



The 'Our Rivers, Our Life' campaign is a regional biodiversity campaign in South East Asian countries. The seven country members work to protect the health and biodiversity of 11 rivers: the Salween (Burma), Mekong (Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam), Mae Kok, Nan, Mae Ping and Mae ing (Thailand), Vaiko (Cambodia), Agusan and Rio Grande De Mindanao (Pulagi) (Philippines), Cisadane (Indonesia), the Dong Nai and Saigon (Vietnam) and the Xedone and Xelanong (Laos).

Monday, November 28, 2011

Lessons to be learned from SE Asia floods



The UN secretary general, Ban Ki-moon, greets flood-affected people housed in tents in a sports hall at Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok. Photograph: Barbara Walton/EPA

Severe flooding has caused serious damage across south-east Asia, affecting around 9 million people. Thailand has been better placed to cope than its neighbours

Agapot squats-down next to his green dome tent, pitched inside a sports hall in Chonburi, an hour south of Bangkok. He's a 24-year-old factory worker left with no home and no job after the [worst floods to hit Thailand](#) for more than 50 years.

"The factory announced a three-day holiday when the floods hit," he said. "But since then we've heard nothing." He has been living in an emergency evacuation centre for over a month now, after fleeing from his family home in northern Bangkok when a canal burst its banks. "The current was so strong I couldn't stand up properly," he said. They didn't have enough time to rescue any belongings, and the house is now submerged up to the ceiling. Twenty members of his family and close neighbours are camping in the gym, along with hundreds of other evacuees from the capital.

They are some of the estimated 9 million people affected by the severe [flooding](#) that has caused [serious damage across south-east Asia](#). [Thailand](#) has been worst hit - with more than a third of provinces flooded, parts of the capital under water and nearly 600 dead. The UN Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (Ocha) estimates that 250 people have died in Cambodia after heavy monsoon rains led to the country's worst floods in a decade. Vietnam, Burma and the Philippines have also seen more than 100 dead and hundreds of thousands more displaced.

As the waters gradually recede, attention is now turning to the post-flood effects on the countries. Thailand is better placed to cope than its neighbours. There have already been reported outbreaks of cholera and other waterborne [infections in Cambodia](#). Many evacuees have been forced to bed down on plastic sheets laid on muddy ground close to livestock and pets - leading to serious risks of disease.

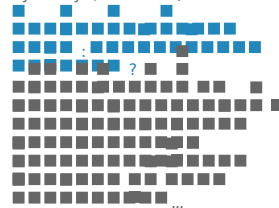
Thailand, with well-equipped evacuation centres - staffed by medical personnel and bustling with volunteers handing out regular meals - faces different challenges. Widespread urban flooding in a developed capital city like Bangkok is "pretty much unprecedented", according to Mark Thomas, Unicef's chief of communications. The floods have shut down factories, affected large numbers of small businesses, and

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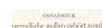
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disrupted national and international supply chains – leaving tens of thousands of workers like Agapot jobless.

The country's important tourism industry is also suffering. Arrivals to the international airport, Suvarnabhumi, outside Bangkok, are **down 25%**, even though the airport and tourist areas in the south have been unaffected by the floods. With damage to industry, tourism and agriculture, the Thai chamber of commerce estimates the total **flood costs will be around \$11bn**.

The government has announced a compensation scheme for households affected by flooding. However, a **Bangkok Post investigation** found the process for claiming was long and bureaucratic – with families needing documents that many had lost in the floods. Mol Plungiamras, a Bangkok resident, had mixed feelings about the plan: "[The money's] not enough to renovate the house, but it's better than nothing," she said.

The UN secretary general, **Ban Ki-moon, visiting Thailand** last week, said he had, "emphasised the importance of learning lessons from this mega flooding". Ban was en route to the Durban climate change conference where he is calling for a \$100bn fund to help developing countries mitigate the impact of global warming.

While individual events such as the flooding in south-east Asia can't be causally linked to climate change, they do demonstrate the impact that an increased frequency of weather extremes will have on countries in the region. With sea level rises also likely to present a serious risk of urban flooding around the world, Bangkok's experience could serve as a template for future disaster management.

Unicef's Thomas said so far he'd been impressed by the government's response. "Given the amount of water, the authorities have done a pretty good job," he said. However, the real test will begin when the flood waters start to recede and those displaced have to return home.

Agapot is currently satisfied with the evacuation provision, but he is worried about the future. "We need government support, money and jobs," he said. For a country struggling with the aftermath of urban "mega-flooding", his expectations will provide a real challenge for the Thai administration to meet.

Source: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/global-development/poverty-matters/2011/nov/25/lessons-learned-asia-floods-thailand>

Posted by **Our Rivers Our Life** at **Monday, November 28, 2011** No comments:

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Labels: **Cambodia, development, flood, lesson, South East Asia, Thailand**

Wednesday, November 23, 2011

The International terre des hommes Youth Network in Germany, 3rd October 2011

des hommes Youth Network in Germany, 3rd October 2011

Declaration of the International terre des hommes Youth Network Preamble: Youths from different corners of the world gathe...

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OSNABRÜCK

Jugendliche wollen gehört werden

Internationales terre-des-hommes-Jugendnetzwerk in Osnabrück gegründet

Von Kathrin Pohlmann

OSNABRÜCK. Verschmutzte Flüsse, radioaktiv verseuchter Boden, Wassermangel in vielen Teilen der Erde: Der rücksichtslose Umgang mit der Umwelt ist weltweit ein Problem. Vor allem die Kleinsten in der Gesellschaft haben darunter zu leiden: die Kinder.

Am Dienstag haben 26 Jugendliche aus Lateinamerika, Indien, Südafrika, Afrika und Deutschland das internationale terre-des-hommes-Jugendnetzwerk in Osnabrück gegründet, um auf die Folgen von Umweltzerstörung aufmerksam zu machen. Sie wollen sich mehr Gehör in der Politik verschaffen. Die Themen Klimawandel und Umweltschutz sind ihnen dabei besonders wichtig. „Die Kinder haben die ökologischen Sünden ihrer Eltern auszubaden“, sagt Karin Jabs-Kiesler, Bürgermeisterin der Stadt Osnabrück, und lobt das Engagement der Jugendlichen.

Das erste Projekt des Netzwerkes ist die Kampagne

Banner für eine bessere Welt: Jugendliche fordern das Recht auf eine intakte Umwelt und wollen den Klimawandel stoppen.

