

## Hydropower & energy research theme leader report

### Background

This narrative report and accompanying financial report covers the one-year period 1 August 2007–31 July 2008: this period follows my completion of an M-POWER fellowship (based at IUCN in Bangkok). During this past year, I also served as a postdoctoral research fellow position based at CMU-USER. Prior to August 2007, hydropower had been a high-profile topic within M-POWER, but no one had actually served as a Research Theme Leader (RTL).

### 1 Achievements

During this period I lead, contributed to, and scoped a set of energy and hydropower activities which together helped give substance to the Hydropower and energy group, and helped represent it publicly. During this period, the Hydropower Theme Leader grant provided an important source of supplemental income.. All activities and publications should be classified as ‘offered to M-POWER,’ in the sense that M-POWER is my primary research network affiliation. Activities are relevant to the following M-POWER themes: Hydropower & energy; Policy; Dialogue.

*\* below indicates activity or travel funded from the Hydropower RTL budget*

#### 1.1 Activities which I led or initiated

(1) Institutional and political analysis of Thailand’s power development planning process, and quantitative demonstration of integrated electricity planning (Foran 2008a). This work builds on my 2006–07 M-POWER Fellowship, and significant extends previous work by M-POWER partner organization Palang Thai (see Greacen and Footner 2006).

\* (2) Began to promote M-POWER as a research network with interest and capacity in renewable energy (discussions with & concept note submitted to Finnish government; see Foran 2008d)

\* (3) Participation in ADB’s GMS Energy Strategy scoping and implementation (Foran 2008e)

(4) A preliminary research project on politics of grassroots resistance to power plants in Thailand (see Na Nan, 2008)

\* (5) Application to serve as a member of Thailand’s first Energy Regulatory Committee

#### 1.2 Activities to which I contributed

**Book Project:** I joined ‘Contesting waterscapes in the Mekong Region’ (M-POWER book 2) as a co-editor. Responsible for editing chapters on hydropower. Also contributed to chapter on politics of knowledge, and wrote another on Pak Mun.

**Fund-raising proposals & concept notes:** I contributed to the solicitation, scoping, writing, revision, and delivery of the following projects.

(1) ‘Improving Mekong Hydropower Investment,’ funded by blue moon fund

(2) Research design & methods training for hydropower-related researchers (see Dore et al. 2008)

(3) ‘Improving Mekong Water Allocation’ (CPWF PN67): contributed to refinements during inception phase

#### Meetings & field trips at which I presented &/or represented M-POWER:

- (1) Australian Mekong Resource Centre Conference, Sydney, August 2007
- (2) Policy Advocacy Meeting with AusAID, Canberra, August 2007 (Foran 2007a)
- \* (3) 1<sup>st</sup> Thai-Lao Sustainable Hydropower Forum, Bangkok, Nov 2007 (Foran 2007b)
- \* (4) Thailand Research Fund field trip to Vientiane and Nam Theun 2 dam sites, 20–24 Dec 2007
- (5) Oxfam Mekong River Basin Management Program scoping, Phnom Penh, Nov 2007
- (6) Free University Berlin, 29 Nov 2007 ~ “Energy futures for developing Asia: towards an action research agenda,” 60 min. lecture to MA students
- \* (7) Thailand Environment Institute brainstorming meeting on energy efficiency 8 Feb 2008, Bangkok
- (8) Berlin BC, Feb 2008 ~ talk on energy regulation for sustainability (Foran et al. 2008)
- (9) International workshop on sustainability experiments, Chiang Mai, Jan 2008 (Foran 2008b)
- (10) World Resources Institute, Singapore, Feb 2008 ~ talk on energy regulation for sustainability (Foran 2008c)
- (11) MRC Basin Development Plan team consultation with M-POWER, Chiang Mai, July 2008

### **1.3 Activities which the group & I scoped**

\*Facilitated discussion with International Rivers, Greenpeace & Palang Thai about possible launching a regional energy modeling study aimed at identifying & promoting sustainable energy

Discussion with International Rivers and Chula-MAIDS about hosting a new M-POWER Research Fellow: secured host & helped applicant complete application.

## **2 Publications**

### **Reports**

Foran, T. 2008a. *Kan wikroh krabuan kan wan phaen fai fa khong prathet thai lae sathit kan wang phaen baep buranakan* [Analysis of Thailand's electricity planning process and demonstration of integrated electricity planning]. USER Working Paper 2008-WP-xx. Chiang Mai: Unit for Social and Environmental Research, Chiang Mai University.

Foran T, Lebel L. 2007. Informed and fair? Water and trade futures in the border regions of mainland Southeast Asia. Report from an M-POWER Dialogue workshop. USER Working Paper WP-2007-14. Unit for Social and Environmental Research, Chiang Mai University: Chiang Mai. (Draft for public comment). <http://www.mpowernet.org/mweb.php?pg=81>

### **Conference Papers**

Foran, T. 2008b. Advocacy pathways towards decision making in Thailand. Presented at *The role of experiments in sustainability transitions in Asia*. International workshop. Unit for Social and Environmental Research, Chiang Mai University, and International Human Dimensions Program on Global Environmental Change. 10–11 January 2008, Chiang Mai. USER Working Paper WP-2007-20. <http://www.sea-user.org/uweb.php?pg=5>

Foran, T., C.E. Greacen, C. Middleton. 2008. Sustainable energy futures for the Mekong Region. Paper presented at *Berlin Conference on the Human Dimensions of Global Environmental Challenge*. 21–23 February 2008, Freie Universität Berlin. <http://web.fu-berlin.de/ffu/akumwelt/bc2008/download.htm>

Foran, T. 2008c. Better financial regulation could make energy organizations more sustainable.

