

# RESEARCH

- Environment
- Human Security and Regional Development





## Background

While the environment group continued capacity-building activities by conducting various training courses, a number of new initiatives and projects were added during the latter part of 2003, with the reorientation of the environmental component of UNCRD research activities.

The main goal of the environment group is now to facilitate progress towards sustainable development in the region, in line with key international commitments and goals such as the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI) and the UN Millennium Development Goals. With this in mind, new initiatives and projects have been formulated in the areas of environmentally sustainable transport (EST), sustainable production and consumption, solid waste management, and sustainable tourism — all issues/topics that have been identified as

priority areas at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) held in Johannesburg in 2002.

The initiative on EST aims to balance the needs of transport with that of environmental protection. In partnership with the Ministry of the Environment (MoE), Government of Japan, other governments, and relevant national/international organizations, UNCRD is planning to promote the concept of EST in Asia by initiating a range of activities such as catalysing local- and national-level actions to formulate an appropriate set of policy instruments, adopt cleaner and efficient technologies, mobilize research, and enhance international cooperation while strengthening the information base, education, and public awareness.

## ONGOING PROJECTS

### **RES/618/03: Promoting Sustainable Production and Consumption at Local and Regional Levels in Asian Countries through a Participatory Process**

This project aims to integrate the perception of sustainable production and consumption with mainstream thinking, national policies, and regulatory framework by sensitizing civil society, local/central governments, and the private sector. As its immediate objectives, the project will initiate contact with targeted governments and resource institutions to identify key partners — NGOs, the private sector, and formulate a clear strategy and set of guidelines for their involvement in promoting sustainable production and consumption.



### **RES/619/03: Promoting Innovative Solid Waste Management Strategies in Rapidly Urbanizing Cities**

The project aims to facilitate the exchange of information, technology, and experiences on innovative solid waste management strategies among Asian countries and to formulate, and jointly implement pilot/demonstration projects in selected Asian cities, in partnership with international agencies, and central and local governments, NGOs, and research institutions.

### **RES/620/03: Promoting Sustainable Tourism Development in Asia**

This project is designed to facilitate the exchange of information, technology, and experiences on sustainable tourism development strategies among Asian countries, and will hold symposiums or policy dialogues to promote sustainable tourism within the public and private sectors.

#### **Initiatives on Environmentally Sustainable Transport (EST)**

Asia is expected to achieve significant economic growth during the early part of the twenty-first century. The growth will be accompanied by increased transport-related services and activities resulting in significant environmental impacts. Most Asian countries have been seriously affected by transport driven socioeconomic and environmental problems. These include: vehicular air pollution and associated public health and environmental impacts, noise and traffic congestion and associated economic loss, inefficient use of energy resources, greater use of nonrenewable fossil fuel, and loss of natural habitats. While poor control and regulation of

vehicular emissions, lack of appropriate infrastructure, and absence of effective policy instruments have been the significant concerns, phenomena like constant growth in traffic demand and urbanization are further compounding the problem in the region.

The Nagoya Conference on EST held in March 2003, recommended the establishment of clear environmental goals and timetables that are appropriate to local circumstances and the identification of ways to meet these goals while at the same time ensuring social and economic development. This is especially important for developing countries, which have shorter cycles of economic growth and urbanization, and therefore have a more urgent need for timely implementation of effective measures.

While transportation is essential to Asia's socioeconomic needs, balancing these needs with the need to protect the environment should be at the heart of the concept of EST. Generally, EST is considered as transport that meets the needs of the present without preventing future generations from meeting their needs. Although there is no single, commonly held definition of EST, the concept of EST is centred on the transportation system and transportation activity that meets social, economic, and environmental objectives.

