



Mekong River Commission Basin Development Plan Programme

Stakeholder Participation and Communication Plan in the LMB Basin Development Planning – *the ambitions and lessons learnt*

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Outline

1. Background of MRC *Stakeholder Participation*
2. Why ***Stakeholder Participation*** is vital for MRC and BDP process?
3. Development of Stakeholder Participation and Communication Plan (SPCP) – and National Stakeholder Analysis
4. What is the substance of these two documents? (Opportunities for stakeholder engagement)
5. Implementation to date and lessons learned
6. What is next?



I. Background of MRC *Stakeholder Participation*

- Since 1999 – MRC has defined general approaches in stakeholder engagement
- In 2001, MRC invited partner regional civil society organizations to participate as observers in their annual council meetings
- MRC Public Participation Strategy was finalized followed by an action plan for public participation in 2004
- In 2005, a short booklet “Public Participation in the Lower Mekong Basin” was released to raise awareness of the work of the MRC and its programmes
- Continuity of community based and field projects from MRC programmes i.e. Fisheries and Environment



I. MRC Stakeholder Participation - *Lessons Learnt*

- Those documents were used only to conceptually promote *Stakeholder Participation* of MRC
- Understanding of roles and responsibilities among actors within the MRC's communities was still largely unclear
- Lack of critical analysis of MRC's available capacity, needs of MRC to stakeholders - and vice versa, stakeholders to the MRC
- Medium and long term approaches and mechanism for meaningful *Stakeholder Participation* was missing



I. MRC Stakeholder Participation – *Lessons Learnt (cont'd)*

- The main area of MRC's work was rather highly technical and engineering and difficult to digest. This was not of interest of many stakeholders
- Lack of understanding in the nature of ***Stakeholder Participation***. It is rather the matter of consistent implementation, communication, process orientation and dedication of time and resources – Not only just a strategic paper
- ***Stakeholder Participation*** is not the means to an end
- Political, authority and realistic approaches were often used as a reason in order to avoid facing the challenges that came within ***Stakeholder Participation***
- Question of sincerity



II. Why *Stakeholder Participation* is vital for MRC and BDP?

- MRC belongs to the Member Countries and its people
- MRC needs to be relevant and respond to the needs of the people especially the poor - as its claim
- MRC needs to listen to stakeholders once there comes to important decision
- MRC could not do it alone!



III. BDP Stakeholder Participation and Communication Plan (SPCP) and National Stakeholder Analysis (1)

- The 1st comprehensive stakeholder participation plan and stakeholder analysis at MRC programme level.
- Developed with participation of member countries and a wide range of key stakeholders in the LMB
- Living documents which need to be reviewed and updated periodically
- Have been used as guidelines for the participatory basin development planning in the LMB



III. BDP Stakeholder Participation and Communication Plan (SPCP) and National Stakeholder Analysis (2)

- SPCP identifies groups of MRC's stakeholders, principles, mechanisms, work plan and system to monitor the participatory aspects of basin development planning
- National Stakeholder Analysis provides information about ***Stakeholder Participation*** opportunities in each of the Member Countries and recommendations

IV. Substance of the two documents - 1



- SPCP provides mechanisms and workplan for stakeholder participation in BDP process at sub-basin, national and regional levels
- SPCP is built around BDP planning cycle with focus on development of knowledge base, analysis of development scenarios, Basin Development Strategy together with Member Countries, national agencies, experts, partner organizations, NGOs
- Emphasises working groups, stakeholder consultation and involvement, peer reviews and public communication



IV. Substance of the two documents - 2

- The work plan does not center MRC as the main actor but rather a facilitator of stakeholders in the Basin
- Emphasize efforts to make the best use of the existing governmental and CSO processes and mechanisms
- Emphasize the main aims of MRC ***Stakeholder Participation*** which are trust, ownership and capacity building, and most importantly, to influence decision making



IV. Substance of the two documents – Discussion issues

- Stakeholder participation opportunities in each of the Country Members? How ambitious MRC should wish for?
- Perception of stakeholders/CSOs of the MRC
- Perception of the MRC of the CSOs/stakeholders
- Institutional change Willing-Able-Allow . Where is MRC in the journey?



IV. Substance of the two documents – Recommendations from Stakeholder Analysis

- Stakeholder participation requires skills, experience, and manpower
- Critical, self-reflective and sincerity
- Largely an issue for the MRC. Lack of practical experience of MRC staff at the local level
- MRC staff's knowledge and familiarity with the key issues is limited – urgent need for capacity building
- Provide better incentives and enabling environment for MRC staff in promoting stakeholder participation
- Eagerly engage with CSOs and research institutes in different parts of the region in order to help the MRC identify and reach the poor and marginalized groups



IV. Implementation to date – What has been done?

- Functional national and regional technical working groups for participatory development of knowledge base
- Forums at sub-basin, national and regional levels i.e. 3S, Mekong Delta, SEA national/CSO consultations and regional consultations/forums
- Peer reviews of documents, partnership building with national agencies, research institutions, CSOs and developers
- Proactive communications through website, information sharing and personal visits



IV. Implementation to date – Lessons learned

- Reconfirm the valid concerns of stakeholders on key issues: the future plan and impacts of hydropower development, mining, access to information and poverty reduction, etc
- Stakeholders still somewhat do not understand the role of the MRC and basin development planning, and its expected outcomes
- MRC BDP still needs to develop better understanding of the needs, diversity and characteristics of stakeholders



IV. Implementation to date – Lessons learned (2)

- More time and resources for MRC and countries to better prepare the national and lower level activities and forums i.e. preparation of sub-basin profiles and IWRM strategies, national and transboundary consultations
- Openness for discussion on sensitive issues and maintain the genuine cooperation atmosphere among stakeholders
- More emphasis on social learning and learning-by-doing process in the facilitation of forums that will provide fair and equal opportunities to all type of stakeholders to voice their concerns

IV. Implementation to date – Lessons learned (3)



- It is essential that stakeholders see the genuine benefits and thus cooperate, provide constructive inputs and motivate the MRC and its Member Countries to understand their interests and concerns
- Efforts by MRC Member Countries to constructively engage stakeholders in their national planning process is the key for MRC BDP stakeholder participation efforts
- MRC stakeholder participation in basin development planning is only one option to influence decision making in water resources development. Synergy with all other actors is crucial

IV. Implementation to date – Lessons learned (4)

- So far, many stakeholder groups are supportive and cooperative for the benefits of genuine cooperation and sustainable development
- In contrast, some stakeholder groups still would like to stand outside the MRC and national processes, and are still not ready for the formal system and bureaucracy



V. What is next?

- BDP still needs to determine the level of ambitions and prove its willingness and efforts for stakeholder participation
- Continue outreaching stakeholder groups especially the poor and marginalized who highly depend on the natural resources
- Continue promoting the benefits and relevance of the MRC, basin development planning process and involve stakeholders in its diverse activities
- And vice versa, involve itself in other mechanisms outside the MRC's community



V. What is next?

Your comments and suggestions?



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Thank you