Foto: Michael Heilmann

„Kinder hatten für ihre Eltern – genug geredet – ökologische Kinderrechte achten.“ Sie thematisiert das Recht der Kinder auf eine intakte Umwelt. Im Juni 2012 wollen sie dann auf dem UN-Gipfel für nachhaltige Entwicklung in Rio ihre Forderungen vorstellen. Bis dahin wartet noch viel Arbeit auf sie. „Wir müssen uns überlegen, wie wir uns in Rio präsentieren“, sagt Mitglied Sophie Uhing. Dazu haben sich die Jugendlichen eine Banneraktion überlegt.

Auf selbst bemalten Tüchern machen sie ihrem Unmut Ausdruck: „Gesundheit vor Profit“ und „Für die Welt – für die Kinder“ steht da geschrieben. Der 17-jährige Gonzalo Ignacio Sagua Nahuelmal aus Chile pinselt mit schwarzer Farbe „Rebellion des Volkes gegen den Kapitalismus“ auf den Stoff.

„Die Firmen benutzen Pestizide, und die Kinder werden krank, aber das ist den egal. Hauptsache, die haben ihr Geld“, sagt die 15-jährige

Jenny Ruft aus Hannover, die sich in dem Netzwerk engagiert, weil sie es wichtig findet, dass eine Firma einfach Abwasser in einen Fluss leitet.

Das Netzwerk hat sich aus verschiedenen lokalen Gruppen und Projekten aus vielen Teilen der Erde zusammengeschlossen, und terre des hommes unterstützt es. Die Mitglieder organisieren ihre Aktionen hauptsächlich über das Internet – über Foren, Blogs und Facebook.

Die Jugendlichen, die nun nach Osnabrück reisen dürfen, wurden nach dem Zufallsprinzip ausgewählt, erzählt Albert Recknagel, Leiter des Referats Kinderrechte von terre des hommes. Wer im nächsten Jahr mit nach Rio darf, das kann er noch nicht sagen: „Nicht alle können mit nach Rio. Das müssen wir von unseren finanziellen Mitteln abhängig machen.“

Contributors

- TdH-Mekong Youth Network
- Our Rivers Our Life

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Declaration of the International terre des hommes Youth Network

Preamble:

Youths from different comers of the world gathered from 22 September 2011 to 3 October 2011, representing the countries of South America, Central America, Africa, South East Asia, Germany and India where they discussed different problems related to children's rights and ecology. One of the most shameful incidents is that many children in different countries still do not have a citizenship, which means right from the beginning of the life the children are deprived of their basic fundamental rights. So we feel that to ensure ecological child rights, citizenship of all children is a precondition. Thus all the country governments should ensure that all children have a citizenship.

The youth network further discussed the precondition of a healthy environment for good living of generations today and tomorrow. Again reality is far away from this situation. Our environment is affected and exploited each moment in each and every corner of this world. This feeling was strengthened by the depositions from different members coming from different comers who have witnessed situations directly or indirectly. Common issues which emerged from all regions were- industrialisation at the cost of people, displacement, exploitations and pollution from mining, destruction of culture and biodiversity, deforestation, effect of harmful chemical pesticides, exploitation of fossil fuels, and many others. Hence as tdhyouth network we felt the need to express our opinion regarding these situations and demand for improvement from the respective governments through this declaration.

Our demands include:

- Any new development project by the government or the industrial companies should be made subject to public opinion and debate before it gets approved, where child and youth participation is made compulsory. The processes should be open, transparent and to ensure accountability.
- Governments should ensure standards of healthy environment during development projects initiated by them or promoted by them and also that all means should ensure 'PEOPLE BEFORE PROFIT'. Where damages have been already caused the victims should be properly treated and rehabilitated through the government infrastructure.
- The governments should integrate ecological education in its regular academic curricula and so create green job opportunities.
- Governments should finance public policies of health, education, environment, etc and ensure that the services provided are of good quality and useful for society. These services should be monitored and evaluated at regular intervals for the enforcement of the policies.
- Development should ensure regeneration and rejuvenation of natural resources to ensure livelihoods sustainability of future generations.
- The respective government should appoint an OMBUDSPERSON to investigate the burden of development on the future generation immediately in respect to ecological imbalances (like pollution, contamination, climate change, etc).
- Ownership of natural resources should remain with the local people of the land. Land that has been taken away forcibly should be given back to the original owners with proper compensation.
- The states must respect diversity of indigenous people and fulfil the ILO convention 169, the UN Declaration of the rights of indigenous people and the declaration of MOTHER EARTH of the WORLD CLIMATE CONFERENCE.

To Conclude:

All these demands should be realised for the benefit and best interest of all children regardless of religion, gender, age and legal status with proper compensation

Signedbythe regional representativesofthe intemational tdhyouthnnetwork:

- Nawaal Domingo (South Africa)
- María José Salazar (South America)
- Eva Reynoso Ambrocio (Central America)
- Sudipta Pramanick (India)
- Thongchai Chakatprasit (South East Asia)

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3rd October 2011

Posted by [Our Rivers Our Life](#) at [Wednesday, November 23, 2011](#)

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Tuesday, November 22, 2011

Dam report decried



Photo by: Piyaporn Wongruang/Bangkok Post

Construction equipment on a road leading to the site of a controversial proposed dam in Xayaburi province of Laos in April this year.

Mary Kozlovski
Thursday, 10 November 2011

An environmental group has accused the Lao government of using a report prepared by a consulting firm to “greenwash” the proposed US\$3.8 billion Xayaburi hydro-power dam on the Mekong River in a “desperate bid” to gain regional approval for the controversial project.

International Rivers said in a statement yesterday the report, prepared by Pöyry Energy AG - whose parent company is based in Finland - acknowledged uncertainties about the trans-boundary impact of the dam but nevertheless recommended that it be built.

The group said the report stated neighbouring countries’ concerns had been addressed.

“The Pöyry report sidesteps science and relies instead on guesswork, making it an unsuitable basis for decision-making on the Xayaburi Dam,” Ame Trandem, Southeast Asia program director for International Rivers, said in the statement.

Representatives from Pöyry Energy AG could not be reached for comment yesterday.

The Lao government commissioned the report in May after agreeing to delay the project following concerns raised by Cambodia, Thailand and Vietnam at an April meeting of the Mekong River Commission, a body established under a 1995 agreement that requires the four countries to consult on projects that could affect the river.

The three countries, along with environmentalists, have expressed concern about the dam’s potential impact on water levels and fish stocks in the Mekong Basin.

According to International Rivers’ statement, the report by Pöyry listed more than 40 scientific and technical studies that still needed to be completed and the group identified 15 MRC requirements the project did not comply with.

