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# Foreword



The Mekong River Commission Fisheries Programme focuses on ensuring the long-term sustainability of the Mekong fishery and providing food and employment in the region. Food security is a top priority. The avian flu outbreak in early 2004 highlighted the need to maintain the diversity of foods available from the Mekong and ensure that sustainable fisheries management is integrated into overall basin planning.

This report presents the programme's activities and achievements in the year to March 2004. In a changing environment, the programme is focused on its key objectives and implementing strategies supporting a socially and economically-sustainable inland fishery for the Mekong region.

The programme is a leader in facilitating regional cooperation. Our commitment to the Fisheries Annual Meeting and the Annual Technical Symposium, along with continued cooperation with regional fisheries agencies, has ensured that the MRC remains at the forefront of regional discussions on inland fisheries management. We see this in joint undertakings between the Fisheries Programme and various regional agencies as well as field activities, workshops and technical publications.

I note with considerable appreciation the increasingly important role of the Technical Advisory Body (TAB) for Fisheries Management. With the increased funding to the TAB provided by the Swedish government, I look forward to the TAB making very substantial contributions to the development of fisheries management policy in the Mekong region.

The programme has also played a critical role in increasing public awareness of Mekong fisheries and of the work of the MRC generally. Its publication of technical and conference papers has raised the MRC's profile over the past year and increased access to the knowledge base of the organisation.

I would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank the national line agencies for fisheries as well as the National Mekong Committees of Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Viet Nam for their continued support. Most importantly, we acknowledge the support for the programme from the principal donor, Danida, and the governments of Australia, Great Britain and Sweden. Finally, I congratulate programme team members for their continued commitment to their work and their contribution to the outcomes outlined within this annual report.

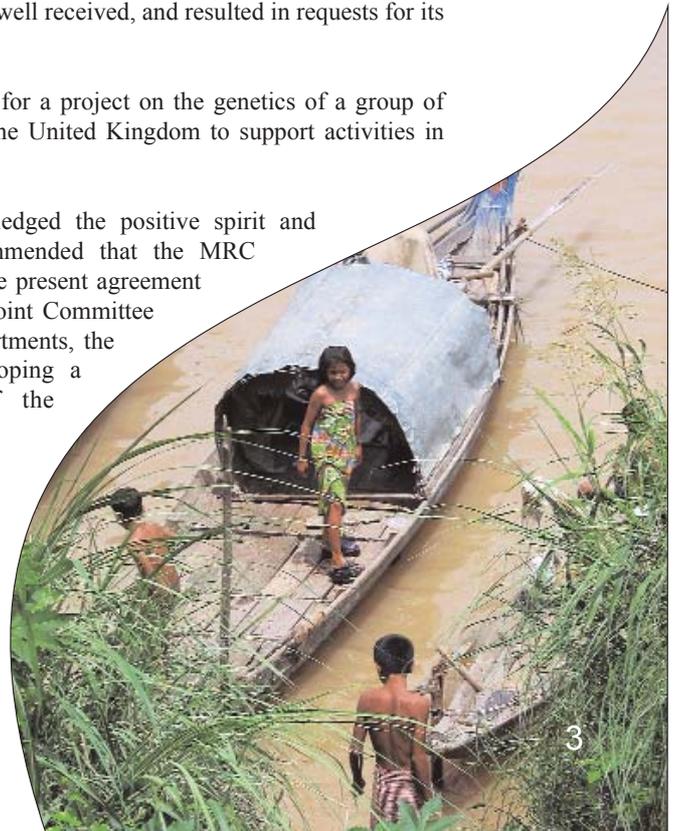
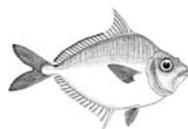
A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Dao Trong Tu', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

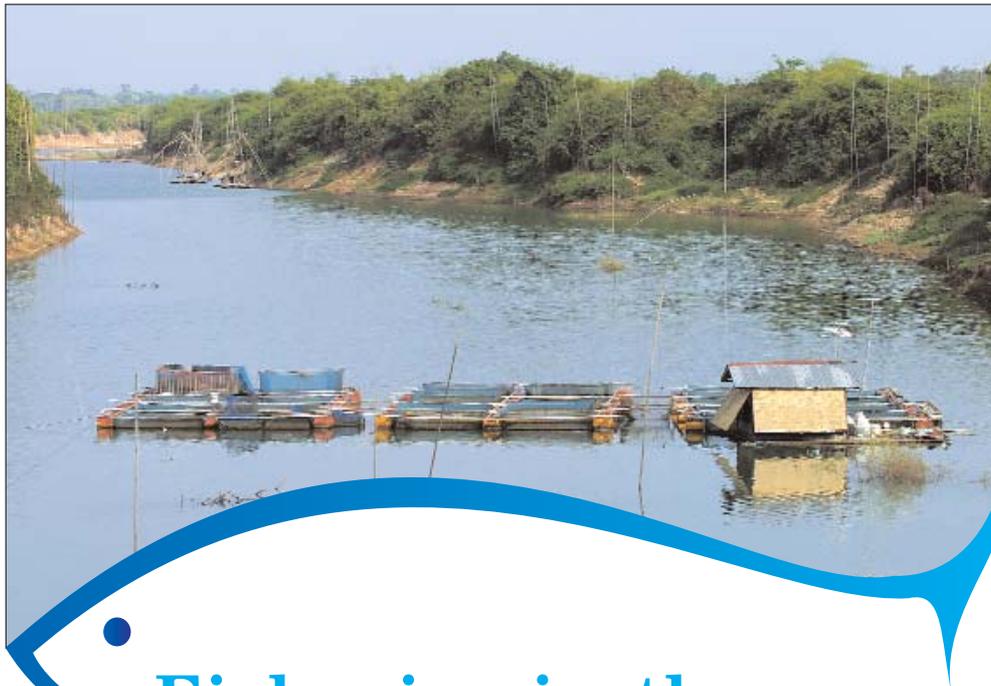
Dao Trong Tu  
Officer-in-Charge  
Mekong River Commission Secretariat

# The Year in Review

The year to March 2004 has seen many positive developments in the Fisheries Programme.

