



GREATER MEKONG SUBREGION
ATLAS
OF THE ENVIRONMENT

2nd Edition



The Atlas has six parts:

Part I provides brief geographical, economic, and social profiles of the countries that make up the subregion.

Part II presents the diversity of peoples of the subregion and their cultures, highlights the extent of their dependence on natural resources, and shows why sustaining the environment is important for poverty reduction.

Part III discusses the state of the environment and natural resources—geology, river basins and wetlands, seas and coasts, forests, fauna and flora, and the conservation of biodiversity in protected areas.

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The spelling of place names in this atlas generally follows ADB usage.

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■ **This page:** Evening sky, central Annamite Mountains, Viet Nam.

Front cover: *upper left:* Indochinese tiger; *lower left:* Floating Market, Mekong Delta, Viet Nam; *right top to bottom:* Li River, Guilin, Guangxi, PRC; Woman tending rice field, Yunnan, PRC; Temple detail, Luangprabang, Lao PDR; Temples of Bagan, Myanmar; Flower of red torch ginger.

Inside flap: *upper:* Nanning, capital city of Guangxi, PRC; *lower:* Women vegetable traders in Bagan, Myanmar

Back cover: Kaeng Krachan National Park, Thailand.

Inside flap: *upper:* School children, Lao PDR; *lower:* Red Lacewing butterfly.

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Foreword

In 1992, Cambodia, the People's Republic of China, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Thailand, and Viet Nam established the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) Economic Cooperation Program with the aim of strengthening economic linkages between them and to foster the achievement of common policy goals. When the program began, protecting the environment was a high priority.

Twenty years later, celebrating the unique culture, biodiversity, and rich environmental heritage of one of the fastest developing areas of the world, the subject of the second edition of this Atlas has become more important than ever: how to improve the livelihood of the subregion's people while maintaining its ecosystems and the services they provide for a sustainable future.

Progress in the Greater Mekong Subregion over the last two decades is reflected in improvements in infrastructure connectivity, promotion of trade and investment, stimulation of economic growth, and reduction of poverty. However, this progress has not been without adverse impacts on the environment. The GMS is poised to grow at 7.5% annually, doubling its economic output by 2020. However, increasing resource constraints, in particular finite land and water resources, suggest that innovative ways of achieving higher resource efficiency will be needed to support future development. In particular, integrating the management of energy, water, and agriculture systems will be essential in the GMS to move to more sustainable, greener paths of development.

In the 20th anniversary year of the GMS, this second edition of the atlas illustrates the exquisite beauty, bounty, and diversity of the subregion's natural environment, the tremendous progress made by the GMS countries over the past decades, and the need to address the increasing risks that they face. We hope that the atlas will be useful in providing an introduction and sound overview to those who are new to the subregion, and a benchmark of the progress made so far and the challenges that lie ahead for those who live and work there, and shape the destiny of the subregion in their daily lives.

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