



Toward Effective Governance of Water, Land, and Biotic Resources Organization

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We have gathered today because the Tonle Sap is in crisis. Population and development pressures are rising and indicators of poverty in the provinces that surround it are worse than those that characterize your population as a whole, or indeed other rural areas of Cambodia.

The threats to the lake's ecosystem include overexploitation of fisheries and wildlife resources; dry season encroachment and land clearance of the flooded forest; and degradation of natural vegetation in watersheds, with associated changes in water and soil quality and siltation rates. Conversations with stakeholders confirm that the number and diversity of concerns is overwhelming.

If environmental governance means the rules, processes, and behavior that affect the way in which powers are exercised in the field of environmental policies—particularly regarding openness, participation, accountability, effectiveness, and coherence—then the Tonle Sap faces a governance crisis and the problems to which I just referred tell the story of failure to act.

In the world's basins, four elements are found where there is good governance of water, land, and biotic resources. They are (i) a stable institutional framework, (ii) a strong knowledge base, (iii) integration across all natural resource issues, and (iv) a program for community awareness and participation.

Today, we will focus on the first element. Specifically, how can you overcome a governance disconnect that will widen with growing numbers of stakeholders, externalities, and costs?¹ Your best guarantee is an institutional framework that ensures economic efficiency, environmental sustainability, and social equity. To my mind, that institutional framework ought to encompass (i) organizations, (ii) incentives, (iii) legislation, (iv) capacities, and (v) stakeholders.

The purpose of this technical assistance is to design, and plan the development of, the institutional framework for integrated basin planning and management. Since its primary output will be a basin management organization design, we will discuss the key issues that must be addressed if that outcome is to be achieved.

¹ The population of the Tonle Sap basin will have a natural increase of 15% over the coming five years and of 30% over the next 10 years.