

2nd Regional Stakeholder Forum on Basin Development Plan
15-16 October 2009
Chiang Rai, Thailand



2nd Regional Forum on BDP

Key Messages of Day 1

1. Reconfirmed commitment of MRC member countries to the shared goal for sustainable and equitable water resources development and to the joint basin planning process. But these require

- Strengthened commitment of riparian countries to take basin concerns into national planning and decision making, and
- A good understanding of what would be sustainable and the distributional affects of developments
- A transparent process to capture new opportunities and address risks

Commitment of China to protect the Basin environment and to work together.

2. The hydrological regime of the Mekong mainstream can be considered to be very close to its natural state. But this situation will change with the current development trends and plans in the region that

- Bring opportunities: possible increase of dry season flow with redistribution of water by hydropower, increasingly dominating private investments
- But also challenges of impacts on the biodiversity, the valuable Mekong fisheries and risks of unsustainable water resources development.

3. This situation calls for IWRM principles and practices:

- Development of basin perspective
- Further develop knowledge on Mekong fisheries:
 - Existing technology for fish passages cannot cope with high tonnage of fish and species diversity
 - Development of mitigation measures takes many years and money
 - Reservoir fish cannot compensate the losses
- Understand the scope for integrated electricity planning vs market driven approach

3. This situation calls for IWRM principles and practices:

- Options to revitalize irrigation that is important to meet future food demand. We heard diverse opinions i.e., diversion vs. storage and non-structural measures, big vs. small scale for NE Thailand
- Holistic approach to analyse factors driving land use change (people vs. national policy), and implications on water resources. Address the issue of access to land
- The vital importance of public participation in all planning and decision making
- Innovation financing mechanism

4. Climate change is a development issue. CC and adaptation should be addressed as part of the development process . There are predicted impacts of sea level rise on the Viet Nam Mekong Delta and observed impacts of flow regime changes on livelihoods throughout the Basin.

It is important to consider adaptation in basin wide context , involving both causing and affected countries and upstream and downstream countries.

China is willing to cooperate to address CC in the region. At the same time, all MRC countries should cooperate with other regions to address the issue

5. Critical questions on the assessment of basin-wide development scenarios:

- Whether and how stakeholders have been involved in defining the scenarios and assessment?
- How the defined scenarios have included dynamics in the region? Can SEA include conflict prevention and resolution
- The linkage between economic, social and environment assessments and how they will be integrated?
- How to use and present results to decision making and to the public?

6. Hydrological assessment:

- There is potential increase of dry season flow. However, the absolute figure seems high
- Methodology to address sediment changes?
- How big are the uncertainties of Upper Mekong developments and how sensitive they are for LMB?
- Operation rule curve should represent daily pattern, not only monthly. For this the model has been upgraded but no data
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- Agreement to exchange information with China on the assessment and mission joined next month

6. Economic assessment:

- It is important to determine how far the assessment will go with cause and effect chain i.e. mainstream dams would make more power, more mines that mean more pollution and health problems.
- Quantification is necessary but fisheries assessment could not compete with the economic benefits given many unquantifiable issues in fisheries.
- Innovative financial mechanisms and benefit sharing need to be developed at local and transboundary levels

6. Environment assessment:

- Need to include issues like blasting of rocks to capture the navigation opportunities and linkage with fisheries habitat
- More detailed biodiversity assessment is necessary to ensure that developments do not cause avoidable species extinctions
- If it possible to consider one large SEA process for BDP (all key sectors)
- MRCS/BDP is not decision maker and have to work within constraint timeframe. There may not be enough time to do it in the best way

6. Social assessment:

- The overall objective of the assessment seems ambitious. It looks like poverty prevention objective. How successful example of poverty analysis as part of the planning can be used?
- Would the scope of the assessment limit to MRC mandate for water sector or beyond to look at broader issues of food security and poverty?
- Linkage with economic assessment i.e. for employment? How shifts in livelihoods over long period (20 years) can be captured?
- Baseline: should use both sources of data: from people and from official statistics. Prediction based on real information and regression would be good.
- What is the unit of analysis for vulnerability and resiliency? Nuclear family or wider social network i.e. family extension

6. Social assessment (continued):

- The nature of implications of water resource development: complex, dynamics, uncertain, contested. Assessment should look at rights, risks and accessibility
- Experience of some hydropower projects in Laos has shown that social impacts are complex and simple compensation would not work.
- The importance of including participatory assessment of water availability and options and agreement from affected communities

How have we addressed the expectations/concerns shared in Zero hour?

- Almost all issues raised have been addressed. More in-depth discussions today
- Answers to the question of “How to cooperate” will follow