

PEOPLE PROTECTING THEIR ECOSYSTEM IN THE LOWER MEKONG

OUR GOAL

COMMUNITIES EXERCISE
THEIR RIGHTS TO SUSTAINABLY
MANAGE ECOSYSTEMS TO
SECURE THEIR LIVELIHOODS
AND PROTECT BIODIVERSITY.



People protecting their Ecosystem in the lower Mekong (PEM) is a 10-year collaborative program bringing together development and conservation efforts to reduce threats to biodiversity and livelihoods posed by large scale development projects in Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Vietnam. Geographically, PEM focuses on the Mekong and the 3S areas. The project is jointly funded by MacArthur Foundation, Margaret A. Cargill Foundation (MACF), and Oxfam.

WHAT ARE THE ISSUES?



The Indo-Burma region as one of the most threatened global biodiversity hotspots, according to the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF). The region's natural resources are at risk from pressures of economic development and the needs of a rural population with high levels of poverty. The Mekong River and its major tributaries is one of the most critical riverine ecosystems in Indo-Burma, supporting the largest inland fisheries in the world. Maintaining the annual flood pulse, conserving key habitats such as floodplains and deep pools, and maintaining key fish migration corridors is essential to the continued productivity and diversity of the Mekong's ecosystems.


Dams, mining, agro-industrial development projects, and land use change due to deforestation continue to pose great threats to the Mekong ecosystem and watershed. The cumulative impacts of this development will be the reduction of fishery resources and increasing unreliability of water quality and water flow, on which millions of people depend for their nutrition, jobs, and farming.

THE APPROACH


Given decisions on how resources are shared, developed and managed occur at community, national, and regional levels, PEM seeks to bring about change at the community and policy levels by employing three linked intervention strategies:

- ◎ **EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES** through a rights-based approach to CBNRM and sustainable livelihoods.
- ◎ **CONVENING AND BROKERING STRATEGIC ALLIANCES** to strengthen networks at multiple levels, including transboundary for villages involved in CBNRM to meaningfully contribute to protection of Key biodiversity areas (KBAs) and priority riverine corridors; and for different conservation and development NGOs supporting CBNRM initiatives and networks for policy advocacy.
- ◎ **CREATING AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT**, for civil society organizations to engage in policy development and dialogues that promote environmental and social considerations in the planning, development and operation of large-scale projects.
- ◎ **CROSS-CUTTING:** Promoting women and youth participation and leadership at CBNRM initiatives and networks; and policy dialogues.





Phorn Sopheak, 26, a young Mekong activist from Cambodia, used her smartphone to take photos of the forest along the Mekong River during her patrolling and shared it on her facebookk. Photo: Savann Oeurm/Oxfam



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