plan had not taken into account lessons learned from prior experiences, and that basin development seemed to be moving backwards towards large-scale infrastructure development with little consultation with those that will be most affected. As one speaker, Francois Molle, noted that infrastructure development is being propelled under the meta-justification of pro-poor development. This justification has the effect of restricting debate and putting forth potentially harmful projects in order to promote economic development. The MRC's Strategic Plan presents a false dichotomy between balancing environmental protection with economic development, painting water resources management as either/or. In reality, the situation is more nuanced; however, the prevailing interest of economic development may be preventing alternative development scenarios that promote benefits and trade-offs, while securing rights, from emerging.

It is clear that the concept of water governance still has a long way to go. However, the Water Dialogues serve as a positive, yet tentative, beginning to improving water governance in the region, and to ensure the sustainable development of the river's resources. This should form one part of an overall approach towards including other actors in the decision-making process. It is crucial that the next phase of the dialogue process builds on the lessons learned from the regional session, and that the various organizations present at the meeting are held accountable to their commitments for greater engagement and inclusiveness. Indeed, a far greater commitment to the principles of governance by all stakeholders is needed - especially government's, international lending institutions, and donors - for the ideals of the Dialogues session to truly take hold.

Student Thesis Profile:

“Impact of Micro-credit Programmes upon Economic and Social Conditions of Women in Rural and Urban Communities in Myanmar”

By May Si Si Aung

The issue of poverty has become a matter of particular concern for NGOs and donor agencies. NGOs have been implementing a wide range of development activities with the major goal of alleviating poverty in low-income communities. Among them, micro-credit programmes have become one of the most important intervening strategies to reduce poverty and empower women. How do micro-credit programmes bring economic and social change to women's roles in the household and community; and do these programmes contribute to poverty reduction in poor communities?

The study addresses the impact of micro-credit programmes on a rural area (Kyaukpadaung Township, Mandalay Division) and an urban community (Htawonbe Ware-North Okkalapa Township, Yangon Division) based on the perceptions of the beneficiaries or borrowers. The research survey analyzes the poverty reduction efforts of two NGOs: Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) and Private Agencies Acting Together (PACT/MYANMAR), with an emphasis on the impacts of their activities in two districts in Myanmar. These two NGOs adopt a group-based approach in their operations to bring economic and social improvements to the well-being of poor communities. Thus, it is an effort to understand the consequences of NGO-driven micro-credit programmes on low-income communities.

As women are an important part of the community, building their capacity to manage communities and community activities should be promoted. In addition to the economic benefits, the micro-credit programmes also promote the social well-being of its borrowers. Female micro-credit members were socially empowered through their increased involvement in community development activities, decision-making, mobility, self-confidence and technical skills.

Micro-credit programmes attempt to increase employment opportunities for the borrowers and their families. In the urban case, half of the interviewees were highly satisfied with their self-employment activities while the other half were reasonably satisfied. In the rural case, the majority of respondents were able to increase their respective incomes. They initiated new businesses with credit, which in turn, created new employment opportunities for family members and/or the local community. By engaging in the micro-credit programmes, members' statuses were changed from small retailer to wholesaler, employee to employer, small-earner to average-earner, and from owning one to multiple family businesses.

As women are an important part of the community, building their capacity to manage communities and community activities should be promoted. In addition to the economic benefits, the micro-credit programmes also promote the social well-being of its borrowers. Female micro-credit members were socially empowered through their increased involvement in community development activities, decision-making, mobility, self-confidence and technical skills. The group meetings and training given to women by the respective projects broadened their social network outside the family and decreased their fear of public exposure. In the end, the research concluded that the provision of these micro-credit programmes was an effective means to empower women and low-income families to raise their standard of living and protect themselves from the vicious cycle of poverty.