- The Technical Advisory Body (TAB) for Fisheries Management is gradually taking on a more prominent role. In recognition of this, the Swedish International Development Agency has provided funding to support its activities over the next three years, and a meeting in Hanoi in March established a TAB work programme for 2004-06.
- The programme's long-running newsletter Catch and Culture was revamped as a more informative and reader-friendly publication. For the first time, it was published in the four riparian languages as well as English. Several technical and non-technical fisheries publications were produced, along with two CD-ROMs on the fish found in the Mekong and migration patterns for major species. Another initiative has been the posting of many fisheries publications on the MRC website. Many of these have been translated into riparian languages, and can now be downloaded for free.
- A book on the Fishing Gears of the Cambodian Mekong was published in conjunction with the Cambodian Department of Fisheries. This detailed and beautifully illustrated book amply shows the importance and complexity of fisheries in the Mekong region. We are actively seeking funding to produce the book in the Khmer language.
- A major regional workshop was held in Vientiane to demonstrate the impacts of different water-management activities on river ecology and fisheries. The meeting was attended by water resource managers and engineers, fisheries technicians and ecologists. With practical examples, it clearly showed the impacts of water diversions as well as what can be done to minimise the impact of development on the ecology of the river.
- A three-year programme to develop and implement community fisheries management was completed. The activity has been very well received, and resulted in requests for its extension to new areas in the basin.
- New funding was obtained from Australia for a project on the genetics of a group of commercially-important fishes, and from the United Kingdom to support activities in participatory management of fisheries.
- Reviews by the principal donor acknowledged the positive spirit and outcomes of the programme, and recommended that the MRC approach Danida to renew funding after the present agreement expires in 2005. In conjunction with the Joint Committee and partners in the national fisheries departments, the programme's management is now developing a project document for Phase Two of the programme.





## Fisheries in the Lower Mekong Basin

At 4,500-5,000 km long, the Mekong is the 10th longest river in the world, and its mean discharge of about  $15,000 \text{ m}^3 \text{ sec}^{-1}$ , makes it the 8th largest river in the world. As is usual for large tropical rivers, the flow of the Mekong varies greatly each year (about 30-fold), but the annual flood is relatively predictable and of similar size each year, which allows people to synchronise their economy and lifestyles with the natural flooding cycle. The lower reaches of the river in Thailand, Lao PDR, Cambodia and Viet Nam, wind through vast flat plains, which when flooded are extremely productive of fish and other aquatic animals, which in turn provide food and livelihoods for millions of people.

The Mekong System is home to at least 1,500 species of freshwater fish, the 2nd-highest species count in the world, after the Amazon River. The Mekong has more families of fishes than any other river system.

The fishery in the Lower Mekong Basin (LMB) is immense, even by world standards. Recent studies have shown conservatively that the yield from the capture fishery (including aquatic animals other than fish) in the rivers is around 2.5 million tonnes; from reservoirs about 250,000 tonnes; and production from aquaculture is also about 250,000 tonnes. This is approximately 2% of the total world marine and freshwater capture fisheries production. About 120 fish species are commonly traded. Extrapolation from average prices for capture and aquaculture product gives a first sale value for the fishery of about US\$1.4 billion. Allowing for multiplier effects the fishery is worth several times that figure, and its replacement value is far higher.

The fishery is nutritionally very important, as the primary source of animal protein, and a major supplier of several micro-nutrients, notably calcium and vitamin A. Consumption of fishery products (converted to fresh-animal-equivalent) averages about 57 kg per person-per year, with consumption highest close to rivers and wetlands. There are no readily available foods to substitute for fish in the diets of people in the LMB.

The bulk of the production comes from riverine fish, a renewable resource available every year, unlike other natural resources, such as minerals and petroleum. In addition, relatively little capital input is required in the riverine fishery to generate products, compared to other natural resource or manufacturing industries.

Maintenance of the flood pulse and migration routes are fundamentally important for the health of the fishery. The annual flood inundates vast areas of wetlands, creating highly productive fisheries habitats. Most fish are caught as the floods recede, when they are migrating towards their dry-season refuges in the main river channels. Many of the important commercial species (63% of the catch in the Cambodian river fishery) migrate long distances between spawning and nursery / feeding grounds. Barriers to migration (e.g. dams) have catastrophic impacts on the survival of these species, and thus fisheries productivity.

The LMB is home to approximately 60 million people. An increasing population places huge pressures on the fishery, both directly through increased fishing pressure and habitat loss, and indirectly through modification of water quality and quantity. The fishery is open-access, and is one of the few sources of employment for an increasingly young, landless, unskilled rural population.

The Mekong is not just another river. It is immensely important for the livelihoods of people of the Lower Mekong Basin, particularly in terms of its magnificent fisheries resources. Active management is required to protect the fisheries to ensure their availability for future generations.





## • Are we meeting our objectives?



The overall goal of the programme is the sustainable development, utilisation, management and conservation of the fisheries of the Mekong Basin. The immediate objective and programme outputs are to generate and communicate information and facilitate its use by policy makers, managers and users of the resource.

This approach permeates work under the main themes of investigations into fisheries ecology and impact assessment, fisheries management and enhancing the livelihoods of fishing communities.

While the programme's objectives, outputs and themes are fisheries-specific, they also contribute to broader development policies and objectives.

**Poverty alleviation** is a core element of the programme's work. Fishers in the Mekong are predominantly from poor rural communities. The health of the fisheries is directly related to the social and economic conditions of the fishers. Aquaculture work is focussed on improving the financial and nutritional status of poor communities.

**Environmental sustainability** is at the heart of the programme's overall goal. We aim to ensure the fisheries resources of the Mekong are not diminished, and that they remain available in a healthy state for the benefit of future generations.

**Good governance** is the primary focus of the programme's activities in the area of fisheries management. Much effort is directed towards improving co-management structures, involving partnerships between fishing communities and government agencies.

**Social justice** is addressed by the programme ensuring that fisheries resources that have been common property for many generations remain available for traditional users. Water-management developments outside the fisheries sector can transfer benefits derived from the river from one sector to another (often from disadvantaged people to more wealthy groups). We propose mitigation measures to minimise the impacts of developments on fisheries.

**Gender equity** is integrated into all activities of the programme. Our aim is to promote the importance of men and women in various aspects of Mekong fisheries, and to ensure that both are represented in meetings, community fishing groups and programme studies.