Realizing the above facts and also as a follow-up to the outcome of the Nagoya Conference, UNCRD, in partnership with MoE/Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, and Transport (MoLIT), Government of Japan, other governments, and relevant national/international organizations, is planning to promote EST through a range of activities such as catalysing local/national level actions to formulate/promote an appropriate set of policy instruments, adopt cleaner and more efficient technologies, mobilize research, and strengthen international cooperation to improve the information base, education, and public



*Lecture on environmental management during ITC 31*

awareness. In order to achieve the above objectives, UNCRD is facilitating and mobilizing the necessary technical and advisory support in formulating an EST Strategy-cum-Five-Year Action Programme at the national level.

Overall, the key elements of the environment group's strategy and work plan include:

- Identification of issues and strategic challenges in realization of Asian EST;
- Formulation of national strategy-cum-action plans on EST for selected countries involving all key stakeholders at the national level addressing short-term and long-term targets, commitments, activities, and measures;
- Set in motion a regional mechanism to promote collaborative efforts towards harmonization of ambient air quality standards, roadside air quality monitoring and assessment, fuel quality standards, vehicle emission standards, and proper management of export/import of used vehicles;
- Organizing periodical high level policy-dialogue meetings in relevant areas of EST to promote regional cooperation;
- Establishment of a knowledge base on EST in Asia to meet the information needs of the developing countries in the region; and
- Mobilizing donor support and follow-up implementation of EST Strategy-cum-Action Plan at the national level.

### **Training on Environmental Management**

UNCRD coordinated and provided training for government officials from nine countries for the module on "Environmental Management — Sustainable Production and Consumption" as part of the thirty-first International Training Course in Regional Development, held in Nagoya. The objective of the training session was: (a) to increase vision and awareness on various as-

pects of sustainable production and consumption; (b) to gain insights into the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation with specific emphasis on changing production and consumption patterns; (c) to gain insights into the major achievements in the area of cleaner production (sustainable production and cleaner production are two sides of the same sustainability coin); and d) to discuss opportunities to build a work plan for initiating relevant activities at the national and regional levels.

### **Contribution to JICA Training Programme**

UNCRD was involved in the JICA group training course for government officials from nine countries on 28 May 2003. Environment group staff members delivered training on environmental impact assessment and involuntary settlements as part of the JICA training course entitled, "Environmental Impact Assessment."

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# HUMAN SECURITY AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

lifestyles. The Commission on Human Security (CHS) affirms that human security focuses on the individual and seeks protection from threats to human life, livelihood, and dignity, and the realization of the full potential of each individual. Human security addresses both conflict and developmental aspects including displacement, discrimination, and persecution of vulnerable communities as well as insecurities related to poverty, health, education, gender disparities, and other types of inequality.

Therefore, human security is understood as the ability to withstand threats such as disease, hunger, unemployment, crime, social conflict, political repression, and environmental hazards. Threats to human security can be economic, ecological, social, and political, and they can occur as sudden shocks, long-term trends, or seasonal cycles. The working definition of human security at UNCRD is the removal or reduction of vulnerability to economic, environmental, social, and cultural threats which undermine the sustainable development of communities. The UNCRD human security group's project activities are efforts to integrate the human security concept into local development strategies through:

- (1) Human security assessments to identify vulnerable communities and the economic, environmental, social, and cultural threats experienced at the household and village levels that compromise sustainable development;
- (2) Capacity assessments at the village, district, and province levels to integrate the coping strategies of households and villages into planning and project formulation within their jurisdictions; and
- (3) Training of local government officials in human security approaches.

This is in line with the recent report on human security by the CHS that states, "human

## Background: Why Human Security?

UNCRD initiated a research-*cum*-capacity building initiative on human security in July 1999 to support the call by the United Nations and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Japan, for a fundamental shift in the perceptions of security, from a focus on defence of territory from external attack to one that addresses the protection of communities and individuals from threats to their lives and livelihoods.

Human security also responds to the negative effects of the globalization process currently being experienced which has led to the increased vulnerability of individuals and communities to financial crisis, widening gaps between the rich and poor, social breakdowns, and cultural erosion against a backdrop of resettlement, conflict, migration, and rapidly changing



Village in Lao PDR

security focuses on shielding people from critical and pervasive threats and empowering them to take charge of their lives.”