Daovong Phonekeo, deputy director of the department of electricity at the Lao Ministry of Energy and Mines, was unable to comment. Other officials could not be reached.

MRC communications officer Surasak Glahan said by email the MRC was still reviewing Pöyry’s report.

Te Navuth, secretary-general of the Cambodia National Mekong Committee, said he had not yet received the report from the Lao government.

Source: <http://www.phnompenhpost.com/index.php/2011111052685/National-news/dam-report-decried.html>

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Southeast Asia floods take 1,000 lives

Southeast Asia floods take 1,000 lives thumbnail

A flood victim takes refuge with his family and pets on the elevated grounds of the Wat Ta Krai temple in Ayutthaya, Thailand (Reuters)

At least one thousand people have died in massive floods across Southeast Asia in recent months, according to an AFP tally on Thursday, and millions of homes and livelihoods have been destroyed.

The death toll in Thailand — grappling with its worst floods in half a century — has reached 533, the government said, and the slowly advancing waters are now threatening the heart of Bangkok, a city of 12 million people.

In neighbouring Cambodia, the most severe floods in over a decade have killed 248 people, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said in its latest flood report. Vietnam's government has reported at least 100 deaths, including many children, in southern and central parts of the country. At least 106 people died in flash floods caused by heavy storms in central Burma in late October, a government official in the military-dominated country told AFP at the time, on condition of anonymity.

In the tiny nation of Laos, 30 people lost their lives in the floods, according to OCHA. The UN body, which does not include Burma in its flood updates, also reported 98 deaths in the Philippines.

Source: <http://www.dvb.no/news/southeast-asia-floods-take-1000-lives/18661>

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Labels: [Burma](#), [Cambodia](#), [flood](#), [Philippines](#), [South East Asia](#), [Thailand](#), [Vietnam](#)

Tuesday, November 15, 2011

Indonesian Earthquake Causes Panic

An large earthquake measuring 6.6 on the Richter scale has struck the Indonesian province of North Maluku, according to the United States Geological Survey.

A strong earthquake hit waters off eastern Indonesia on Monday, sending people on nearby islands fleeing from their homes in panic. Fearing a tsunami that never came, villagers living along coastlines ran to high ground. The 6.3-magnitude quake was centered 20 kilometers beneath the Molucca Sea, the United States Geological Survey said. Many people in Ternate, the town in North Maluku province that was closest to the epicenter, scurried from shaking buildings, said George Rajalao, a resident. "I ran with everyone else," he said. Suhardjono, from the Indonesian meteorological and geophysics agency, said at that magnitude and depth there was no danger of tsunami. But residents fled beaches all the same. Indonesia straddles a series of fault lines that make the vast island nation prone to volcanic and seismic activity. A giant quake off the country on Dec. 26, 2004, triggered a tsunami in the Indian Ocean that killed 230,000 people, half of them in Indonesia's westernmost province of Aceh.

Source: <http://www.thejakartaglobe.com/home/indonesian-earthquake-causes-panic/478333>

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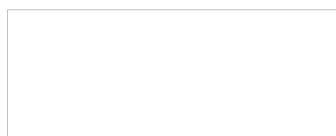
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Experts discuss Dong Ho Lake conservation

by Thien Ly

HA TIEN-KIEN GIANG — The conservation of Dong Ho Lake is one of several important objectives that the Kien Giang provincial People's Committee will implement in the following years, in an aim to enhance economic development



and deal with climate change.

The statement was made by Le Van Thi, chairman of the People's Committee, at an international seminar held in Ha Tien on Friday.

The seminar's main objectives included assessing the current social and natural conditions surrounding Dong Ho Lake and its potential.

Identifying these factors would help experts, scientists and officials develop policies on conservation, exploitation and development of the lake, said Lam Hoang Sa, vice-chair of the People's Committee.

He said that information presented at the conference by scientists, managers and professionals would be used by provincial departments in their implementation of conservation and sustainable development programmes for the lake in the context of climate change and the rise of sea levels.

"It will also be used to support planning for Ha Tien to become a city of culture and tourism," he said.

"Ha Tien town is well-known for its numerous tourism attractions and historical monuments, and has been recognised as a border-gate economic zone and key tourism site of Kien Giang Province," Thi said.

"The karst mountain ecosystems and wetland in Ha Tien is considered to be of special importance. The saltwater Dong Ho Lake is a highlight of Viet Nam's coastal lagoon system."

Located in the centre of Ha Tien township, the 1,384-ha lake with 903ha of water surface, surrounded by 249,53ha of mangrove forests and 171,23ha under aquaculture cultivation plays a pivotal role in the economic, cultural and social life of residents, and is also valued for its biological diversity.

Sa said that it was urgent to plan for conservation of the ecosystem and hydrological regulation as well as the mitigation of flood damage downstream of Giang Thanh River.

All related departments and agencies had to begin working together soon on these goals, he said.

However, Sa noted that no official scientific research or statistical analysis and evaluation of the lake's value had been conducted.

More than 200 delegates including many foreign experts and scientists attended the conference delivering 20 presentations on three major topics.

These topics included the conservation of wetlands, mangroves and biodiversity of Dong Ho Lake, and the relationship between conservation and development of Dong Ho Lake in the context of climate change and sea-level rise.

It also included examining the means of livelihood, environmental problems and treatment, planning for the lake area, and developing strategies for conserving and promoting cultural heritage of Ha Tien to develop a tourism industry.

Prof Nguyen Ngoc Tran, director of the Cuu Long (Mekong) Development Research Institute, said Dong Ho Lake was the shallowest place in the sub-region of Ha Tien of Long Xuyen Quadrangle, with water running from Hau River.

"The environment of Dong Ho is under great pressure from the economic development of Ha Tien, particularly from urbanisation. Thus, between Dong Ho and the Gulf of Thailand, the river and the sea flows are becoming imbalanced.

Le Duc Tuan, director of the Institute of Can Gio Mangrove Forest, said that "Dong Ho Lake is a reservoir with several mangrove forests. The preservation of the lake should be given appropriate attention by the local authority and scientists, policymakers, provincial administration and the central government."

Dr. Thai Thanh Luom, director of Kien Giang Province's Department of Natural Resources and Environment, said the lake was downstream of the Giang Thanh River which originated from Cambodia and flowed across the Ha Tien border and into the lake out to the sea adjacent to both Viet Nam and Cambodia.

Because the lake originates from the natural river and is in the southwestern part of the country, the floral and fauna distribution is dominated by three types of ecosystems: the riverside ecosystem, a freshwater source from upstream, and a brackish ecosystem, the latter an intermediary between salty fresh water and the salty coastal ecosystem.