## Our financial supporters



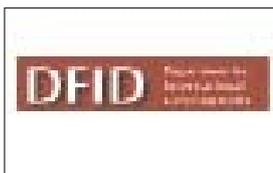
Denmark is the major donor to the programme, and has been so since the mid-1990s. Danida, the international development agency of the Danish Government, provides about 90 percent of the funding for the Fisheries Programme. The programme's success has been largely due to Danida's sustained commitment to developing fisheries in the Mekong Basin. Funding from Danida allows the programme to maintain core functions and operating capacity, thereby facilitating efficient entry into the programme by other donors.



Swedish International Development Assistance (Sida) funds several activities of the Technical Advisory Body (TAB) for Fisheries Management. The TAB has the charter to develop and implement fisheries policy, particularly that relating to transboundary resources in the Lower Mekong Basin.



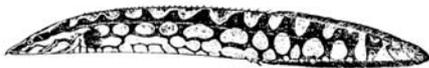
The Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) provides funding for studies on the genetic composition of an important and abundant group of cyprinid fishes, commonly known as trey riel in Cambodia and ca linh in Viet Nam. Often preserved, they are important for food security, especially in poor rural communities. The purpose of the research is to provide information on stock composition and to train managers in the use of genetic information.



The United Kingdom, through its Department for International Development (DFID), funds two related studies on data collection and sharing in fisheries co-management and adaptive learning approaches for enhancing fisheries. The funding is channelled through MRAG, a UK-based consulting firm dedicated to promoting sustainable use of natural resources. Both studies will enable information generated in the Mekong region to be used in fisheries development in other countries.



# The TAB - Technical Advisory Body for Fisheries Management



The Technical Advisory Body (TAB) for Fisheries Management was created in 2000 at the instigation of the programme and several Director-Generals of fisheries departments in MRC member countries.

Its mission statement is as follows:

"The TAB is a regional body which gives advice, enables and facilitates the exchange and uptake of information on fisheries management and development into government policies and action plans for the sustainable improvement of rural livelihoods in the LMB. This it achieves by strengthening management capacity, creating knowledge through commissioned research and assisting the flow of information to relevant line agencies, MRCS, NMCs, fishery groups and donors. In



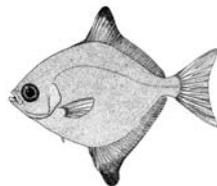
implementing its activities the TAB highlights the cross-cutting issues of gender equity, food security, poverty alleviation and full participation. It is a member of the MRC Fisheries Programme Steering Committee and regularly reports to the Joint Committee on regional fisheries status, opportunities and constraints."

The TAB is composed of 12 members: two from each member country, nominated by the head of the Department of Fisheries (at least one member is at the level of Deputy Director-General or higher), and one from each of the National Mekong Committees. The Convenor of the Gender in Fisheries Network also attends all meetings.

Over the past 12 months, the TAB has assumed a broader role in overseeing work through its membership of the programme's steering committee.

The TAB's mandate places it in an ideal position to be the central point for all planning and negotiation of regional fisheries management. It is now recognised as a central plank in regional efforts to bring about sound understanding of the requirements for effective fisheries governance. The Swedish government allocated funds in early 2004 to support the TAB work programme.

The work programme for 2004-06 is now being developed. Activities will focus on strengthening management capacity, knowledge creation through research and assisting the flow of information to relevant institutions.





## Assessment of Mekong Capture Fisheries



The Assessment of Mekong Capture Fisheries (AMCF) component began in January 2003 by combining the activities of the Assessment of Mekong Fisheries Component (AMF) and the Cambodia Capture Fisheries Component (CCF). Like all components of the Fisheries Programme, it operates across all MRC-member countries.

The component has successfully implemented several new areas of research and continued to document past work.

New activities were initiated in mid-2003. Results should be available in late 2004, as all studies run for about 12 months. Preliminary results were presented at a Technical Symposium in Pakse, Lao PDR in November 2003. The three main study areas are:

**Catch monitoring:** Catches are being monitored basinwide in a trial which aims to establish systems for detecting trends in the fishery. Over 100 fishers using a wide range of gears are included. The study also provides valuable field experience for agency staff and facilitates agency-fisher dialogue.

**Market monitoring:** Markets are being surveyed and individual traders monitored in key locations in each country. Markets are a key employer of women in fisheries. The results provide useful information on species, sizes and prices as indicators of trends. The studies will provide much useful information on methods and costs of establishing market monitoring systems.

**Consumption study:** Household consumption is being monitored in each country with the objective of developing quantitative methods for such studies and comparing the results of

interviews with actual consumption data. The ultimate aim is to develop a surrogate method of estimating fisheries yield in the basin.

The component also supported several other studies in Cambodia including:

**Dai fishery monitoring:** The 2003-4 season was the ninth year of monitoring the Tonle Sap dai fishery, and the results showed the lowest catch yet. Fish prices rose dramatically in response to the reduced supply. The low catches are to some extent caused by low floods, but catches for the past three seasons are lower than expected based on flood levels alone. Each year, more fishers increase the pressure on this fishery, so it appears we are now seeing signs of overfishing.

**Fish larvae monitoring:** Catches were lower than in previous years, which would have reduced recruitment, exacerbating any primary effect of low-flood levels on production.

**Dai trey linh:** This study documented catches from a set of dais along the Viet Nam border. The total catch was close to 400 tonnes and mostly exported to Viet Nam.

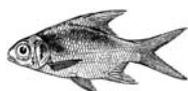
**Deep pools survey:** The component surveyed, documented and mapped all deep pools along the Mekong from Kratie to the Lao border, increasing the number recorded to 97. This exercise was an important prerequisite for further work to establish trial management of some deep pool areas. Counterparts were also supported for training in stock assessment using echo-sounding.

Effective reporting of results is required to ensure that information on the size and value of the fishery is incorporated into development planning. Several reports were prepared during the year, and several more are in the final draft stages after additional contract staff were recruited to assist in their completion.

The component also aims to encourage effective mitigation and management of the impacts of development. A workshop on fisheries EIA and mitigation was held in Lao PDR (where demand was strong), and participants from each country were sponsored to attend so they could develop national workshops.

All activities to date have been carried out under Danida funding. During 2003, a project proposal from ACIAR for genetic analysis of the main species group in the dai fishery (the small carps, *Cirrhinus lobatus* and *C. siamensis*) was approved and sampling for preliminary analyses commenced in January 2004.

