

WATR7200 - Community, livelihoods, development and water (2 units)

Integration module (Specialisation stream #1: International development)

Module description

This specialist module is part of the 'International development' stream and led by Ubon University's [Dr Kanokwan Manoram](#). It is delivered as a ten-day [field trip in Thailand](#).

Participants spend time at a remote village on the Mun River in Northeast Thailand. They learn about how local livelihoods are bound up with water and the river. They learn firsthand about water resources development, environmental change and social conflict, and discuss these issues with community members, NGO workers and government officers.

Participants live with local families and experience the realities of water in village life, learning about how it relates to culture, livelihoods and health, and how the construction and operation of the nearby Pak Mun Dam is leading to profound changes to lives and livelihoods.

This field trip is partially subsidised by IWC.

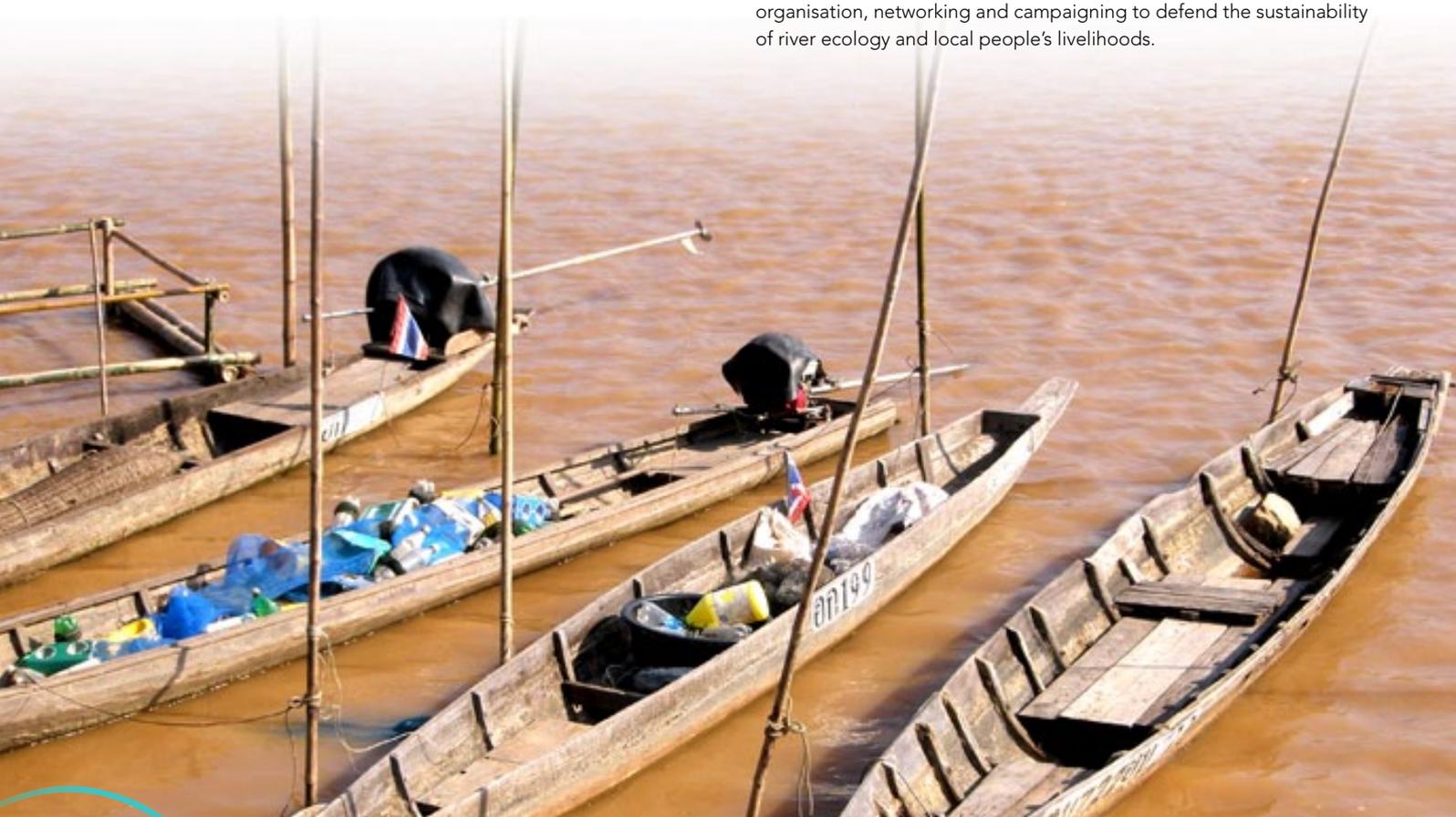
Module introduction

This module explores water and development issues from the perspective of rural villagers living along the Mun River in Northeast Thailand.

The module introduces participants to some current issues in water and development through a 10-day field trip to a rural community and community-based organisation (CBO) in the Mekong region. Participants travel to rural village communities in Khong Jiam in Northeast Thailand, where the Mun River meets the Mekong.

Participants are hosted by the CBO Villagers' Committee for the Rehabilitation of Life and Livelihood on the Mun River and local villages along the river. This CBO has become well known in Thailand and around the world for its activities and campaigns against the human and ecological impacts of the Pak Mun Dam, constructed on the Mun River in 1994. It also played a leading role in the Assembly of the Poor, the first nation-wide grassroots movement to emerge in Thailand.

The Villagers' Committee represents about 2,000 families from 50 villages along the lower Mun River and has very useful facilities at its headquarters, including offices and seminar rooms, a museum and meeting hall, an agricultural cooperative and community radio. Participants learn from ordinary villagers, CBO leaders and NGO advisors about their experiences of mobilising people and resources, establishing and managing a highly effective community-based organisation, networking and campaigning to defend the sustainability of river ecology and local people's livelihoods.



While in Khong Jiam participants are accommodated in 'homestays' with village families to gain an insight into their day-to-day lives and their perspectives on water, local livelihoods, water resources development and community development.