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USER Working Paper 2008-05. Presented at *Generating Dialogue. A Forum on Sustainable Energy, Good Governance, and Electricity Regulation*. Centre on Asia and Globalization, National University of Singapore. 16–18 March 2008 <http://www.sea-user.org/uweb.php?pg=5>

Lebel, L., Foran, T., Garden, P. & Manuta, J.B. 2008. Adaptation to Climate Change and Social Justice: Challenges for Flood and Disaster Management in Thailand. Paper presented at *Berlin Conference on the Human Dimensions of Global Environmental Challenge*. <http://web.fuberlin.de/ffu/akumwelt/bc2008/download.htm>

### **Proposals & Concept Notes**

Foran, T. 2008d. Mekong Pro-Poor Energy Partnership. Concept Note submitted to Finnish Mekong Development Mission on behalf of M-POWER. February 2008. Chiang Mai: CMU-USER.

Dore, John, Tira Foran, Kate Lazarus, Louis Lebel, Francois Molle, and Joakim Ojendal. 2008. Mekong River Mainstream Dams and Diversions. Proposal to Sida-SENSA. May 2008. Chiang Mai: M-POWER.

### **Briefing papers & selected communications**

Foran, Tira. 2008e. GMS Energy Strategy Draft Final Report (May 2008), Comments from M-POWER. 14 June 2008. Memorandum from T. Foran to R. Nangia, ADB. Chiang Mai: CMU-USER.

Foran, T. 2007a. More sustainable energy futures for the Mekong Region: A brief for development donors. September 2007. Chiang Mai: CMU-USER.

Foran, Tira. 2007b. High Level Forum on Lao-Thai Partnership in Sustainable Hydropower Development. 7 November 2007. Small group discussion in Thai/Lao. Chaired by Prutichai Chonglertvanichkul (EGAT) and Dr. Somboune Manolom (LHSE). Notes by Tira Foran (Chiang Mai University, M-POWER).  
[URL:http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTTHAILAND/Resources/group2.pdf](http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTTHAILAND/Resources/group2.pdf) Washington, D.C.: World Bank.

Foran, Tira. 2007c. Master Plan Study of Hydropower Development in Cambodia. Presentation 13 November 2007 by Nippon Koei. Comments by Tira Foran for Oxfam America. 19 November 2007. Chiang Mai: CMU-USER.

Foran, Tira. 2007d. *Sanue praden lae kham tham samrap kan duen thang long pheun thi nai so po po lao* [Proposed issues and questions for Thailand Research Fund field trip to Lao PDR 21-21 December 2007].

## **3 Assessment**

(1) During the reporting period, Palang Thai moved from Bangkok to Washington state, USA. I also lost a very talented Research Assistant, Sakkarin Na Nan, who left CMU-USER for PhD studies. International Rivers became more active in M-POWER, and I had several very positive strategizing sessions with Carl Middleton.

(2) The relationship between the M-POWER Research Theme Leader ('RTL'), and the thematic Working Group deserves comment. The Working Group has no separate budget: it is a collection of self-propelled individuals, pursuing diverse agendas. Not all members receive M-POWER funding. Often there are gains from collective action. Often there are limitations, in terms of existing commitments individuals have to their own organizations. The RTL can identify potential gains from collective action. He/she can encourage and perhaps persuade but neither assume nor demand cooperation. Furthermore, the RTL does not directly supervise the activities of Research Fellows.

(3) Bearing in mind these limitations, I approached the RTL position as an opportunity to provide intellectual leadership and support to M-POWER. I persuaded M-POWER that the Theme should be renamed 'Hydropower & energy,' recognizing the need to put hydropower into an integrated electricity services planning framework. The activities in Section 1.1 above reflect my intentionally broader approach to improving hydropower governance.

## 4 Plans

For the six months (1 August 2008–31 January 2009) I propose to:

- endeavour to constructively shape the MRC's hydropower turn by engaging in its September 2008 consultation process, and follow-up;
- invest significant time in 'Improving Mekong Hydropower Investment,' which includes components on improving Thai energy regulation, as well as corporate social responsibility which will include a USA study tour;
- recruit one Research Fellow to work on hydropower and energy, whom I would ideally supervise;
- help strengthen regional capacity in integrated electricity planning (e.g., design & secure venue for a workshop on alternative power development plans, with participation of Palang Thai, VUSTA, TERRA, USAID, Government of Thailand etc);
- secure funding for a research methods training event for hydropower-related researchers;
- explore the value-added from a new independent modelling study (e.g., mean-variance portfolio analysis; see Awerbuch 2006; Foran 2008a, p98);

## 5 References

- Awerbuch, S. (2006) 'Portfolio-based electricity generation planning: policy implications for renewables and energy security', *Mitigation and Adaptation Strategies for Global Change* 11: 693-710
- Greacen and Footner (2006) "Decentralizing Thai Power: Towards a Sustainable Energy System." Bangkok: Greenpeace Southeast Asia.
- Na Nan, 2008. Presentation on field trip to Ratchaburi Province.