In each country, counterparts continued to receive various other kinds of training support including report writing, English, statistics and databases, and fisheries courses.



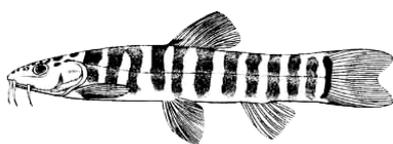


# Management of River and Reservoir Fisheries



Under the Management of River and Reservoir Fisheries (MRRF) component, resource users and local government staff in all four countries are formulating and implementing management plans with objectives they have set themselves. Results are encouraging. Vietnamese and Cambodian community managers report an increase in catches, income and compliance with management rules. In Lao PDR and Thailand, communication has improved and resource users are playing a more active role and identifying with management measures, which are increasingly based on their own experiences.

But what about the costs? So far, the brunt has been borne by the communities. While co-management may hold the promise of less expense for some state agencies, villagers expect more inputs from government! Often, community members are expected to decentralise management whereas governments are thought to provide 'enabling' conditions for meaningful participation. Community managers have largely kept their part of the deal, at times against great odds. But participation is costly, if not in money in time. And there may be little benefit in a good management plan with no funds to implement the activities. Unfortunately, decentralisation of management has generally not meant decentralisation of funds. So what have governments been able to contribute?



A number of 'enabling' approaches exist or are in the process of being developed in the four countries with MRRF help. In Viet Nam, fishers who co-manage reservoir fisheries in the Central Highlands have been authorised to levy taxes on aquatic resource use from members and non-members of the Fishers Union. The taxes, in addition to contributions from the Australian Government, have paid for management interventions such as stocking water bodies.

In Cambodia, members of Community Fisheries - a unique form of user organisation set-up following recent fisheries management policy reform - collect contributions from fishers for activities such as enforcing community-formulated fishing rules and regulations.

In Thailand, co-management is channelled through the Or-Bor-Tor, the sub-district administration. Management plans become part of the Or-Bor-Tor's plan and the sub-district funds management activities such as stocking and establishing conservation zones.

In Lao PDR, Reservoir Fisheries Management Committees (RFMC) now receive funding to be spent within the framework of their management plans. This improves the administrative capacity of the committees, leading to increased transparency, accountability and "ownership" in the real sense of the word.

Designing and implementing management activities often requires expert advice, available from MRRF counterpart organisations. But such advice has to be client-oriented and demand-driven. To implement RFMC development plans in Lao PDR, for example, five research projects were identified to be conducted by staff from LARReC, the Fisheries Programme's counterpart organisation in that country. According to needs identified by community managers, these research projects will deal with issues such as investment in cage and pen-culture, stocking, eco-tourism and fish marketing to raise income and operating capital for the local management organisation. The last study will identify RFMC opportunities in a presently monopolised fish-marketing system.

Another critical service of government managers should be their 'expert' participation in monitoring and evaluation, and especially in communicating management information across organisation levels and geographical scales. Information not only has to be 'transported' between management but also 'translated'. This is easier said than done!





## • Aquaculture of Indigenous Mekong Species



The Aquaculture of Indigenous Mekong Species (AIMS) component is supporting development of indigenous species for aquaculture to reduce the need to introduce alien organisms. Although some indigenous species have been cultivated for some time, most require considerable research and domestication before they can be considered viable alternatives. AIMS supports a network of counterparts at fisheries line agencies in the four countries and facilitates research and development activities at 11 aquaculture stations in the region. In addition, AIMS is engaged in the development of regional codes of practice for use in the movement of both alien and indigenous species.

The development of indigenous species can be divided into four main areas of research: (1) maintaining and conditioning of captive broodstock for spawning, (2) techniques for breeding captive or wild broodstock, (3) nursing, technical and economic feasibility and (4) grow-out, technical and economic feasibility. AIMS has selected nine priority species for more intensive work (see Tables 1 and 2).

Species	Broodstock	Breeding	Nursing	Grow-out	Total
<i>Anabas testudineus</i>	3.0	3.0	2.5	1.5	2.5
<i>Barbonymus gonionotus</i>	2.8	3.0	2.8	2.8	2.8
<i>Cirrhinus microlepis</i>	0.5	1.5	1.5	2.0	1.4
<i>Cirrhinus molitorella</i>	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0
<i>Hemibagrus wyckioides</i>	3.0	3.0	2.0	1.0	2.3
<i>Leptobarbus hoevenii</i>	2.0	2.5	2.5	2.0	2.3
<i>Osphronemus exodon</i>	3.0	2.0	1.0	3.0	2.3
<i>Pangasius bocourti</i>	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.0	2.4
<i>Pangasianodon hypophthalmus</i>	2.5	3.0	2.5	2.5	2.6

**Table 1.** Status of AIMS priority species on-station. The number in the coloured cells is the average of a score from 0 to 3 given to the respective species by counterparts in each of the countries. The interpretation is as follows: 0 = no progress (blank); >0 - 1 = some progress (red); >1 - 2 = average, ok (yellow); >2 - 3 = above average, good (green).

Species	Broodstock	Breeding	Nursing	Grow-out	Total
<i>Anabas testudineus</i>	2.5	1.5	1.0	1.5	1.6
<i>Barbonymus gonionotus</i>	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.7	2.5
<i>Cirrhinus microlepis</i>	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.5	0.4
<i>Cirrhinus molitorella</i>	1.0	1.0	1.0	3.0	1.5
<i>Hemibagrus wyckioides</i>	2.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.3
<i>Leptobarbus hoevenii</i>	0.5	0.5	1.0	2.5	1.1
<i>Osphronemus exodon</i>	1.0	1.0	1.0	3.0	1.5
<i>Pangasius bocourti</i>	1.5	1.0	1.0	2.0	1.4
<i>Pangasianodon hypophthalmus</i>	1.5	1.5	2.0	3.0	2.0