During the field trip, participants learn about village water supply systems in the past and present, the role of water in local rice cultivation, villagers' relationships with the Mun River and fishing ecology and the cultural meanings of rivers and waterways. They learn some local skills from villagers such as rice harvesting, fish net and trap making, and helping their homestay hosts prepare a local meal and other household tasks.

They also learn from villagers through dialogue and discussion, participatory research methods such as PRA, visits to the river, the Pak Mun Dam, village walks, and learning by doing with villagers. They explore the sustainable livelihoods approach and asset-based community development, and critically examine the roles of the state and NGOs to develop a critical understanding of local responses to dam development, environmental, economic and cultural change.

Finally, participants link the local experience of the Mun River communities with development issues across the whole Mekong Region, and consider how local lessons about water and development can be related to development issues across the Mekong.

Assumed background

The following modules are pre-requisites for this module: 'New perspectives on project management', 'Science of water', 'Water, sustainability and development', 'Water governance and policy'.

Learning objectives

After successfully completing this module participants are able to:

- Explain the relationships between water, local livelihoods, development and socioeconomic change in a lower Mekong community
- Employ a range of qualitative and participatory methods for Rapid Rural Appraisal of water, livelihoods and development, and water security
- Analyse the environmental, social and economic impacts of a large dam, and relate the field case study to broader issues in the lower Mekong region
- Analyse and explain lessons learned from local processes of community organising and community development
- Participate successfully in an integrated group project exploring detailed aspects of water sustainability at the community level

- Demonstrate the use of personal reflection and social learning to improve their ability, individually and as part of a team, to analyse and explore integrated solutions to practical water planning and management problems exemplified in case studies presented in this module.

Teaching staff

Lecturer: [Dr Kanokwan Manoram](#) (Ubon University)

Problem-Based Learning (PBL) projects

Parallel PBL projects and field trips run through the semester, comprising roughly 50% of the assessment weight. Full-time students complete two PBL projects per semester, while part-time students complete one PBL per semester.

PBL projects for the Integration semester comprise:

- **PBL3:** Integrated catchment management – developing strategies for change (*Individual project*)
- **PBL4:** Learning lessons from integrated water management in practice (*Individual project*)



Thai women cooking food for the villagers.