"Because Dong Ho Lake has such high biodiversity, surveys of the area need to be undertaken to understand fauna and flora compositions there. Another task is to classify species and determine rare or endangered species, and the endemic species at Dong Ho Lake," Luom said.

There are about 704 families with about 3,006 people living mainly in the southwestern and southern areas near the lake. Most of these families live in poor conditions so it is of paramount importance to have proper planning and research conducted of the local community in the Dong Ho Lake area as soon as possible, according to Mai Van Huynh, chairman of the People's Committee of Ha Tien Township.

Huynh said that the provincial administration should develop policies to help local people find decent jobs so they would not continue to destroy the area's natural resources in order to make a profit.

Dr. Sharon Brown, chief of the Kien Giang Biosphere Conservation Project and Climate Change in Coastal Ecosystem Programme, said in its conservation plan the province should have regulations that species which fish species in the Dong Ho Lake could be exploited and how long this exploitation could last. The aim is to protect biodiversity and prevent extinction of the variety of species.

The event was jointly organised by the Kien Giang People's Committee and Germany's GIZ Viet Nam under the support from UNESCO Viet Nam and the Australian Development Agency. — VNS

Source: <http://vietnamnews.vnnet.vn/Environment/217601/Experts-discuss-Dong-Ho-Lake-conservation.html>



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Labels: [conservation](#), [Dong Ho Lake](#), [Vietnam](#)

Thursday, November 10, 2011

Four polluting factories shut in HCM City

HCM CITY — Four polluting factories in HCM City were forced to suspend operations by having their power supply cut and their machinery and equipment sealed, the municipal Department of Natural Resources and Environment has announced. The four firms are: a cloth dyeing workshop in District 12's Dong Hung Thuan Ward; Gia Hung Co Ltd in District 12's Tan Thoi Nhat Ward; paper producer Hoang Son Phat Co Ltd in Le Minh Xuan Industrial Park, Binh Chanh District; and Quoc Sieu Co Ltd in Binh Chanh District's Vinh Loc B Commune. These factories had been fined earlier for violating environmental protection regulations. However, recent inspections showed that the gas emissions from these factories remain higher than permitted. This is the first time this "strong" measure has been taken to force polluting enterprises to suspend their operations, the inspectors said. Meanwhile, the Department of Natural Resources and Environment in central Thua Thien - Hue Province has fined 11 polluting enterprises over VND2 billion (US\$95,200) for violating local environmental protection regulations. Last week, Phan Van Dang, Chief Inspector of the Department, named the firms as violators: Thua Thien - Hue Enameled Tiles Co No 1; Hue Paper Material Joint Venture Co; Hue Textile and Garment JSC; Hue Seafood JSC; Kuks - Viet Nam Cement Co Ltd; Hoang Gia Paint Co Ltd; Thua Thien - Hue Mineral and Enameled Tile Co; Hue Brewery; Thuy Phuong Waste Treatment Co; Hue Environment and Urban Work Co; and Binh Dien Hydro-power Plant. Their violations included the lack of wastewater and gas emission treatment facilities and the discharging of wastewater and gas in greater volumes than permitted, Dang said. — VNS

Source: <http://vietnamnews.vnnet.vn/Environment/217483/Four-polluting-factories-shut-in-HCM-City.html>

Posted by [Our Rivers Our Life](#) at Thursday, November 10, 2011 No comments:



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Activists Move to Protect Forests

They conduct 'patrols' in the heart of Cambodia's lowland evergreen forests to check illegal logging.



Photo courtesy of LICADHO.

Activists taking a break from their 'patrols' in the Prey Lang forest area. About 200 environmental activists have entered a rare Cambodian rain forest area in a bid to combat illegal logging and other abuses which they say stem from government-linked concessions for opening up rubber plantations and mineral extraction.

The activists, calling themselves Cambodia's "Avatars," will "patrol" the core area of the Prey Lang forests for a seven-day period from Monday in what has been dubbed by some groups as Occupy Prey Lang.

The move may have been inspired by the Occupy Wall Street protests that began in New York recently decrying corporate greed and economic inequality.

The activists from all four Prey Lang provinces—Preah Vihear, Kratie, Stung Treng, and Kompong Thom—said they want to assert their right to protect the sprawling 3,600 square-kilometer (1,400-square mile) forest area.

"As Cambodian citizens, they are asserting their rights to protect this forest by fanning out across the forest on foot to discourage forest crimes and to challenge concessionaires," a statement from the Prey Lang Community Network said.

They have vowed a peaceful campaign, saying they will confront illegal loggers and poachers and explain to them the value of the forests and the need to protect them.

"If we don't express the voices of the youth to the public, the government won't

know that Prey Lang is so important to us," said group youth leader Em Khemra.

Prayers

Some activists gathered for prayers on Tuesday around the Preah Ang Dangker statue in front of the Royal Palace in Phnom Penh.

"We prayed for forest protection because the forest is so dense that it will help protect the environment," another group member Sar Mony said.

"We are protecting the forests to ensure our environment's sustainability and prevent any natural disaster."

The activists planned to converge at "O Chrok," the heart of Prey Lang area in Sandan district, Kompong Thom, where they claim forest crimes have increased.

The activists also plan to hold a vigil at the site of a Vietnamese military-linked company Chu Se Rubber Company Kompong Thom (CRCK) which has begun clearing forests in order to make way for a rubber plantation.

The Prey Lang network says more than 40,000 hectares (98,840 acres) in the forest have been granted for rubber plantations alone, while 27 exploration licenses and related concessions have been handed to mining firms.

Bribes

Community leader Sim Sean told RFA that local authorities had received bribes from the company as they cleared the forests to establish the rubber plantation.

But Kompong Thom deputy governor Oth Sam On denied the accusation, saying that the company owns a government license to carry out its activities.

The company has cleared only areas reserved for plantation activity and "not the dense forests," he said.

After several days in the forests, about 50 activists among the 200 are reportedly sick due to exhaustion and lack of food, rights groups said.

Rights activist Chheng Sophorse said bad weather and lack of medicine have compounded the problem.

In August, the activists gathered outside the royal palace for a religious ceremony and distributed leaflets defending the Prey Lang forests, which some green groups claim is Southeast Asia's largest lowland evergreen forest.

They wore dress and makeup inspired by the blockbuster movie "Avatar," which depicts the destruction of a forest on an alien world and its inhabitants' bloody fight to protect their home from miners.

Most of the wood from Prey Lang is smuggled into China and Vietnam where it is made into furniture and exported worldwide, some environmental groups have charged.