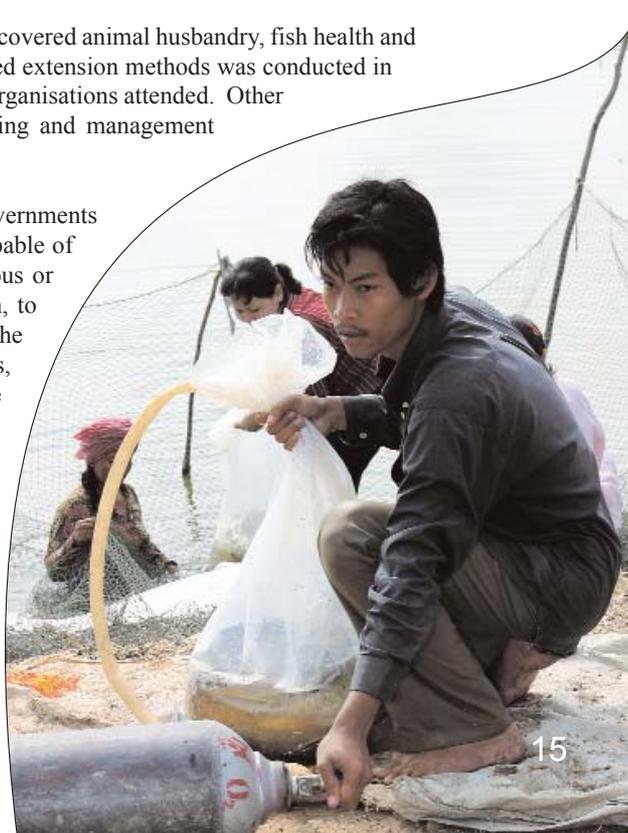
Table 2. Status of AIMS priority species on-farm. For explanations, see Table 1.

On-station activities have seen more progress in closing the life cycle of the priority species. Generally, it is more challenging to work on-farm because facilities are basic and the skills and interest of farmers influence the outcomes. However, on-farm activities are necessary to find the limitations of the different species and techniques in actual, small-scale culture systems. For one of the priority species, *B. gonionotus*, all stages of the life cycle can be handled on-farm. Maintaining and conditioning of broodstock is generally difficult on small-scale farms, in particular for species where brooders are large, e.g. *P. hypophthalmus*.

The least developed species, both on-station and on-farm, is *C. microlepis*. In early 2004 it was decided to make a concerted effort, across all four countries, to bring the knowledge and techniques used for this species closer to a level where it can be more widely applied. The work is currently focusing on improving conditioning of broodstock and breeding.

Training events for counterparts over the last year have covered animal husbandry, fish health and aquaculture feeds and feeding. A workshop on improved extension methods was conducted in Lao PDR in late 2003. Several aquaculture extension organisations attended. Other training planned includes statistics and project planning and management (including logical framework).

Aquaculture enjoys strong support from the riparian governments and fisheries line agencies. Species used should be capable of utilising low-grade feed, i.e. they should be herbivorous or omnivorous. And they should be native to the region, to avoid the unwanted effects of invasive alien species. The AIMS component incorporates these guiding principles, and in doing so will help to develop aquaculture practices that maintain the healthy environment of the Mekong - an environment on which both aquaculture and capture fisheries depend.





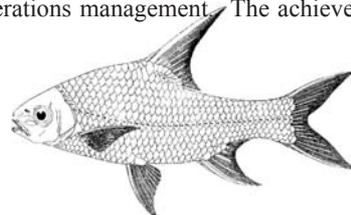
## Building capacity in the Cambodian Fisheries Institute

The Twinning Arrangement with the Inland Fisheries Research and Development Institute (IFReDI) is a sub-component of the Fisheries Programme's Institutional Support component funded by Danida. The twinning arrangement with IFM in Denmark started in February 2003 when IFReDI was established. It has a duration of 30 months, although to date funding has been secured for the first 12 months only.

The objective of the arrangement is to build management capacity in IFReDI, with a view to operating the institute as a sustainable and internationally-recognised national fisheries research and development institution.

The major achievements in 2003 were:

- On-the-job training for IFReDI management in research planning, human resources planning, budgeting, accounting and operations management. The achievements also included

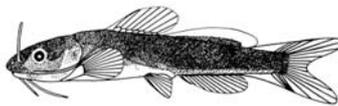


the drafting and adoption of a Management Plan (modus operandi), Terms of Reference for Management Staff, an Accounting Manual, a Human Resources Development Plan and a Medium Term Research Plan for 2003-2006 and an Annual Work Plan and Budget for IFReDI in 2004.

- Partnerships in regional and international research collaboration. Besides the Fisheries Programme, partnerships include joint research activities with LARReC (Lao PDR) on deep pools upstream and downstream of the Khone Falls. In conjunction with scientists from Bangladesh, Kenya and Denmark, a joint research proposal on the role of fish in human nutrition was submitted to Danida for funding.
- Coordination capacity-building support from the MRC fisheries programme with ADB-funded support provided from the WorldFish Centre.

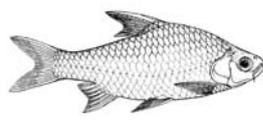
The major challenges for the sub-component in 2004 comprise: (a) continued capacity building at IFReDI to be implemented within the framework of the Mekong Fisheries Field Academy adopted by the Fisheries Program (b) support for implementing the priority research project under Medium Term Research Plan and (c) facilitation of the fostering of partnerships and collaboration with research institutes in Cambodia, the Mekong region and outside the region.

Through the twinning arrangement, IFReDI will increasingly be capable of providing much-needed science-based information for fisheries management at the regional, national and local levels.





# Communications

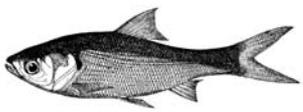


Communication of information is a central element of the Fisheries Programme. Publications cover technical and development issues, and are produced in a variety of media. A particular target audience comprises policy makers, planners and technicians outside the fisheries arena with responsibilities related to river management and development.

A highlight this year has been the production of the book *Fishing Gears of the Cambodian Mekong*. This magnificent publication amply illustrates the adaptation of fishing gears and technology to the wide variety of fishes and habitats in the Mekong. Perhaps more significantly, it also conveys a sense of the importance of fisheries for the rural people of Cambodia.

The newsletter *Catch and Culture* was completely overhauled in 2003. It is now produced in a new, user-friendly format and translated into each of the four riparian languages to promote wider use and readership throughout the Mekong region. The riparian-language versions are amalgamations of articles produced during the year in English.

Other publications have included a MRC Development Series paper on biodiversity and fisheries in the Mekong, and a technical report on the status of exotic fishes in the Mekong system.