Retrospective: Public Lectures/Seminars at MAIDS March - August 2006

March 21st, 2006

Globalizing Economy and the Civilizational Agenda

Prof. Dr. Mary Racelis, Institute of Philippine Culture;
Prof. Dr. Supang Chantavanich, Institute of Asian Studies;
Assoc. Prof. Ananta Kumar Giri, Madras Institute of Development Studies;
Co-organized by the Japan Foundation and the Institute of Asian Studies

March 24th, 2006

Peace Building and Conflict Resolution in Mindanao and Aceh

Kamarulzaman Askandar, Ph.D., Southeast Asian Conflict Studies Network (SEACSN)

March 24th, 2006

Transitional Capital and Democratic Possibilities in Today's World

Jomo K.S., Assistant Secretary General for Economic Development in the United Nations' Department of Economic and Social Affairs

March 29th, 2006

The Burmese women's movement at the Thai-Burma border

Mary O'Kane

May 3rd, 2006

Multilateral Trading System and the Environment: Harmony or Conflict?

Mark Halle

August 12th, 22nd-23rd, 2006

Master Thesis Seminar 2006
2005 MAIDS students

'My Stay at the MAIDS programme' by Olivier Girard

Olivier Girard worked as a CUSO volunteer for the MAIDS programme from April 2005 to March 2006. He currently studies economics at HEC in Montréal, Canada.

While on a 2004 meditation retreat in Bangkok, I stumbled upon a staff member of CUSO, a Canadian volunteer-sending organization I barely knew of at the time¹. I expected to find inner peace, but instead, this encounter landed me a few months later with work as a foreign volunteer with the MAIDS programme.

CUSO was very keen on helping the Faculty of Political Science set up its International Development Studies programme. CUSO - who seeks to promote global social justice through partnerships with local organizations in Africa, Asia and Latin America - shares an interest in promoting the study of development, human rights, and environmental issues in Southeast Asia. Working in Thailand for over 30 years now, CUSO had already collaborated on various occasions with professors at Chulalongkorn University.

Cynics could certainly raise the debate as to who really benefits from foreign aid: the recipient, the donor, or the 'development' worker. I would like to think that this is a win-win situation, but CUSO's partner organizations remain the ultimate judges of the work accomplished.



Perhaps due to this well-established relationship, both the mandate and expectations for my work were shared and understood by the agency and the host organization; a rare partnership in development projects. Even more surprising, what was actually accomplished twelve months later turned out not too far off from the original goals. This undoubtedly made it much easier and rewarding for me.

Beyond my fleeting contributions to the programme newsletter, website, and public relations, the most enduring and valuable contribution of such a partnership was the opportunity for the organizations to expand their networks. For example, a professor put CUSO in touch with the leaders of Bangkok's Phom Mahakan community, a group which was repeatedly threatened of eviction as part of the city's beautification campaign. Fostering links between academia, development agencies and grass-roots communities is of great long-term benefit for civil society at large.

On a personal level, this dual allegiance to CUSO and MAIDS proved to be a blessing, particularly since both organizations are keen to send their constituents on fieldtrips around Southeast Asia. Cynics could certainly raise the debate as to who really benefits from foreign aid: the recipient, the donor, or the 'development' worker. I would like to think that this is a win-win situation, but CUSO's partner organizations remain the ultimate judges of the work accomplished. Fortunately in this case, the placement of a second CUSO volunteer at the MAIDS programme after my departure hints at some degree of satisfaction!

I do want to take this opportunity to thank all the MAIDS professors, staff members and students who provided me with work, afternoon snacks and a witty sense of humor which made my stay at Chula memorable. I was truly amazed by their fierce intellectual independence, which gives me hope about the future of the region. I wish them and the MAIDS programme a long, pleasant life and journey.

¹ Like many people, I initially asked what CUSO, as in C.U.S.O., stands for. It was initially an acronym for Canadian University Service Overseas. It later dropped this reference and stuck to CUSO. The mandate of the organization, however, never changed.

Master of Arts Programme in International Development Studies (MAIDS)

2007 – 2008 ACADEMIC YEAR

Application deadline: May 31st 2007

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 sectors. The programme particularly encourages applications from citizens and residents of the Greater Mekong Sub-region countries.

The Programme 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 students to develop expertise in a particular area of interest.

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

Programme Structure

The M.A. in International Development Studies is a full-time, one-year (Oct – Sep) programme 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 programme (36 credits), the student is awarded a Master of Arts degree in International Development Studies. The M.A. programme 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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