Reported by RFA's Khmer service. Translated by Samean Yun. Written in English by Parameswaran Ponnudurai.

Source: <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/cambodia/avatar-11082011194808.html>

Posted by [Our Rivers Our Life](#) at Thursday, November 10, 2011 No comments:



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Labels: [Cambodia](#), [Environment](#), [forest](#), [illegal logging](#), [protection](#)

'False Claims' In Dam Report

A report commissioned by the Lao government gives the green light to a controversial dam.



Photo appears courtesy of

International Rivers

A caterpillar works on the access road to the Xayaburi dam in Laos in an undated photo.

A new report commissioned by the Lao government makes "false claims" regarding the impact of a planned hydroelectric dam in the landlocked country and

should not be used as a basis for proceeding with the project, according to a conservation group.

Despite acknowledging uncertainties about how the Xayaburi Dam would affect riparian communities in Laos and other countries along the Mekong River, the report, released Wednesday by Swiss company Pöyry Energy AG, recommends that the dam be built, falsely claiming concerns about the project have been addressed, the U.S.-based International Rivers said in a statement Wednesday.

"The Pöyry report sidesteps science and relies instead on guesswork, making it an unsuitable basis for decision-making on the Xayaburi Dam," said Ame Trandem, Southeast Asia Program Director for International Rivers.

"Pöyry claims that the project complies with Mekong River Commission (MRC) guidelines, despite listing over 40 major scientific and technical studies that still need to be completed. It would be irresponsible of Laos and other Mekong countries to support the Xayaburi Dam based on the false claims of this report."

The Lao government hired Pöyry Energy AG in May to undertake a three-month evaluation of the project's compliance with the MRC's requirements for Mekong Mainstream Dams after the regional body decided in April to defer any decision on the U.S. \$3.8 billion project to the end of 2011.

The MRC, which consists of Laos and neighbors Thailand, Vietnam, and Cambodia, concluded at the time that the potential for damage to rice farming and fishing communities along the river warranted the suspension of work on the dam.

In early September, the Lao government announced that the Pöyry report would be presented to neighboring governments as part of a plan to begin full construction on the dam before the end of the year.

Sulasak Krahan, a public relations officer for the MRC, told RFA in an interview that his organization had received a copy of the report and was in the process of reviewing Pöyry's findings.

"The MRC has received the report on Xayaburi dam project and our experts are now reviewing it. The review is expected to be completed soon and the MRC will inform the public of our findings."

While Laos has yet to publicly disclose the report, a leaked copy has recently been widely circulated.

Report shortcomings

International Rivers said it has identified at least 15 "fundamental" MRC requirements with which the Xayaburi Dam still does not comply.

"The Pöyry report avoids mentioning many of these requirements, and instead proposes unproven mitigation measures without having basic data about who, what, when, and how much will be impacted," International Rivers said.

In particular, the group noted the report's lack of provisions for an MRC requirement that the dam include safe passage for at least 95 percent of key fish species. Instead, it said, Pöyry promoted technologies that have never been applied on the Mekong River or used successfully in any tropical river.

"Fishery experts from around the world have concluded that no technology exists to effectively mitigate the impacts mainstream dams would have on the world's largest inland fishery," International Rivers said.

The river conservation group said it found several other shortcomings in the Pöyry report, including analysis of ecosystems, sediment flows, and dam safety.

Critics of the dam say it would destroy the river's ecology and disrupt the livelihood of riparian communities that rely on it for their livelihood.

They also fear that proceeding with the Xayaburi dam would give a green light to construction on as many as 10 other hydropower projects planned for the lower Mekong.

Several groups have issued warnings that any dam built in the area may be at risk of collapse because the site is prone to earthquakes.

In the report, Pöyry falsely claims that a regional prior consultation process on the Xayaburi is already complete and that the Lao government can make a unilateral decision on whether to proceed on the dam, International Rivers said.

"Pöyry incorrectly asserts that the Lao government is not required to respond to the concerns of other governments and the MRC about the project's transboundary impacts before the dam's construction begins," it said.



Map showing the proposed Xayaburi dam project.
Government push

International Rivers said that the Lao government had been working hard to push the dam project forward—proceeding with construction on access roads and work camps despite the lack of a regional agreement.

“It’s not surprising Laos has commissioned Pöyry as their hired gun given their long history of involvement in controversial projects in the Mekong region and their close ties to the Xayaburi Dam’s main builder, Ch. Karnchang,” Trandem said in the statement.

“Poyry and Ch. Karnchang are currently working together on another hydropower project in Laos, the Nam Ngum 2 Dam. It comes as no surprise that Pöyry would give its business partner a positive review, despite strong evidence to the contrary.”

With plans to build a total of 70 hydropower projects, Laos hopes to become “the battery” of Asia.

International Rivers said that as the first Mekong mainstream dam to undergo the MRC’s prior consultation process, the Xayaburi will set the bar for how decisions are made on all 11 dams proposed for the river.


“Over 40 million people, or two-thirds of the population in the Lower Mekong Basin, are involved in the Mekong’s fisheries at least part-time or seasonally. The future lives of many depend on governments’ willingness to say no to the Xayaburi Dam,” it said.

A decision on the Xayaburi Dam is expected to be made at the upcoming MRC Council meeting, scheduled for Dec. 7-9 in Siem Reap, Cambodia.

Reported by RFA’s Lao service. Translated by Max Avary. Written in English with additional reporting by by Joshua Lipes.

Source: <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/laos/dam-11092011164208.html>

Posted by [Our Rivers Our Life](#) at [Thursday, November 10, 2011](#) [No comments:](#)


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Labels: [hydropower](#), [Laos](#), [Mekong](#), [MRC](#), [Thailand](#), [Xayaburi dam](#)

Daunting environmental costs

The toxic legacy of the worst flood in Thai history will remain long after the waters have receded.

This year’s unusually long rainy season has left many parts of Thailand, Laos and Cambodia inundated and has resulted in the worst flooding crisis in Thailand, in the last 50 years. Provinces in the Central Plains and many districts in the north, east and west of Bangkok are now under water. The huge volume of water is such that flood levels are three metres deep in some areas.

 The flood’s impact is more than just damages to homes and disrupting the way of life. It entails waste contamination on a grand scale.

Towns, villages, historic temples, paddy fields, industrial estates, factories, landfills, water treatment plants, airports and other infrastructure have all been inundated. The social and economic costs of the disaster will be daunting.

So far, the death toll in Thailand has surpassed 500.