A major effort has been put into posting fisheries publications on the MRC website ([www.mrcmekong.org](http://www.mrcmekong.org)) as well as on the Mekonginfo ([www.mekonginfo.org](http://www.mekonginfo.org)) website. Articles were first posted on the Mekonginfo site in November 2003. Monitoring of downloads showed that 890 articles were downloaded in December and 1,337 in January. This gives an idea of the impressive demand for fisheries information.

The Fisheries Programme is currently compiling all publications and many databases that have been produced within the programme over the last 10 years. The objective is to provide all our information in one easy-to-use, searchable CD-ROM. It will be available in July 2004, and thereafter widely distributed as well as posted onto websites.

## Why do we need all this information?

Information is essential for maintaining the Mekong fisheries, which are a major contributor to the economy, food security and income of the region. Providing information on the size and potential of the fisheries, as well as the threats faced, is a precondition for efforts to alleviate the poverty of a large portion of the basin's inhabitants. The Fisheries Programme provides such information to policy makers and basin planners. It also directs its attention to developing aquaculture and maintaining indigenous fish fauna and thus the aquatic environment. Furthermore, it supports resource users and governments in a decentralised approach to socio-economic development.

Information also allows the public to learn about Mekong fisheries and understand their significance. Access to information at all levels is a major condition for public participation in basin development, contributing to transparency, accountability and good governance in matters related to aquatic resource management.





Sailing past the banks of the Mekong River, it is clear that both women and men are involved in Lower Mekong Basin fisheries. Moreover, the fisheries agencies of the four countries today have a considerable proportion of women employees - 15 percent in Cambodia, 24 percent in Lao PDR, 34 percent in Thailand, and 14 percent in Viet Nam<sup>1</sup>. However, there are still voices advocating that the specific needs of women in the fishery sector are not sufficiently addressed and gender therefore continues to be an issue considered by the MRC Fisheries Programme and its counterpart organisations.

At the TAB meeting in Hanoi in March 2004, gender was included in the mission statement. The regional coordinator of the Network for Promoting Gender in Fisheries Development (NGF) continues to have observer status in the TAB.

The MRC Fisheries Programme continues to set strict targets for the involvement of both women and men in programme activities. In 2003, there was increased emphasis on female-dominated activities under the Management of River and Reservoir Fisheries (MRRF) component. For example, in Lao PDR, fish processing - a typically female-dominated activity - was included in all 2004 reservoir management plans. In Cambodia, activities related to the establishment of 'rice

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<sup>1</sup> Lao PDR, DLF, 212 female employees, 24% (DLF, 2003); Thailand, DoF, 1049 female employees, 34%; (S. Suwarangsi, 2001); Cambodia, DoF, 112 female employees (15%); (Khaing Khim, 2002); Vietnam, Ministry of Fisheries, 14% female senior officers and 51% of all employees (9660/18970) are women (Tuyet Nhung Pham, 2004).

and cow banks' - mechanisms for credit and saving - predominantly involves females. And in Thailand, fish-processing groups are continually developing new and improved products.

At the Technical Symposium on Mekong Fisheries in Pakse in November 2003, there were three papers presented that exclusively addressed issues of gender in fisheries, and 23 percent of the participants were women. Moreover, during the Regional Training Course on Co-management in Cambodia in September 2003, women comprised 38 percent of the participants. A whole session was devoted to the discussion of women's and men's roles in fisheries. The session raised many interesting issues, adding to the awareness of gender and the technical capacities to address gender issues in fisheries development. The session on gender was ranked second in the course evaluation, confirming the relevance of this topic to fisheries management in the Lower Mekong Basin.



Mrs. Tram Thi Huong; fisher and treasurer of Lak Fishers Union, Lak Lake, Daklak Province, Viet Nam

*Since I have joined the Fishers Union, my awareness and knowledge have improved amazingly. I now know that people should share responsibility in managing the resources. Based on the credit and savings groups, fishers can save money for buying nets and other pieces of equipment for fishing. The living condition of most fishers has improved steadily. Also, the fishers realize that everyone should follow the fisheries regulations that we have made, which have also been approved by the local authority.*



## Annex 1



# Fisheries Programme Staff Directory

**Technical Advisory Body for Fisheries Management**

**Institutional Support to Fisheries Programme**

**National Programme Coordinators and Component Coordinators**

**Country Offices**

**Management of River and Reservoir Fisheries**

Cambodia  
Lao PDR  
Thailand  
Viet Nam

**Assessment of Mekong Capture Fisheries**

Cambodia  
Lao PDR  
Thailand  
Viet Nam

**Aquaculture of Indigenous Mekong Fish Species**

Cambodia  
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# AQUACULTURE OF INDIGENOUS MEKONG FISH SPECIES

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## Annex 2

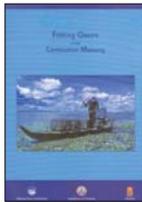
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## Annex 3

### Fishing gears of the Cambodian Mekong



Fishing gears are the link between the fishers and the fish. They reflect many aspects of the behaviour of the target species, the habitats they occupy, and their movements across space and time. Fishers exercise their knowledge, accumulated

over generations, in the selection and use of gears. The gears themselves display local technologies and show the decision-making processes of the fishers, including beliefs and taboos. It is important to understand these, when it comes to measures for resource conservation.

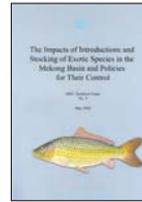
This catalogue is an essential aid for managing and studying inland fisheries. It will assist those involved in assessing or monitoring fisheries, by providing accurate specifications of gear size and characteristics, allowing calculation of catch per unit effort, for example.

Fine technical drawings accompanied by photos and concise descriptions make this fishing gears catalogue an outstanding production. It describes around 150 gear types grouped into 16 major categories, based on their principle of capture. The names of the gears are given in Khmer and English, accompanied by a short technical description, drawings and photographs. A chart shows usage of the gear in four fishery regions: the Great Lake, the Tonle Sap, the Mekong and Bassac floodplains south and east of Phnom Penh, and the upper Mekong River. There is also information about seasonal uses, gender aspects, cost and legal status.

Apart from the usefulness of this manual for the management and study of fisheries, the gears that are depicted reflect the living culture of the Cambodian people, whose lives have for centuries been based on harvesting the Mekong's riches.