More recently, attempts are being made to understand the role of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in integrating human security in local development. The three main pillars of UNCRD’s human security project are participatory action research for vulnerability assessments and programme evaluation, capacity-building in local governments for a human security orientation, and the creation of electronic networks for greater South-South cooperation.

By addressing the need to enhance human security, ongoing projects respond to a central concern raised at the UN Millennium Summit. The focus is on strengthening capacity in the least developed transitional countries of Indochina, as identified on the agendas of the Social Summit and the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) held in Johannesburg in September 2002. These projects are built around mechanisms recommended in the Plan of Implementation of the WSSD such as South-South cooperation to share knowledge and best practices, forging collaboration among government, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and the private sector, and increasing uses of ICTs for development.

### Objectives of the Group

The human security group addresses a range of objectives including:

- (1) Conducting human security assessments in the regions, provinces, or cities of developing and transitional economies with the aim of enhancing understanding of the concept and its application in ongoing development efforts;

- (2) Fostering links with selected central and local governments in Asian developing and transitional economies, and promoting application of the findings of human security assessments leading to policies, programmes, and projects which advance human security;
- (3) Creating electronic networks for information- and experience-sharing, and for e-learning;
- (4) Forging partnerships for South-South cooperation and city-to-city partnerships; and
- (5) Assessing training needs and conducting training in human security in the context of regional development.

### ONGOING PROJECTS

#### RES/594/97: National Training Programme in Lao PDR

In 1997 the Government of Lao PDR made a policy decision to promote decentralization with a view to accelerating the pace of market-oriented development while addressing poverty issues. In line with the decentralization policy, priority has been directed to capacity development of administrators and planning personnel undertaking development planning and management at the provincial and district levels. Capacity development in this field is considered to be the key to institution building for effective implementation of the decentralized system of development planning and management under the overall reform policy of the Lao Government.

In 1998, the Department of General Planning, Committee for Planning and Cooperation (DGP/CPC) of the Lao Government jointly with UNCRD launched a training project on local development planning and management. The national decentralization policy was expedited through *Prime Minister’s Instruction (No. 1/PM)*



*Training workshop in Sayaboury Province, Lao PDR*

adopted in March 2000, which aims at building up the province as the strategic unit, the district as the planning and budgeting unit, and the village as the implementing unit. The training project is therefore being implemented to promote capacity-building at the provincial and district levels for poverty reduction and human security at the local level, while addressing sociocultural and environmental concerns along with economic development issues in all the training-related activities. This is in line with the decentralization policy and poverty reduction strategy of the Government of Lao PDR.

Seven training courses (plus one training workshop) have been conducted since 1998 as integral parts of the project. A total of 180 planners at the provincial and district levels have so far undergone training. The third training workshop held in January 2001 was the first attempt to impart training by a team of Lao trainers who had been trained in earlier workshops, using the training materials prepared in Lao by Lao trainers on the basis of the inputs developed by UNCRD for the first two workshops.

With the successful implementation of the third training workshop, CPC has proven its ability to manage and run training programmes. In view of this (and coupled with the availability of trained trainers as well as training materials in the Lao language), JICA agreed to support CPC for five years in implementing the training programme for provincial- and district-level planners.

These training courses have successfully enabled the participants to acquire the skills and knowledge needed to undertake participatory local development planning and vulnerability assessments at the local community level along with those for project design and management. The design of each training course is based on the lessons learned from the previous training course, and included lecture-discussion sessions,

a participatory local development planning exercise, field study visits, and action planning.

This training programme adheres to the Plan of Implementation drawn up during the September 2002 WSSD in that it targets a least developed country that is also a land-locked transitional economy and one of the poorest in the Asia-Pacific Region. The training provides capacity-building at the provincial and district levels for improved planning and project management, poverty alleviation, and increased human security. Concerted efforts are made to address environmental and sociocultural concerns along with economic development in all training-related activities. This is in line with the policy of the Lao Government and the recommendations of the UN mission in the country.

