

Mid-term Review of the MRC Strategic Plan 2006 - 2010

Appendix G

Mid-term Review, Country Paper Cambodia

APPENDIX G



Cambodia National Mekong Committee

**Country Paper
On the Mid-Term Review of the Implementation of the
Mekong River Commission Strategic Plan 2006-2010**

Prepared for the Cambodia National Mekong Committee

By

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Under the Mekong River Commission Terms of Reference
for Facilitator and Resource Persons
for the Mid-Term Review of the Implementation of the MRC Strategic Plan 2006-2010

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

- ACMECS : Ayeyawadi-Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy
- ADB : Asian Development Bank
- AMBDC : ASEAN-Mekong Basin Development Cooperation
- ASEAN : Association of South East Asian Nations
- CCCO : Climate Change Office of Cambodia
- CDM : Clean Development Mechanism
- CLMV : Cambodia-Laos-Myanmar-Vietnam
- CNMC : Cambodia National Mekong Committee
- BDP : Basin Development Program
- DSF : Decision Support Framework
- DWRAM : Department for Water Resources and Meteorology
- ECSHD : Environmental Considerations for Sustainable Hydropower Development
- EIA : Environmental Impact Assessment
- EP : Environment Program
- FMMP : Flood Mitigation and Management Program
- FP : Fishery Program
- GEF : Global Environmental Facility
- GHG : Green House Gases
- GMS : Greater Mekong Sub-region
- GWP : Global Water Partnership
- ICBP : Integrated Capacity Building Programme
- IKMP : Information and Knowledge Management Programme
- IWRM : Integrated Water Resources Management
- JRP : Junior Riparian Professional
- LMB : Lower Mekong Basin
- LMO : Living Modified Organism
- LNMC : Laos National Mekong Committee
- MAB : Men and Biosphere
- MAFF : Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
- MDG : Millennium Development Goals
- MIME : Ministry of Industry, Mine and Energy
- MIS : Management Information System
- MOC : Ministry of Commerce
- MOE : Ministry of Environment
- MOFA-IC : Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation
- MOH : Ministry of Health
- MOWRAM : Ministry of Water Resources and Meteorology
- MOU : Memorandum of Understanding
- MRB : Mekong River Basin
- MRC : Mekong River Commission

- MRC-IS : MRC Information System
- MRC JC : Mekong River Commission Joint Committee
- MRCS : Mekong River Commission Secretariat
- NAP : Navigation Programme
- NGO : Non-Governmental Organization
- NMCs : National Mekong Committees
- NCDM : National Committee on Disaster Management
- PMFM : Procedures for the Maintenance of Flows on the Mainstream
- PWQ : Procedures for Water Quality
- PIP : Project Implementation Plan
- RFMMC : Regional Flood Management and Mitigation Center
- RGC : Royal Government of Cambodia
- SIDA : Swedish International Development Agency
- TNMC : Thailand National Mekong Committee
- TSD : Technical Support Division
- UN : United Nations
- UNDP : United Nations Development Programmer
- UNESCO : United Nations for Economic, Social & Cultural Organization
- UNFCCC : United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
- VNMC : Vietnam National Mekong Committee
- WMO : World Meteorology Organization
- WTO : World Trade Organization
- WUP : Water Utilization Program

1- Introduction

That the Mekong cooperation dates back to 1957, when the Committee for Coordination of the Lower Mekong Basin (the Mekong Committee) was established. Over the period 1978 to 1995, it was known as the Interim Mekong Committee, during which Cambodia was in war and had no possibility to join the committee. The Mekong River Commission (MRC) was established, in its present form, in April 1995 by the governments of Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Vietnam, under the “Agreement on the Cooperation for the Sustainable Development of the Mekong River Basin”. It then became an important regional river basin organization of the Lower Mekong Basin (LMB). The MRC principle role is to coordinate and promote “cooperation in all fields of sustainable development, utilization, management and conservation of the water and related resources of the Basin”. The MRC is administered by three permanent bodies: the Council, the Joint Committee and the Secretariat.

Over one decade of its existence, the MRC turned into a stronger river basin organization, building on a foundation of half a century of knowledge and experiences on water and related resources over the LMB. To accommodate with the national planning of the member countries, its first five years Strategic Plan 1999-2003 was readjusted. The second MRC Strategic Plan was consequently adopted starting from 2001 to 2005. Building on the progress achieved in the two previous planning cycles, the MRC member countries, with the support from the donor community, believed that it is the right time for the MRC to more focus on tangible activities which may benefit to the rural people and support the poverty alleviation policy of the governments. Under the overall goal “more effective use of the Mekong’s water and related resources to alleviate poverty while protecting the environment, the Strategic plan for 2006-2010 sets forth four goals, which is now at its mid-term and requires a mid-term review of its implementation.

The 27th Meeting of the MRC Joint Committee agreed on the need for a mid-term review of the Strategic Plan 2006-2010, recommending that “..... *the alignment of the MRC programmes to the Strategic Plan could be reviewed together with recommendations of elements of the work programme that may be considered marginal to the direction of the Strategic Plan. Similarly, aspects not covered by the reporting of the Secretariat, such as achievements of water-related Millennium Development Goals in the Lower Mekong Basin, could be considered.*” Following these recommendations, this national paper will provide an overall assessment from one of the four MRC member countries on its present state of implementation at its mid-term against the goals, objectives and strategic outputs set forth in the Plan.