At least seven major industrial parks in Ayutthaya and Pathum Thani have been submerged. Two major eastern industrial estates – Lat Krabang and Bang Chan – have been heavily reinforced with sandbags to protect the facilities and

infrastructure therein.

While the government deals with the immediate crisis and puts in place plans for the eventual rehabilitation of the flood-damaged industrial estates and other infrastructure, the environmental pollution has been largely overlooked.

Deluge water is not only floodwater. Indeed, significant amounts of industrial waste, hazardous substances, raw sewage and miscellaneous toxic chemicals have been released into the environment as a result of the flooding and these will have an immediate negative impact on water quality and human health.

The floods will also have a toxic legacy in the form of soil, sediment and groundwater contamination, which will continue to represent a risk to human health and the environment long after the floodwaters have receded.

Groundwater resources may be contaminated by toxic chemicals and harmful pathogens such as faecal coliforms and E-coli that can enter aquifers directly via groundwater abstraction wells and indirectly via downward percolation of contaminated waters through the soil profile. Toxic chemicals and harmful pathogens may also be absorbed by soil particles and trapped in pore spaces within the soil matrix itself. Exposure to these contaminated soils and groundwater can represent a serious risk to the health of exposed individuals.

Contaminants can also leach out of river sediments and be transferred up the food chain via the aquatic ecosystem. Consumption of affected species such as freshwater shrimp and fish represents a potential hazard to human health.

Inundated buildings also provide a breeding ground for harmful moulds and fungi. Moulds are ubiquitous in the biosphere but when mould spores are present in abnormally high quantities, they can pose a threat to humans by causing allergic reactions, asthma episodes, fungal infections such as mycosis, irritations of the eyes, nose and throat, sinus congestion and other respiratory problems. Moulds excrete toxic compounds called mycotoxins under certain environmental conditions and some mycotoxins can be harmful, even lethal, to humans with high dosage exposure. It is important that buildings that have been inundated are inspected by a specialist for the presence of potentially harmful moulds and fungi once the waters have subsided.

The toxic legacy of the floods may also have financial implications for the owners and occupiers of affected properties such as industrial units when they come to divest of the property or hand back their lease. It is common practice for potential purchasers to conduct environmental due diligence (EDD) to determine the contamination status of the property before finalising any transaction, this is often referred to as an environmental baseline study (EBS). Furthermore, land owners may require lessees to conduct an EBS before they hand back the property to demonstrate that their operations and activities have not resulted in soil or groundwater contamination. These studies are an integral component of the risk and liability management process that accompanies most significant business transactions.

It is common to collect soil and groundwater samples during these studies and submit them for analysis for a range of common contaminants. If contamination is found during this stage of the transaction process it can have significant financial and legal implications for the property owner.

One way to avoid the potential for this situation to arise in the future is to commission a soil and groundwater sampling and testing study as soon as the floodwaters have abated. If contamination is present as a direct result of the floods then the property owner or lessee may be able to claim the costs associated with assessing and cleaning up the contamination from their insurer.


 Deluge water is not only floodwater. Significant amounts of industrial waste, hazardous substances, raw sewage and miscellaneous toxic chemicals have been released into the environment as a result of the floods. The government will put an expensive and large-scale restoration in place when the flooding recedes, yet the clear and present danger of environmental pollution has been largely overlooked. Even when an area becomes dry, it may face long-term effects.

PHOTO: THITI WANNAMONTHA

Source: <http://www.bangkokpost.com/feature/environment/265562/daunting-environmental-costs>

Posted by [Our Rivers Our Life](#) at Thursday, November 10, 2011 No comments:

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Labels: [Cambodia](#), [Environment](#), [flood](#), [hazardous](#), [Loas](#), [Thailand](#)

Wednesday, November 9, 2011

10 hurt, buildings damaged in Philippine quake - Channel NewsAsia

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Posted by [Our Rivers Our Life](#) at Wednesday, November 09, 2011

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Vietnam floods kill at least 100 - Channel NewsAsia

[Vietnam floods kill at least 100 - Channel NewsAsia](#)

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8 Karen from the Salween River had joined in Bangkok flood relief

8 Karen from the Salween River had joined in Bangkok flood relief.

The 8 Karen had been traveling to Bangkok to help the Bangkoks make simple bamboo rafts. They said "*we want to help because we just faced the same situation, landslide due to floods, that happened in Mae Hong Son*" Even they found the restriction on traveling as they are "stateless people" and had no money for donation. So that they devoted skills and labour to help people who are suffering.

The interview can be found in the 11-minute.


Posted by [Our Rivers Our Life](#) at [Wednesday, November 09, 2011](#)

No comments:  Recommend this on Google

Labels: [Bangkok](#), [flood](#), [Karen](#), [Salween River](#)

Vietnam agrees atomic power ties with S. Korea

Vietnam agreed on Tuesday to seek greater nuclear energy cooperation with South Korea, opening the way for its participation in a project to build atomic power plants in energy-hungry Vietnam.

 South Korean President Lee Myung-Bak (right) ushers his Vietnamese counterpart Truong Tan Sang during a welcoming ceremony at the Blue House in Seoul. Vietnam has agreed to seek greater nuclear energy cooperation with South Korea, opening the way for its participation in a project to build atomic power plants in energy-hungry Vietnam.

The agreement was reached during talks between Vietnamese President Truong Tan Sang and his South Korean counterpart Lee Myung-Bak, Lee's office said. Sang is in South Korea for a three-day visit.

The leaders agreed on the need to strengthen cooperation for peaceful use of atomic power, a joint statement said.

"The two sides took a special note of South Korea's proposals on developing Vietnam's nuclear power plant based on South Korean technologies, nurturing human resources, transferring technologies and cooperation in other related areas," it said.

South Korea operates 20 nuclear plants, which generate some 35 percent of its electricity needs, and plans to build 12 more over the next 14 years.

It has vowed to stick to its atomic power development despite heightened concerns following Japan's earthquake and tsunami on March 11 that caused the world's worst atomic accident in 25 years.

Fast-growing Vietnam faces energy shortages and foreign businesses have expressed concern about a lack of energy and other infrastructure.

Hanoi has recently sought co-operation with nuclear-capable countries to help boost its needs.

Last month it Japan officially secured support to help build two nuclear reactors in Vietnam and in October last year Hanoi signed a deal with Russia worth an estimated \$5.6 billion for its first nuclear power plant.

South Korea and Vietnam have boosted economic and diplomatic relations since they normalised ties in 1992. Two-way trade totalled \$12.9 billion last year.

They agreed to boost trade to \$20 billion earlier than their target year of 2015 and further to \$30 billion.