Discussions with CPC and the provincial planning departments revealed that the training course would be more effective and have a deeper impact if geared to a group of provinces in various regions of the country which share similar development potentials and challenges. Therefore, it was decided to focus the next three training courses on the northern, southern, and central provinces of the country, respectively.

The first training course under JICA's in-country training programme was held in January 2002.

The Second CPC-JICA-UNCRD Training Course on Local Development Planning and Management was held in Sayaboury, Sayaboury Province, from 14 to 25 October 2002 and targeted the northern provinces. The objectives were to enable participants to: (a) gain deeper insight into the emerging perspectives, concepts and strategies for local development planning and management; (b) acquire the necessary skills and knowledge to undertake participatory project design and management for promoting local development and poverty reduction; and (c) exchange project experiences and ideas on



*Village planning exercise in Attapeu Province, Lao PDR*

local development and poverty reduction.

A total of twenty-five participants attended the training course from the six northern provinces of Bokeo, Luang Namtha, Luang Prabang, Phongsaly, Sayaboury, and Oudomsay. Lecturers and training facilitators included CPC staff, a gender expert from the Gender Resource Information Centre of the Lao Women's Union, guest lecturers from the central and provincial governments, and UNCRD staff. All the Lao resource persons are alumni of former training courses either by UNCRD or JICA, and five out of fourteen (35 per cent) are women.

Recommendations for the next training course included improving gender balance, follow up of action plans, defining roles of participants from central line ministries, inclusion of group discussions and workshops, focus on training of trainees as trainers/resource persons, documentation and use of best practices, and integration of training activities with manuals being prepared by CPC and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

The Third In-country Training Course on Local Development Planning and Management was implemented in Attapeu Province from 17 to 28 February 2003. This training course covered the specific training needs of the southern provinces of the country. A total of twenty-five participants attended the training course from six provinces: Attapeu, Champassack, Khammouane, Saravane, Savannakhet, and Sekong.

The course included lectures, discussions, participation paper presentations, a planning exercise on participatory project design and management for poverty reduction and local development, a field study visit to local development project sites, and action planning designed to enable each participant to reflect on what he/she had learned from the training course and define actions he or she plans to initiate upon

return to his/her office. Lecturers and training facilitators included CPC staff, JICA staff, provincial planning personnel, a retired UNCRD expert, and UNCRD. It must be noted that nearly all of the Lao resource persons were alumni of former training courses by UNCRD and JICA.

The CPC's current training programme in local development planning and management will continue to be implemented up to 2005 under the JICA In-country Training Programme with technical advisory services from UNCRD. Recommendations to improve the effectiveness of future training courses are:

- (1) The training must address the recently introduced concept of *kum-ban* (cluster of villages) development and cover economic, environmental, and sociocultural aspects.
- (2) Participants at the provincial and district levels should be selected so that they can form teams of planners from the principal line agencies along with those from the planning departments as well as members from the Lao Women's Union (LWU) and the Lao Youth Union (LYU). This would ensure greater commitment to wider dissemination of training as well as continuation of teamwork in the plan preparation process.
- (3) At present most of the Lao resource persons are from the central government. It is recommended that more practitioners from the provincial levels be used as resource persons for the training to better disseminate the training in a form better comprehended by provincial and district planners.
- (4) It is recommended that the field visit be related to a method for documenting best practices that is currently being discussed at DGP/CPC. The field visit site must demonstrate elements of local entrepreneurship, community mobilization and development, women's issues, empowerment of weak and vulnerable groups, particularly ethnic mi-



*Slum relocation site, Cambodia*

norities and resettled communities, and must cover economic, environmental, and sociocultural aspects.

- (5) The action plans must include an on-the-job component of sharing of experience. The importance of team-building at provincial and district levels needs to be reemphasized at this stage.