*Jointly published by the Mekong River Commission, the Department of Fisheries in Cambodia, and Danida in 2003. Hardback, 268 pages. US\$25.*

### The Impacts of Introductions and Stocking of Exotic Species in the Mekong Basin and Policies for their Control



Exotic fish species have been introduced into the Mekong River Basin for aquaculture, stocking of lakes and reservoirs, mosquito control and the aquarium fish trade. The authors call for a code of conduct to be established for future

introductions, arguing that while the impacts of exotic species so far appear relatively minor, their uncontrolled movement is a threat to native fish species that may decline through competition, predation or genetic interference, and the possible spread of disease.

The report describes the exotic species, their known impacts, and policy suggestions.

*MRC Technical Paper No. 9, May 2003. US\$5.*

### Biodiversity and Fisheries in the Mekong River Basin



This new publication in MRC's Mekong Development Series argues persuasively for the elimination of boundaries between fisheries management and biodiversity conservation, showing that when biodiversity is well managed, fisheries

production goes up.

*Mekong Development Series No. 2  
June 2003. 35 pages. \$5.00*

### **Local Knowledge in the Study of River Fish Biology: Experiences from the Mekong**

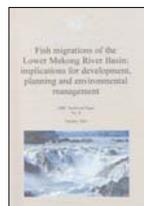


Life cycle information on important Mekong species, based on interviews with knowledgeable fishers, sellers and other local experts. The study highlights the critical influence of habitat and flood patterns on the propensity of

fish species to migrate, spawn and find dry-season refuges.

*Mekong Development Series No.1*  
July 2001. 22 pages. \$US 5.00

### **Fish migrations of the Lower Mekong Basin: implications for development, planning and environmental management**

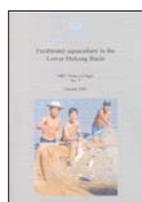


In the Mekong Basin, many fish species are migratory. They swim hundreds of kilometres, and often across international borders, during their seasonal migrations. Since millions of people are dependent on migratory fish for their food

security and livelihoods, plans for dams and other water management projects must consider the consequences on fish migrations. To aid in these assessments, this paper identifies key features of the Mekong River ecosystem that are crucial for migratory fishes and suggests how to incorporate this information into environmental assessments.

*MRC Technical Paper No. 8,*  
October 2002. 62 pages. \$US 5.

### **Freshwater aquaculture in the Lower Mekong Basin**

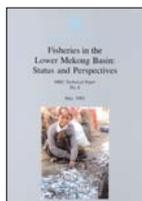


Aquaculture, the farming of fish, other aquatic animals and plants, is an increasingly important source of income and means of assuring food security for rural people in the Lower Mekong Basin. This paper reviews the status of freshwater aquaculture

in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Viet Nam and the trends shaping aquaculture development. It also provides recommendations for increasing the importance and success of aquaculture, particularly in poor communities.

*MRC Technical Paper No. 7,*  
October 2002. 62 pages. \$US 5.

### **Fisheries in the Lower Mekong Basin: Status and Perspectives**



Current data from the Lower Mekong Basin on the status of capture fisheries and aquaculture, as well as data on consumption, processing and marketing. The study includes the requirements for sustainable management of capture fisheries

and aquaculture, an overview of types of development that affect fisheries, and short illustrated features on important topics related to the fisheries sector.

*MRC Technical Paper No. 6,*  
May 2002. 95 pages. \$US 5.

### Financial analysis and risk assessment of selected aquaculture and fishery activities in the Mekong Basin

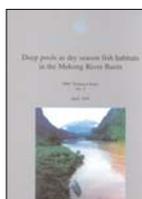


Describes financial risks that low income groups face in establishing small-scale aquaculture operations. Along with comprehensive recommendations, the report provides formulas and

spreadsheets that agencies can use in assessing new aquaculture operations.

*MRC Technical Paper No. 5, April 2002. 66 pages. \$US 5.*

### Deep pools as dry season fish habitats in the Mekong River Basin



This study discusses the crucial role that deep pool habitats within the Mekong mainstream and its tributaries play in maintaining fish stocks. It also provides information on fish species in the pools,

hydrographic data and a set of recommendations for protection of these areas.

*MRC Technical Paper No. 4, April 2002. 24 pages. \$US 5.*

### Mekong giant fish species: on their management and biology



An overview of the importance and status of giant fish species in the Mekong River and species synopses for *Catlocarpio siamensis*; *Pangasianodon gigas*; and *Probarbus jullieni*.

*MRC Technical Paper No. 3, April 2002. 29 pages. \$US 5.*

### Status of Pangasiid aquaculture in Viet Nam



Discusses the status of wild river catfish larvae, and summarises the status of hatchery seed production and the status of pond and cage culture.

*MRC Technical Paper No. 2, April 2002. 16 pages. \$US 5.*

### Status of the Mekong *Pangasianodon hypophthalmus* resources, with special reference to the stock shared between Cambodia and Viet Nam



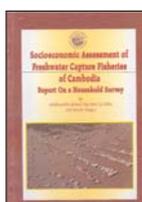
This paper covers the identification, distribution and life-cycle of *Pangasianodon hypophthalmus*.

It also discusses the status of fishery exploitation, utilisation of *P. hypophthalmus* in aquaculture and provides

recommendations for maintaining the viability of this species.

*MRC Technical Paper No. 1, April 2002. 29 pages. \$US5.*

### Socio-economic Assessment of Freshwater Capture Fisheries of Cambodia: Report on a Household Survey



Baseline information on the socio-economic status of people living in village communities along the banks of the Mekong River who depend on fishing and related activities for food, income and employment. Also a general reference for understanding and comparing specific

local data within the wider context of the rural Cambodian economy.

*1998. 185 pages. \$US 15.00*

### Large Dam Fisheries of the Lower Mekong Countries: Review and Assessment Report and Database 1997



A review and assessment of reservoir fisheries in Lao PDR, Thailand, and Viet Nam, including a survey of existing reservoir fisheries, benefits and hazards from large dams, prediction of impacts, and criteria for designing impact

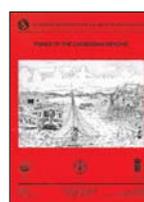
assessments for fisheries. The database contains information on 46 reservoirs in Lao PDR, Thailand, and Viet Nam regarding dam specifications and functions, reservoir morphology, physical and chemical status, fish species, and annual fish production and effort.