Published: [8/11/2011](#) at 07:32 PM

Source: <http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/asia/265325/vietnam-agrees-atomic-power-ties-with-s-korea>

Posted by [Our Rivers Our Life](#) at [Wednesday, November 09, 2011](#)

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Labels: [development](#), [Environment](#), [nuclear power plant](#), [South Korea](#), [Vietnam](#)

Tuesday, November 8, 2011

Little action on many 'green' laws

High-class pottery line of Viet Nam since the 15th- 17th centuries, in Thai Tan Commune, Nam

HA NOI — Environmental mismanagement and serious pollution at craft villages were discussed by the National Assembly in Ha Noi yesterday.

On the issue of environmental protection law and policies in economic zones and craft villages, Deputy Nguyen Duc Hien said legal documents relating to environmental protection were not synchronous, resulting in a lack of strict policing of violations and discontent among residents.

Many legal documents were produced too slowly or were too general, making them too difficult to enforce, he said.

Hien said authorities had not yet paid due attention to environmental protection while penalties for violators remained light.

Similarly, environmental impact assessment had received little attention during the investors' licence processes, despite it being compulsory under the Law on Environmental Protection.

Deputy Truong Minh Hoang said 110 legal documents had been issued to regulate the development of economic zones.

"We are not short of legal documents regarding the issue but the problem lies in the low quality and ineffective execution of these documents," Hoang said.

The deputy said environmental pollution had been increasingly alarming in economic zones and craft villages yet few violators were penalised.

Hoang attributed the situation to overlapping management and a lack of interest in environmental protection, from grassroots office level upwards.

Many provinces turned a blind eye to violations because they wanted to attract investment, he said.

Deputy Truong Thai Hien said economic zones and craft villages had generated jobs for nearly 1.5 million people and contributed to growth in the southern province of Kien Giang.

However, environmental pollution in economic zones had been two to six times higher than allowable rates there, he said.

He asked the Assembly to revise Decree 67 concerning the collection of environmental protection fees for waste water, saying the current rates remained too low and were not enough to cover the cost of testing waste water samples.

He also requested provincial authorities be given more power to oversee dumping grounds as Departments for Industry and Trade, Natural Resources and Environments were currently overlapping in managing these dumping grounds and were passing the buck to each other.

Deputy Nguyen Minh Lam said the quality of waste water discharged from craft villages was not closely controlled before connecting to concentrated waste water treatment systems at economic zones, causing overloading and pollution.

Lam and other deputies asked the Assembly to issue a resolution on environmental protection supervision in economic zones and craft villages.

Participants at the session were told there were 18 coastal economic zones with 800 projects capitalised at US\$50.8 billion. Viet Nam also had 3,400 craft villages employing more than 11 million workers. Of which, 30 per cent of employees were rural people.

Deputy Than Duc Nam requested the Assembly assess environmental protection laws and policies to see if they conformed with reality.

He cited the Law on Environmental Protection issued in 2005 that related to seven ministries and localities, yet co-ordination between them was neither smooth nor in accordance with their responsibilities.

He said they had not yet conducted regular inspections over the treatment of solid waste, exhaust fumes and waste water.

Deputy Ly Kieu Van, meanwhile, said crimes and violations on environmental protection law were increasing. A Government report had found more than 1,700 environmental pollution cases this year, representing an increase of 72.6 per cent compared with the previous year.

Only 135 cases with 138 offenders had been prosecuted while the rest received administration fines.

Similarly, a NA Standing Committee report said most coastal economic zones of 15 surveyed had not yet met their commitments on environmental protection. Very few had concentrated waste water treatment systems and some that had them but shut them down to save costs.

Van voiced her concern over synchronous management of different ministries on environmental protection issue.

"I'm not sure if the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment is able to become a bandmaster and take major responsibility over the environment issue," she said.

According to the World Bank, Viet Nam will suffer losses through environmental pollution of up to 5.5 per cent of GDP each year. — VNS

Source: <http://vietnamnews.vnanet.vn/Environment/217378/Little-action-on-many-%E2%80%98green-laws.html>

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Children main victims of Vietnam floods: UN

Almost all the victims of severe flooding in Vietnam's Mekong Delta were children, the United Nations said on Monday, as the official death toll climbed to 78.

 Villagers looking down at their flooded houses from makeshift shelters set up on a mountain in the Tan Hoa commune, in the central Vietnamese province of Quang Binh, in October 2011. Almost all the victims of severe flooding in Vietnam's Mekong Delta were children, the United Nations said on Monday, as the official death toll climbed to 78.

The UN said 65 children under the age of 16 were among those killed by widespread flooding that has inundated much of south and central Vietnam.

"The Mekong floods have caused an alarming number of child fatalities, most of them due to drowning," it said in a statement, announcing it was stepping up its response to the disaster.

Jean Dupraz of the UN Children's Fund in Vietnam said preventing drowning was the agency's priority.

"Populations here have lived along the Mekong River for centuries. Still many children do not know how to swim. And it takes only a few minutes for a child to be swallowed by powerful river streams," he said.

UN agencies, along with Save the Children, have provided a total of more than 9,000 floating school bags and 3,200 life vests to help protect children from drowning.

More than half a million people have seen their homes or livelihoods affected by the rising waters, which have inundated around 140,000 homes.

Unusually heavy monsoon rains have caused devastation across the Mekong region, with more than 500 dead in Thailand's worst flooding in half a century and around 250 killed in Cambodia.

Source: <http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/asia/265237/children-main-victims-of-vietnam-floods-un>

Posted by [Our Rivers Our Life](#) at [Tuesday, November 08, 2011](#) No comments:



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Labels: [Cambodia](#), [children](#), [flood](#), [health](#), [Mekong Delta](#), [Vietnam](#)

Monday, November 7, 2011

Environment needs better protection

HA NOI — Enhanced environmental protection tools need to be applied in an effort to ease the nation's chronic pollution problem, according to experts at the workshop held by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment in Ha Noi on Friday.

Tools such as the strategic environmental assessment (SEA) and environmental impact assessment (EIA) would help planners assess the possible impacts on the environment of proposed projects before they were formally launched, and application of these tools would help minimise pollution stemming from economic development which had degraded the quality of life and threatened national security, said Minister of Natural Resources and Environment Nguyen Minh Quang.

The director of environmental impact assessment and evaluation for the ministry, Mai Thanh Dung, said that local authorities failed to pay enough attention to performing SEAs.

"The quality of local SEAs also remains low," Dung said.

SEAs were often on paper only and not based on real conditions in the particular locality, causing them to be ineffective as a tool in improving economic and environmental planning, he said.