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### **RES/607/99: Human Security and Regional Development, Phase III**

During 2002, UNCRD initiated South-South Cooperation between the Municipality of Phnom Penh (MPP), Cambodia and the two cities of Makati and Naga in the Philippines to transfer the Philippine experience on decentralized governance and planning for human security to the Cambodian capital. The two cities in the Philippines are committed to continuing this cooperation through active contribution to capacity-building in MPP.

As a follow-up, a training workshop was conducted on Human Security and Urban Development in Phnom Penh from 10 to 14 February 2003 with the objective of building capacity in the MPP and local governments at the district and commune levels in the metropolitan area for planning for human security by addressing the needs of the weakest socioeconomic groups.

A total of thirty-four participants attended the training workshop from the various divisions of MPP concerned with urban poverty alleviation, slum upgrading, and relocation, seven municipal districts, thirteen communes within the municipal districts, and selected line agencies concerned with service delivery and social development. The specific objectives accom-

plished by the training are:

- (1) Creation of awareness on the role of decentralization in achieving human security;
- (2) Strengthening understanding on mechanisms for service delivery in a decentralized context;
- (3) Study of problems and solutions related to upgrading and relocation of slum settlements in urban areas through interactions between Cambodian officials and Philippine resource persons;
- (4) Transfer of best practice experience from the Philippines to Cambodia on community organization, micro-credit, and alternative livelihood generation; and
- (5) Study of participatory methods for identifying vulnerable groups and addressing their needs in local development planning.

Sharing of experiences from Naga and Makati cities clearly demonstrated the importance of people's participation in poverty alleviation, where the voices of the poor are heard. The mechanisms used by the two Philippine cities for including the felt needs of the poor in the local planning and decision-making processes were highly appreciated. The poor in Cambodia have few survival mechanisms because of heavy dependence on relief assistance offered by the central government and NGOs following the protracted civil war.

A field visit was arranged to two relocation sites in Sen Sok and Samakkhi. Participants were able to apply the method for vulnerability analysis used in the lecture during their interviews with the residents of the relocation sites and learn the perception of the people and the risks that threaten their lives and livelihoods. Documentation of vulnerabilities included social and environmental threats along with economic constraints. The coping strategies of the people to help themselves were also documented. During the group work sessions, this



Community meeting, Cambodia

information was used to generate strategies for these two sites using the solutions learned from the Philippine experience. A strengths-weaknesses-opportunities-threats (SWOT) analysis was undertaken to understand how solutions from the Philippines might be applied in the Cambodian context.

Training activities related to human security and urban development in Phnom Penh must continue, as the need for capacity-building is acute in the MPP as well as in the districts and communes. South-South collaboration between the Cambodian and Philippine municipalities should be continued. Naga and Makati cities have generously offered to host MPP staff at their organizations for a one-month training course on slum upgrading. Future training activities should include the participation of NGOs and community-based organizations (CBOs) to better comprehend the complexities of participatory and partnership-based approaches to urban poverty alleviation. Lectures should provide substantial material on community organization and leadership, areas in which Cambodian local governments are weak. In addition, there is a need for training activities to be integrated with the ongoing planning process and become output-oriented where the outputs would include joint strategies and identification of teams to undertake specific tasks related to urban poverty alleviation. The importance of team-building within the local governments needs to be further emphasized.

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### RES/612/01: e-workspace, RDD output and web pages, and training modules

In July 2001, UNCRD embarked on a new project on “Incorporating Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) for Human Security in Local Development” with the twin objectives of understanding the contemporary uses of ICTs for local development targeting the poorest and most vulnerable groups as well as to create an electronic network among agencies undertaking such projects and those interested in doing so.

During the first phase of the project from July 2001- June 2002, five innovative projects in India and two in Japan that are using ICTs for rural development were documented using a framework that highlights the impacts of the project on the weakest groups, the constraints in project implementation and expansion, and the training needs to sustain and expand such initiatives as well as the more intangible aspects of ICT impacts on a community such as changes in modes of communication and improved participation in community activities and local governance. These cases were documented in *Regional Development Dialogue*, Vol. 23, No. 2, Autumn 2002 (theme: “Using ICTs for Human Security in Local Development”).

