

# Transboundary Fish Trade in the Lower Mekong Basin: Impacts on Fisheries and Rural Employment in Cambodia, Lao PDR and Thailand

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# Background

- Fish stock & ecology of Lower Mekong Basin has been well documented [MRC & LARReC]
- Fish trade 9.3% of Cambodian GDP (IMF 2006), 13% of Lao PDR GDP (UNDP 2009).
- Fish trade culturally and economically important to the region
- Threats to LMB fisheries well-documented
- Bush 2004 reviewed impacts of policy on fish trade in Khong District, Lao PDR, but major changes have taken place since then and the study area was small

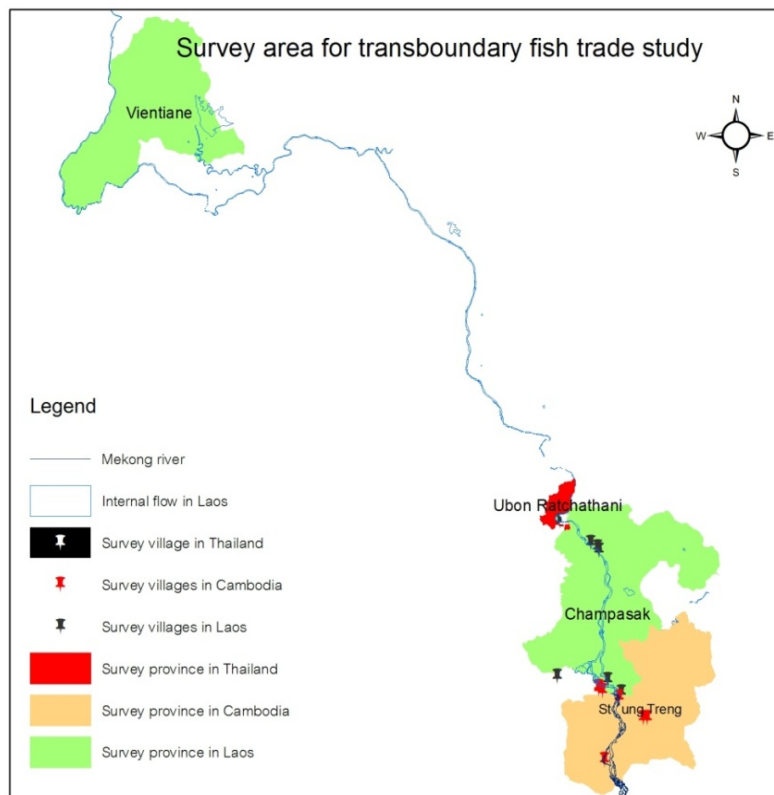


# Objectives

- 1. Describe the route and actors of the transboundary trade of fish between Thailand, Lao PDR, and Cambodia**
- 2. Identify the contribution to employment of the fish trade in the study area**
- 3. Give recommendations based on results**



# Study Area



Transboundary trade route from Stung Treng province, Cambodia to Champasak province and Vientiane district, Lao PDR and Ubon Ratchathani province, Thailand

One of three major routes of LMB fish out of Cambodia. The other 2 are larger, so the results of this study can be assumed to have an even more substantial impact.



