

Workshop on Water and Human Security for Asia

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Title: Water and Human Security Workshop in Southeast Asia and Oceania

Location: Canberra, Australia

Dates: November 16-18, 1998

The Global Environmental Change and Human Security project (GECHS) of the International Human Dimensions Programme on Global Environmental Change (IHDP) and the Australian Human Dimensions Programme (Aus-HDP) hosted a workshop on November 16th - 18th in Canberra, Australia, on the topic of Water and Human security in Southeast Asia and Oceania. Funding for the workshop was provided by the Asia-Pacific Network for Global Change (APN) and START, the Global Change System for Analysis, Research and Training. The objectives of the workshop were, as follows:

1. To review current understanding of the links among water resources and human security, including issues of environment change, human health, dam construction, economic development and food security in Southeast Asia and Oceania.
2. To highlight case methods of integrated water resource analysis.
3. To identify mechanisms that will increase our understanding of the links between water, environmental change, human security and therefore enhance the ability of policy makers to design suitable interventions; and
4. To facilitate collaborative research and networking on problems relating to water and human security throughout Southeast Asia and Oceania.

The workshop focused on the following four themes:

- Water and human health
- Water, food security, and agricultural sustainability
- Water and indigenous people
- Institutional cooperation and conflict over water

Thirty-eight scholars from fifteen countries attended the workshop, and fifteen papers were presented over three days (see the workshop schedule).

The quality of the papers – and the discussions – were exceptional for a workshop of this type. All papers were submitted a month prior to the workshop. They were then copied and redistributed to all participants. This allowed for specific recommendations to be made on each paper, further ensuring the quality of the proceedings volume, and a forward is being written by Apichai Sunchindah (who was unable to attend the workshop due to the political situation in Jakarta).

Judging by the comments from the participants, the meeting was very successful. We kept the number of participants small in order to facilitate interaction amongst members of the group. It was our belief that this could best be accomplished through a combination of formal workshop session and informal activities. Accordingly, we included a number of informal activities to enhance the workshop. This strategy seemed to work well, and by the end of the meeting, a number of collaborative projects and workshops were being discussed.

The final afternoon was devoted to a general discussion of “Where do we go from here?” Chaired by Chris Cocklin and Edgar Gutierrez-Espeleta, the discussion was lively and generated many comments and recommendations that will be included in the proceedings volume. Overall, the workshop can be considered a tremendous success. If an independent assessment is desired, Ms. Ramine Shaw from the IHDP office in Bonn, was the IHDP representative to the meeting, and could be called on to write such an assessment.