In order to establish an electronic network among experts, practitioners, and learners in this subject area, UNCRD held an e-workshop on “Moving from Virtual to Real Benefits in Local Development” from 11 November to 13 December 2002. The basic premise was that existing literature on the uses of ICTs to bridge the digital divide places too much importance on stories and anecdotal improvements to the lives of people, paying insufficient attention to the constraints and details in implementing such projects. At the same time, it is recognized that several ongoing initiatives are path break-



*Village Knowledge Centre at Pondicherry*

ing and hold considerable promise for expansion and replication if the lessons from them are drawn and understood correctly.

The aim of the e-workshop was to share the results of the first phase of the UNCRD project to stimulate discussion based on review of showcased initiatives of uses of ICTs for poor, vulnerable, and isolated communities. Seven themes were identified for the workshop that cover practical issues of using ICTs for local development as well as more abstract issues related to changes in lifestyle and relations between different groups: (a) policy and regulatory frameworks; (b) low-cost technologies; (c) financing mechanisms; (d) services and content creation; (e) citizen-government interface; (f) empowerment of weak groups and building social capital; and (g) coexistence of virtual and real communities.

Participants in the e-workshop included policymakers, practitioners, and academics working in the area of ICTs and development. The e-workshop provided a valuable opportunity for those interested in ICT-related development to discuss the potentials and impacts of technology, and actively exchange ideas and experiences. It has raised a number of important points on identifying and addressing key issues, problems, and strategies in reaching the most vulnerable groups. The topics that attracted the highest levels of interest included "services and content creation" and "citizen-government interface". The workshop is an ongoing initiative and will continue to bring together a network of professionals committed to the potential of ICTs in development.

This initiative provides useful information including links to organizations working with ICTs, a range of case study examples, and a full reading list on ICTs and development activities (See [www.uncrd.or.jp/ict/eworkspace](http://www.uncrd.or.jp/ict/eworkspace)).

The e-workshop generated: (a) cases, discussion points, and the summaries of the discussions in each forum; (b) training materials which have been formulated from the proceedings and secondary material from the UNCRD project that are disseminated in electronic formats through the UNCRD homepage; and (c) an electronic network created during the e-workshop.

Recommendations for future activities related to ICTs and development include the forging of links between the field projects in India using ICTs for rural development with agencies in other countries in South Asia undertaking similar initiatives for exchange of experiences and for training activities; conducting further research on e-government and the implications on changes in efficiency, accountability, and opportunities for participatory planning with the community; and development of online training courses on uses of ICTs for development.

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## FUTURE ACTIVITIES

Up to 2002-2003, the human security group made substantial progress in gaining practical understanding on integrating human security into national agendas for poverty alleviation and local development strategies in Cambodia and Lao PDR. Training materials were prepared on several topics related to human security for country-specific training activities as well as for the ITC 31.

For the next phase, efforts should be made to further consolidate the integration of human security into national poverty eradication strat-



*Children at the Village Knowledge Centre,  
Pondicherry*

egies and build capacity for implementing strategies that address economic, environmental, social, and cultural threats to sustainable development. This will be done through enhanced South-South cooperation within and between subregions of Asia (Indochina, Southeast Asia, and South Asia), strengthening of online information- and experience-sharing as well as training, continued documentation of best practices, and in-depth studies on addressing the needs of vulnerable groups.

To achieve this, the following research is proposed:

- (1) Sustainable livelihood strategies and transfer of best practices within the Indochina region;
- (2) Training strategies for local development that are explicitly linked to the planning cycle and include participatory planning;
- (3) Understanding of short-, medium-, and long-term impacts of uses of ICTs for development with a focus on the weakest and most vulnerable groups; and
- (4) An improved understanding of the impacts and changes wrought by the introduction of e-government on the efficiency and accountability of local governments, and community development.

Training activities will include greater use of the case method, participatory planning methods, and the use of online training and sharing of information.