EIAs were also performed without considering opinions by the local community, creating conflicts when projects were carried out, said Dang Kim Chi from the Viet Nam Association for Conservation of Nature and Environment.

"Many EIAs have been conducted without reference to environmental management but only in order for the projects to be approved," Chi said.

The low quality of EIAs could also be blamed on the low awareness of project investors or worse, namely their irresponsibility towards environment protection and the weak capacity of environmental evaluators, she said.

Nguyen Van Thanh from the Ministry of Industry and Trade agreed, adding that costs were another barrier to investors conducting proper SEAs or EIAs

To make these tools more effective, it was important to raise the awareness of both authorities and project investors about the essential role they play in preserving the environment, experts at the workshop agreed.

The capacity of environmental officials also needed to be enhanced to ensure the quality of assessments and of environmental management once projects were underway.

The application of these assessments were regulated by Decree No 29 issued last April and by Circular No 26 issued in July.

"Other regulations related to environment must also be amended to ensure consistency," said Dung, urging stricter provisions on punishing violators.

To date, 63 out of 61 provinces and cities throughout the country have conducted SEAs of their master socio-economic plans. However, shortcomings and limitations remain, with pollution on the rise, especially water pollution in urban and industrial zones.

According to Le Trinh from the Association of Environmental Impact Assessment, SEAs and EIAs have been effective environmental management tools worldwide since the 1980s, and Viet Nam was among the countries which applied these tools earliest in the Far East and Southeast Asian regions. — VNS

Source: <http://vietnamnews.vn/vnnet.vn/Environment/217353/Environment-needs-better-protection.html>

Posted by [Our Rivers Our Life](#) at [Monday, November 07, 2011](#) [No comments](#):



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Labels: [Environment](#), [pollution](#), [protection](#)

Homes at former lakeside flooded

111107_06

Photo by: Khouth Sophak Chakrya

MONDAY, 07 NOVEMBER 2011 12:02KHOUTH SOPHAK CHAKRYA

A girl stands in floodwaters in a neighbourhood at Boeung Kak lake yesterday.

Several hundred Boeung Kak lake villagers saw their homes flooded in knee-deep water over the weekend as heavy rains continued to pummel the capital.

Mie Mom, a village 20 resident in Daun Penh district's Srah Chak commune, said that polluted water flowed up to her knees inside her house on Saturday night and prevented her family from sleeping.

"My village has never flooded like this before," she said.

Kaon Chhengleang blamed the flooding on blocked irrigation systems caused by the infill of sand by real-estate developer Shukaku Inc.

"The rubbish and the poll-uted waste are pooling in our homes, and it is harmful to our health," she said.

Kaon Chhengleang said vill-agers were also concerned about their electrical cords, which were dangerously close to being submerged.

Source: <http://www.phnompenhpost.com/index.php/2011110752575/National-news/homes-at-former-lakeside-flooded.html>

Posted by [Our Rivers Our Life](#) at [Monday, November 07, 2011](#) [No comments](#):



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Labels: [Cambodia](#), [flood](#), [health](#), [pollution](#)

Floods show what lies ahead for sinking Bangkok

BANGKOK: The Thai capital, built on swampland, is slowly sinking and the floods currently besieging Bangkok could be merely a foretaste of a grim future as climate change makes its impact felt, experts say.

The low-lying metropolis lies just 30 kilometres (18 miles) north of the Gulf of Thailand, where various experts forecast sea level will rise by 19 to 29 centimetres (7 to 11 inches) by 2050 as a result of global warming.

Water levels would also increase in Bangkok's main Chao Phraya river, which already overflows regularly.

If no action is taken to protect the city, "in 50 years... most of Bangkok will be below sea level," said Anond Snidvongs, a climate change expert at the capital's Chulalongkorn University.

But global warming is not the only threat. The capital's gradual sinking has also been blamed on years of aggressive groundwater extraction to meet the growing needs of the city's factories and its 12 million inhabitants.

As a result Bangkok was sinking by 10 centimetres a year in the late 1970s, according to a study published last year by the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Japan Bank for International Cooperation.

That rate has since dropped to less than one centimetre annually, they said, thanks to government measures to control groundwater pumping.

If those efforts continued, the report authors said, they hoped the subsidence rate could slow by another 10 percent each year.

But Anond disputed their projections, saying Bangkok was still sinking at "an alarming rate" of one to three centimetres per year.

While scientists may argue over the exact figures, they agree about what lies in store for the sprawling megacity.

"There is no going back. The city is not going to rise again," said the ADB's lead climate change specialist David McCauley.

Faced with the combined threats of land subsidence and rising temperatures and sea levels, the World Bank has predicted that Bangkok's flood risk will increase four-fold from now by 2050.

And the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development has classified the Thai capital among the 10 cities in the world facing the biggest potential impact from coastal flooding by 2070.

For now, Bangkok is relying on a complex system of dykes, canals, locks and pumping stations to keep the rising waters at bay.

The flood protection efforts, however, failed to prevent an onslaught of run-off water from the north from swamping at least one-fifth of the capital.

The murky floodwaters, triggered by three months of heavy monsoon rains, are edging in on Bangkok's glitzy downtown area, threatening luxury hotels, office buildings and shopping malls.

Rapid urbanisation is one reason why the inundations are affecting the sprawling city so badly, according to experts.

As the area that needs flood protection gets larger and more built-up, the water "has fewer places to go", said Francois Molle, a water management expert at France's Institut de Recherche pour le Developpement.

Molle said that in the long term, Bangkok would eventually be under water.

"The only question is when," said Molle.

Experts say Thai authorities must address the capital's land use and planning challenges and consider relocating factories or industrial parks in flood-prone areas.

Or even moving the entire city.

"It may be appropriate for the people who want to be dry 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, to be setting up a new city," said Anond.

"We do have areas where we can develop a new city that would be completely dry. There's a lot of land in this country," he said.

It may sound like a drastic scenario, but there is little doubt that Bangkok will have to act if it wants to avoid the fate of the fabled sunken city of Atlantis.

"To remain where it is, the city will need better protection," said Robert Nicholls, a professor of coastal engineering at Britain's University of Southampton.

He said he expected Bangkok's current flood misery to "trigger massive investment in defences over the next 10 to 20 years".

Dealing with the phenomenon will be expensive elsewhere too. Across the Asia-Pacific region the ADB has estimated it will cost a minimum of \$10 billion a year to adapt to climate change.

- AFP/fa

Source:

http://www.channelnewsasia.com/stories/afp_asiapacific/view/1163860/1/html

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