

WATR7200 – Capacity building and community development (2 units)

Integration module (Stream no.1: International development)

Course description

This elective module is led by Monash University's [Dr Bruce Missingham](#) and delivered as a ten-day [field trip in Thailand](#). Students spend time at a remote village cooperative in Northeast Thailand near the Mekong River, learning about community organising and environmental campaigning. They learn firsthand about water resources development, environmental change and social conflict, and discuss these issues with community members, NGO workers and government officers. Students live with local families and experience the realities of water in village life, learning about how it is bound up with culture, livelihoods and health.

Dr Missingham, the program's creator and leader, is an anthropologist with interests in community development and political ecology. He has a long-standing relationship with the communities and village cooperative on the Mun River in Thailand who will host the field studies experience.

This field trip will be partially subsidised by IWC.

Course introduction

This module explores water and development issues from the perspective of rural villagers living along the Mun River in Northeast Thailand.

The module introduces students to some current issues in water and community development through a 10 day field trip to a rural community and community-based organisation (CBO) in the Mekong region. Students travel to rural village communities in Khong Jiam in Northeast Thailand, where the Mun River meets the Mekong.

Students will be hosted by CBO Villagers' Committee for the Rehabilitation of Life and Livelihood on the Mun River and local villages along the river. This CBO has become well known in Thailand and around the world for its activities and campaigns against the human and ecological impacts of the Pak Mun Dam, constructed on the Mun River in 1994. It also played a leading role in the Assembly of the Poor, the first nation-wide grassroots movement to emerge in Thailand.

The Villagers' Committee represents about 2000 families from 50 villages along the lower Mun River and has very useful facilities at its headquarters, including offices and seminar rooms, a museum and meeting hall, an agricultural cooperative and community radio. Students learn from CBO leaders and NGO advisors about their experiences of mobilising people and resources, establishing and managing a highly effective community-based organisation, networking and campaigning to defend the sustainability of river ecology and local people's livelihoods.



While in Khong Jiam students are accommodated in 'homestays' with village families to gain an insight into their day-to-day lives and their perspectives on water, development and community development.

During the field trip, students learn about village water supply systems in the past and present, the role of water in local rice cultivation, villagers' relationships with the Mun River and fishing ecology and the cultural meanings of rivers and waterways. They learn some local skills from villagers such as rice harvesting, fish net and trap making, and helping their homestay hosts prepare a local meal and other household tasks.

They also learn from villagers through dialogue and discussion, participatory research methods such as PRA, visits to the river, the Pak Mun Dam, village walks, and learning by doing with villagers. They explore the sustainable livelihoods approach and asset-based community development, and critically examine the roles of the state and NGOs, to develop a critical understanding of local responses to dam development, environmental, economic and cultural change.

Finally, students link the local experience of the Mun River communities with development issues across the whole Mekong Region, and consider how local lessons about water and development can be related to development issues across the Mekong.

Assumed background

The following modules are pre-requisites for this course: WATR7000, WATR7001, WATR7002 and WATR7003.

Learning objectives

After successfully completing this course students should be able to:

- explain the key principles of community development and their application to water resources development and local capacity building;
- employ a range of techniques and methods for engaging groups in community research, planning, mobilisation, organisational development, networking and conflict management;
- facilitate community development workshops and group processes;
- plan community development programs and access appropriate information and technical resources;
- participate successfully in an integrated group project exploring detailed aspects of integrated water management;
- participate successfully in an individual project that integrates the knowledge obtained from the core classes;

- demonstrate the use of personal reflection and social learning to improve their ability, individually and as part of a team, to analyse and explore integrated solutions to practical water planning and management problems exemplified in case studies presented in this course;
- show how relevant theories, integration tools and decision support systems presented in this course can inform the analysis of case studies and help to identify practical, integrated solutions to water planning and management problems.

Teaching staff

Course Coordinator: [Dr Steven Pratt](#) (The University of Queensland)

Lead Lecturer: [Dr Bruce Missingham](#) (Monash University)

Problem-Based Learning (PBL) projects

Parallel PBL projects and field trips will run through the semester, comprising roughly 50% of the total contact time and assessment weight for the Integration semester. These enable students to develop skills that complement the content delivered in the four co-requisite courses: WATR7100, WATR7200, WATR7300, WATR7400. Please see other co-requisite course profiles to cross-reference.

The PBL stream for the Integration semester comprises an individual project and a group project conducted in multidisciplinary teams:

- **PBL3:** Development of an implementation plan for increasing water recycling in the lower Great Southern (Group project)
- **PBL4:** Critical assessment of Australian integrated water management learnings and application in a developing country context (Individual project)



Thai women cooking food for the villagers.