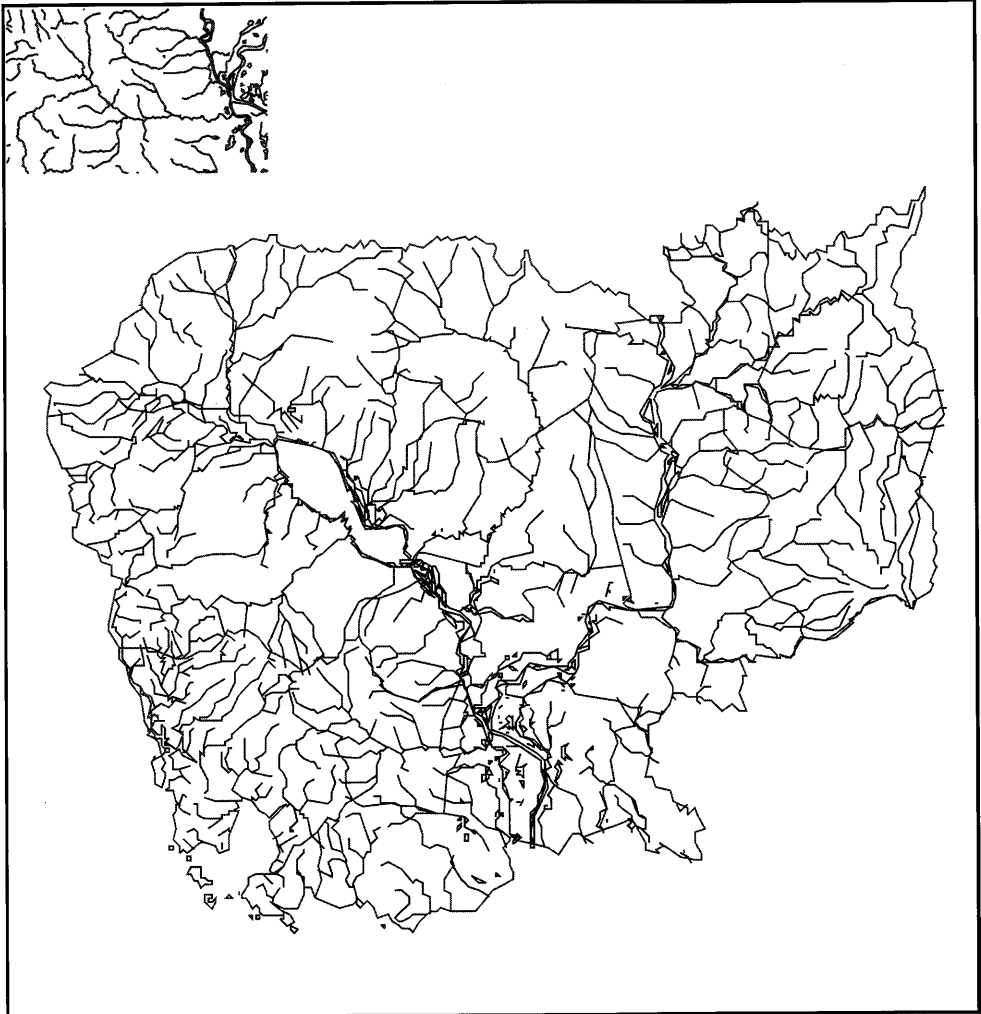


Cambodia

Cambodia-1: Prek Thnot



Introduction

Cambodia is located in Southeast Asia in the lower Mekong basin between latitudes 10- 15° N and longitudes 102 -108° E. It is bordered by Thailand in the west and north, Lao PDR in the north and Vietnam in the south and east. Covering an area of 181 035 km², Cambodia consists of three main topographical regions. In the south-west along the coast are the Cardamone and Elephant mountain chains with elevations ranging between 1 000 m and 1 800 m above sea level. The second region, the central plain, is dominated by Mekong River and the basin of the Great Lake. A large part of this low lying region is less than 10 m in elevation, and is inundated annually by the rise of the Mekong River. The third region, in the east, is a low plateau with a general elevation of between 100 m to 300 m. Cambodia experiences tropical monsoon climate with a wet season between May and November brought by the south-west monsoon, and a dry season between December and April. The mean annual rainfall varies from 1 200 mm near the Great Lake to more than 4 000 mm along the coastal area west of the Cardamone mountain range. The population in 1993 was about 3 million and the average population density then was 49 persons / km².

Prek Thnot River is located on the right bank of the lower Mekong. It joins the Bassac River, an arm of the Mekong. The annual rainfall varies from about 3 000 mm in the west of the catchment to about 1 250 mm in the east. The higher floods usually occur between July and October, although occurrences in other months of the year are also possible. Prek Thnot is the largest river, flowing through the important rice producing areas of Kompong Speu Province. The first stage (5 000 ha) of the multi-purpose Prek Thnot Project in Kompong Speu Province was started in the late 1960s. The project included construction of a dam to provide ultimately year-round irrigation facilities to some 70 000 ha of land, but with the start of the war, was left unfinished.

Historically, water policy has been perceived as one of the keys to the prosperity of Cambodia. At present, the agricultural policy of the Royal Government is formulated such that irrigation is expected to play an important role in agricultural development. A decision has been made by the Royal Government to construct a dam across Prek Thnot River and to rehabilitate irrigation systems in that area. Due to this reason, the Department of Agricultural Hydraulics and Hydro-meteorology decided to select the Prek Thnot River as the first river for inclusion in the River Catalogue.

Acknowledgments

The establishment of the River Catalogue Project was supported by the UNESCO Office in Cambodia and the UNESCO Regional Office in Jakarta and physically executed by the following persons:

Mr. Veng Sakhon, Vice Director of the Department of Agricultural Hydraulics and Hydro-meteorology, and
Mr. Suong Sophak (Hydrologist), Department of Agricultural Hydraulics and Hydro-meteorology.

We also express our sincere gratitude to Mr. Michael Sheinkman, GIS Specialist of CMAC and Dr. Neu Bonneau, Representative of UNEP-EAP/AP in Cambodia for providing software (Arc View) and national database of Cambodia which enables us to prepare the river catalogue.