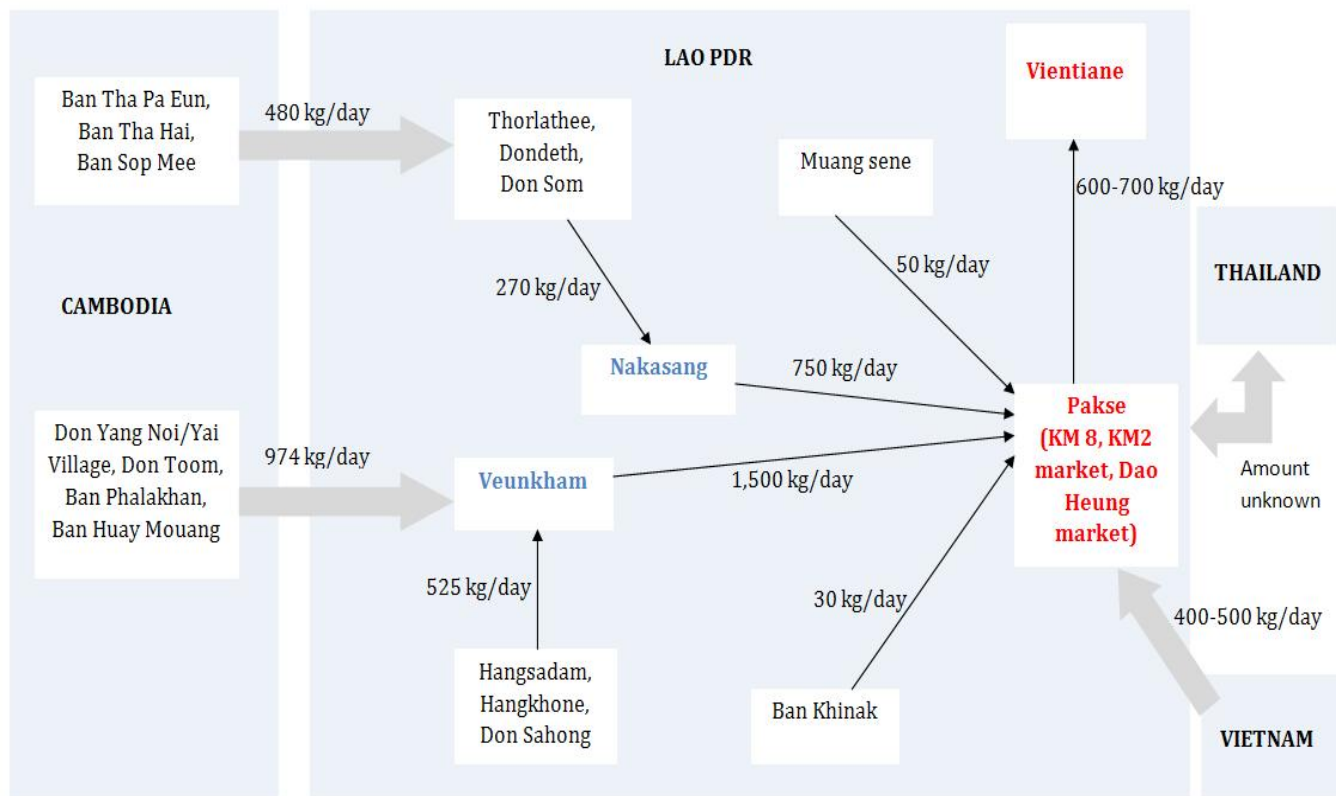
# Methods & Research Activities

- In Cambodia:
  - Interviewed 40 fishermen, 9 farmers, 14 traders, 42 consumers with structured questionnaires
  - Key informant interviews with 6 local, regional, and national officials
  - Focus group discussions with 30 fishers and 10 consumers
- In Lao PDR:
  - Interviewed 40 fishermen with structured questionnaires
  - Key informant interviews with 4 local, regional, and national officials
  - Focus group discussions with 64 fishermen in 4 group interviews, as well as 5 farmers, 10 traders, 40 consumers and 4 key informants
- In Thailand:
  - In-depth interviews to assess informal trade with restaurant owners, traders, and fishers
- Desk study: policy, law and regulation review
- Vulnerabilities Analysis



# Key Results

Summary of the average quantity of fish sold per day over the past year (mid 2011-mid 2012)



- Size of trade from Cambodia to Lao has increased from 86,000 kg/yr to 530,000 kg/yr since 2001 baseline established by Phonvisay & Bush
- Transboundary trade to Thailand along this route has ceased, replaced by Vientiane due to road improvements and growing demand in Vientiane.



# Key Results

- **20,221 people** (6,391 in Cambodia; 13,324 in Lao PDR; and 506 in Thailand) in the study area rely on the fish trade for a substantial portion of their income.
- Cambodia: 23% of fishers' household income comes from sale of fish in study area
- Lao PDR: 70% of fishers' household income comes from sale of fish in study area
- Thailand: 50-100% of fishers' household income comes from sale of fish in study area



# Key Results

- Vulnerabilities Analysis:
  - Lack of financial capital
  - Low education
  - Lack of other employment opportunities
  - When people need more income they tend to leave villages





# Key Results

- Desk study review of fisheries laws in the three countries found:
  - Lack of awareness of the law for actors
  - Fisheries laws incomplete, not strongly enforced (e.g. no implementation decree in Lao PDR)
  - No transboundary cooperation on regulation of fish trade
    - Leads to administrative difficulties, trade inefficiencies, unfair practices, and lack of coordinated response to environmental threats



# Key Results

## Analysis of Perceptions:

- Fishers and fish farmers concerned over perceived and potential environmental changes, feel that they are not included in decision-making processes



# Recommendations

- Primary regional recommendations:
  - Increased transboundary cooperation and communication is needed
  - Strengthen & simplify law enforcement
  - Create national fisher & fish trader associations
  - Include the income generated from the fish trade in the cost-benefit analysis of development projects on the river
- Additional national recommendations made for each country



# Lessons Learnt & Suggestions for Further Research



- Short time frame was limiting
- Further research could be done:
  - to take larger, more representative sample
  - to include indirect beneficiaries of the trade such as ice merchants, truck drivers, mechanics, etc.
  - on the other two trade routes from C to T & L

# Thank you

