



# Achieving Sustainable Livelihoods

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Despite the richness of the Tonle Sap, most indicators of poverty in its basin are more negative than those that characterize the nation as a whole. And so people naturally aspire to a range of better livelihood outcomes. But in the face of high demographic growth, which is increasing the numbers to feed, consumptive use of the basin's resources is intense. Major local threats to the Tonle Sap, to name just a few, include overexploitation of fisheries and wildlife resources; conversion of the flooded forest to agriculture; collection of fuel wood from the flooded forest; deforestation in the watersheds; agricultural expansion; and habitat fragmentation. Why? Because short-term survival, rather than sustainable management of natural capital, is often quite necessarily the priority of people living in poverty.

Threats to the Tonle Sap

Climate Change	Cumulative Impact of Built Structures on the Hydrology of the Mekong Basin	Deforestation in the Watersheds	Agricultural Expansion
Industrial and Urban Pollution	Conversion of the Flooded Forest to Agriculture	Overexploitation of Fisheries and Wildlife Resources	Agricultural Runoff
Mining	Habitat Fragmentation	Collection of Fuel Wood from the Flooded Forest	Introduction of Non-Native Species

Source: ADB. December 2004. *Future Solutions Now: The Tonle Sap Initiative*. Manila.

In July 2003, the Asian Development Bank formulated the Tonle Sap Basin Strategy. The strategy aims to meet the poverty and environment challenges of the Tonle Sap through the three development objectives of pro-poor, sustainable economic growth, improved access to assets, and better management of natural resources and the environment. This is a very tall agenda. The Tonle Sap basin must be treated holistically; but it is impossible to tackle every threat and meet every opportunity at the same time. One of our tactics has been geographical phasing.<sup>1</sup> We have opted to begin at the heart of the basin with support to the environmental management objectives of the three core areas, before moving progressively through the buffer zone with an emphasis on fishing communities, then to the transition area and beyond to develop their potential for enhanced agricultural production, and finally through to the watersheds with due attention to the absolute imperative of their protection while affording means of livelihoods for those living in their upland areas. It is envisaged that this project cycle will need to go through a number of iterations and it therefore incorporates advance piloting of interventions.

The Tonle Sap Sustainable Livelihoods Project is part of the suite of loan and technical assistance projects, collectively known as the Tonle Sap Initiative, that will hopefully begin to make a difference. The loan that would ensue from project preparatory efforts of the consultants would be the second in the series. Specifically, the purpose of the consulting services that have been extended in two

<sup>1</sup> The others are development of the institutional, policy, and regulatory framework; enablement of stakeholders; acquisition and dissemination of knowledge; judicious use of different funding modalities; and forging of partnerships.

separate phases since 2004 is to prepare a project to sustain and improve livelihoods in the flooded area of the Tonle Sap, building on the community organization component of the Tonle Sap Environmental Management Project.

We are at this consultative meeting to be informed about what direct and indirect interventions could be leveraged to this end. I particularly look forward to hearing how these interventions would build on past and ongoing accomplishments elsewhere, including those under the Tonle Sap Initiative. And all of us, meaning the Government, the Asian Development Bank, the consultants, and those who might wish to associate themselves with the Tonle Sap Sustainable Livelihoods Project as partners, want to be guided by your considered opinions. We also need your support.