

cooperating in 1957, first with the formation of national committees on river-related projects, followed by the formation of a regional Mekong River Commission. However, decades of war interrupted this process in which Cambodia had been a leader, especially in preparing feasibility studies. Only in 1995 did Cambodia re-establish the Cambodian National Mekong Committee (CNMC). The other countries by then had done much to develop river resources (eg, Vietnam, harnessing the Mekong for irrigation, now surpasses Thailand as a rice exporter), while Cambodia had done virtually nothing.

Now, however, as a result of the energetic lobbying of the vice-chair of the CNMC, Khy Tainglim (a Canadian citizen), the Cambodian government seems committed to national/regional action on the basin. Eight ministers are involved in the CNMC, which the Second Prime Minister heads. Cambodia succeeded in persuading its neighbours that the secretariat (employing 120 people) of the four-country MRC will have its permanent seat in Phnom Penh, starting in July 1998.

The interest of the Commission goes well beyond utilization of the river itself for electricity and irrigation to include: agriculture (fisheries, forests, irrigation); tourism (especially eco-tourism); transportation and communication in the "Greater Mekong System"; and investment and trade. For Cambodia, this range of development activity is especially significant given that 80% of the country is inside the river's basin.

b) Cambodian Ngos

On issues of regional integration (or, for that matter foreign trade and political policy), CICP is the most active local ngo. A policy think-tank headed by Kao Kim Hourn, it sponsors conferences on a wide range of issues, but with a particular focus on foreign affairs. In 1997, it organized 14 such meetings, mainly on ASEAN and Southeast Asian topics such as "Women's Political Voice in ASEAN" and "Roundtable of Trade Unions in Southeast Asia." It has also trained 50 people from different government ministries in multilateral and bilateral negotiation, leadership training of new diplomats, and a session for finance and commerce ministry officials on ASEAN and AFTA. It produces a newsletter and a journal, sponsors a distinguished lecture series (see the Media section above), and produces a number of articles for newspapers and other publications. It is also active in developing networks with counterpart organizations in the region and elsewhere (see Canadian role below).

The Cambodian Development Resource Institute (CDRI) in 1997 undertook a research project on Cambodia's membership in ASEAN.

c) Multilateral Bodies

The World Bank and GEF have been supporting the Water Utilization Program, under the umbrella of the MRC. This program is concerned with the quality and quantity of the water itself. These issues are especially important for Cambodia because of its unusual dependence of