*1997. 2 volumes.*

*Main report, 156 pages. US\$ 15.00*

*Database, 147 pages. US\$ 10.00*

### Fishes of the Cambodian Mekong

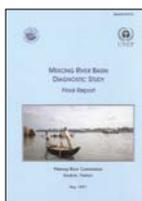


This field guide by a well-known taxonomist provides descriptions, line drawings and colour plates for the identification of nearly 500 species of fish. English and Cambodian names in Khmer script are included, with notes on

market uses, biology and where species are found. Published by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation.

*1996. 265 pages, plus colour plates. Heavy. US\$ 50.00*

### **Mekong River Basin Diagnostic Study Final Report 1997**



A study of the environmental conditions and related factors affecting human use of the water resources of the Mekong River Basin. The study includes the status of physical and ecological resources, quality-of-life issues, plans and trends in development initiatives, and country-specific assessments of environmental management capacity.

*1997. 196 pages. Heavy. \$US 25.00*

### **Fisheries in the Lower Mekong Basin Main report, summary and annexes, 1992**



An overview of the fisheries sector in the Lower Mekong Basin, fisheries development issues and development needs, a review of external assistance, and proposals for future work. The annexes contain country sector reviews of the four Lower Mekong Basin countries, including production and distribution, environmental aspects, government roles and policies, and lists of development assistance projects.

*1992. Main report, 92 pages. US\$15.00  
Summary, 16 pages. US\$ 3.00  
Annexes, 254 pages. Heavy. US\$ 8.00*

### **Mekong Fish Database**



Key information on Mekong fish species including taxonomy, migration, common names, synonyms, pictures, occurrence data, maps and biological information. Information contained in the database is fully referenced and was obtained both from published material and from the results of surveys coordinated by the MRC Fisheries Programme in collaboration with riparian line agencies.

*2003. CD-ROM. US\$5.*

### **Fish Migration and Spawning**



Information from a four-year assessment of Mekong fisheries, including digital maps showing migration routes of specific species, and information on river ecology.

*2001. CD-ROM. \$US 5*



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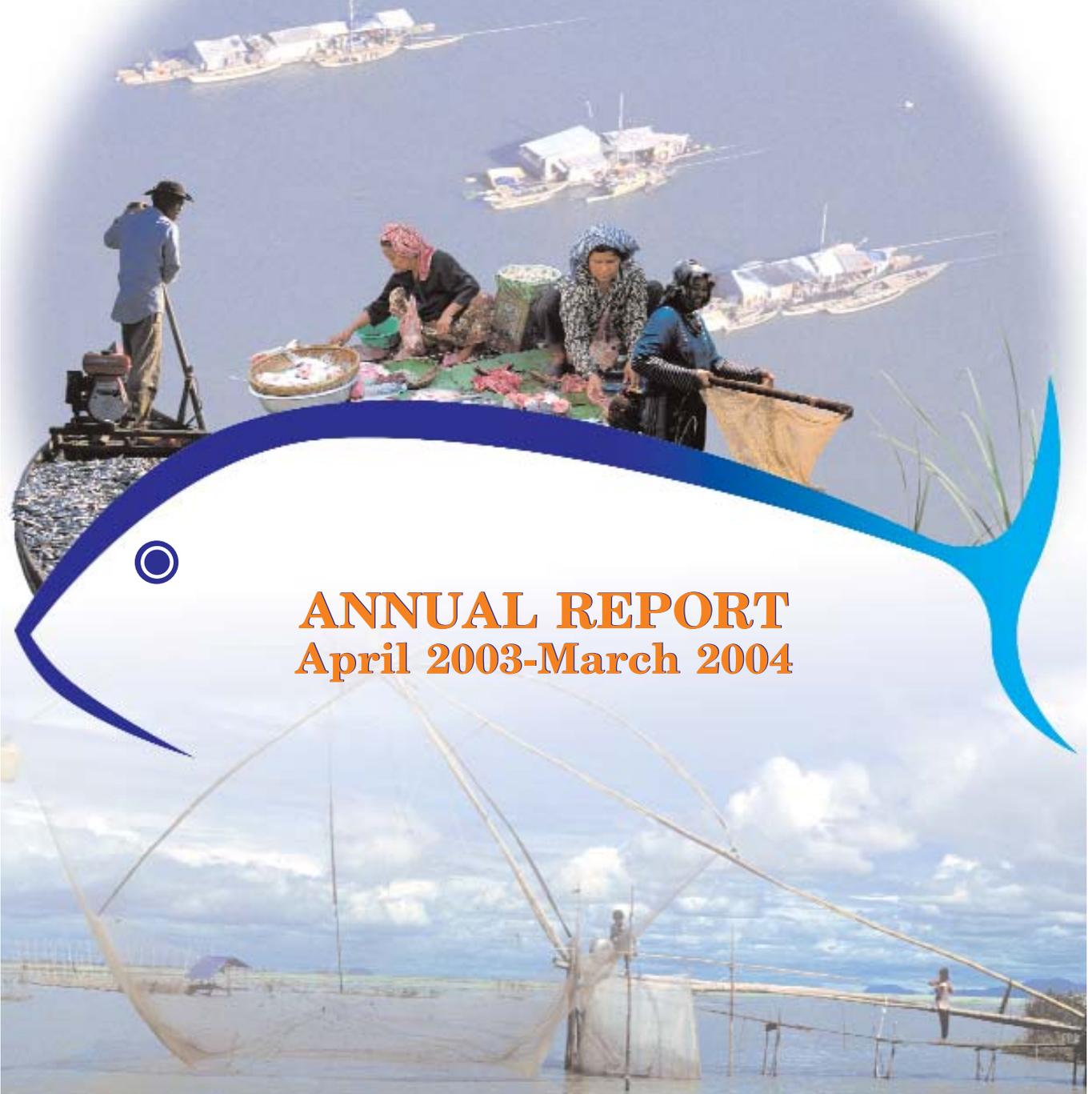
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**THE MRC PROGRAMME  
FOR  
FISHERIES MANAGEMENT  
AND DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION**



**ANNUAL REPORT  
April 2003-March 2004**