This national paper is prepared under the Terms of Reference (ToR) for Facilitator and Resources Persons for the Mid-term Review of the Implementation of the MRC Strategic Plan 2006-2010 (see **Annex 1**). Similar activities are also carried out in other MRC member countries. Based on the said ToR, a common outline for the national paper (see **Annex 2**) was discussed and agreed upon by the four riparian national resource persons and the international facilitator at a meeting on 1st September 2008 at the MRC Secretariat in Vientiane, Lao PDR. Furthermore, as suggested in the ToR, they may also find the assessment of the implementation of the Plan and the alignment of the MRC programmes, as well as the MRC’s orientation towards the UN Millennium Development Goals. Country’s view on prioritization of the remaining period of the Strategic Plan would as well be come across indicating any urgent concerns by the country over issues that are currently dealt with in the MRC framework. Before concluding the paper, one chapter will talk about preparation of the next

Strategic Plan 2011-2015. As suggested in the draft country paper outlines, the list of issues was prepared and appears in **Annex 4**.

2- Process for the Review

The Strategic Plan is an ongoing process of setting goals and policies and plans to be achieved within a specified time frame. The MRC Strategic Plan was prepared with the close involvement of each NMC, including the Council and the Joint Committee (JC) members, relevant line agencies, bilateral and multilateral partners, and other stakeholders through a series of meetings and national workshops. His Excellency Mr. Sin Niny, Vice-Chairman of the CNMC, Member of the MRC JC for Cambodia and Chairman of the MRC JC for 2006-2007, expressed in his opening address, at the 24th MRC JC Meeting in August 2006 in Vientiane, that to ensure the reflection of the joint view of the MRC member States and donors and Stakeholders, the Strategic Plan for 2006-2010, which was endorsed by the 13th MRC Council Meeting, was also shared and consulted at the informal Donor Consultative Meeting, the Mekong Region Water Dialogues and other national consultation meetings before its submission for endorsement¹.

At national level, as the national coordinator within the framework of the MRC cooperation, the Cambodia National Mekong Committee (CNMC) wished to organize the national consultations, with the financial support from the MRC Secretariat (MRCS), to discuss and review the Strategic Plan 2006-2010 at its mid-term of implementation, inviting representatives of line agencies, stakeholders, and all concerned units within the CNMC. Due to time constraint, many national holidays during this period of the year, and the unavailability of the CNMC managers, the discussion/consultation process was unable to conduct. It was clearly understood that such process may also measure the results through a systematic feedback from concerned line agencies who are real implementers or stakeholders, aiming at increasing benefits and ownership of the member States, while at the same time maintain its strong relationship with the MRC and donors to sustain a steady support both technically and financially.

Direct and individual consultations were also arranged to get more advice and views from key CNMC managers, as well as head of relevant programme units. Literature review has been conducted to study the available documents, especially those provided by the MRCS, such as the 1995 Mekong Agreement, the MRC Strategic Plans, MRC Work Programmes, Independent Organization, Financial and Institution Review, etc Some information in relation to the practices, legal documents and government policies were also highlighted for a better understanding on Cambodia as basis for the assessment. It may also find Cambodia's foreign policies and practices in dealing with neighboring countries in terms of water and related resources management, as well as cooperation with some regional organizations in the field of water and related resources cooperation. The initial draft of the national paper was submitted to CNMC for consideration before revising it. Before sending the final national paper to the MRCS facilitator to further compile, the paper was reviewed and finalized by the CNMC managers.

A table of key findings on the MRC mid-term Strategic Outputs 2006 – 2010 was prepared as **Annex 3**. It is to note that one additional sub-heading was added under Chapter 4 aiming at providing addition information on government's policy/practice in relation to water resources management, both within national context and transboundary context. The role of the national coordinating institution, the Cambodia National Mekong Committee – CNMC was also highlighted. Moreover, the report stressed also on practices and lessons learnt in

¹ MRC, 2006, Minutes of the 24th Meeting of the MRC Joint Committee, MRC Secretariat, 29-30 August 2006, Vientiane, Lao PDR.

implementing the MOU between CNMC and VNMC, which contributing to the strengthening of cooperation to implement both bilateral relations and the 1995 Mekong Agreement.

3- Assessment of the Implementation of the MRC Strategic Plan

The CNMC Secretariat is a local and national coordinating body for MRC activities in Cambodia. At national level it coordinates with line agencies and stakeholders within the context of Cambodia. Also vital to the efficiency and effectiveness, in implementing all MRC activities, are the evolving relationship between the JC member, CNMC and relevant line agencies. The line agencies are the principle collectors of primary natural resources data, and implementers of MRC programmes and projects. During the early years of its existence, the operations and organization of the MRC were designed basically to cope with the different programmes and projects initiated by the Secretariat, the four member countries and occasionally by donors². It was then assented that those initiatives generally reflected the political and development agendas of members or donors countries, without a strong focus on common goals, or a shared vision for the Mekong River Basin (MRB).

Acknowledging that regional cooperation is extremely difficult in any context, the MRC member countries, including Cambodia, confirm their strong commitment to pursue concrete mechanisms for regional cooperation on the management of the water and related resources of the MRB. The MRC, however, has made enormous progress over the relatively short time since its existence. The approval of five sets of procedures and their relevant guidelines for water utilization as set forth by the MRC Council resolution of 1999 and required by the 1995 Agreement is just an example of significant successes achieved by the organization. It was also acknowledge that the greatest strength of the MRC is its knowledge base providing a trusted regional hub for information collection and knowledge generation to inform management decisions at all levels. The decision support tools and expertise, including the Decision Support Framework and the emerging Integrated Basin Flow Management (IBFM), are unique to the region, and critical to its strategic roles. The Basin Development Plan Phase 1 was successfully carried leading to its second phase which focuses more on tangible development plan.

Basin Development Plan

The four goals of the current Strategic Plan 2006-2010 were to support member States for more effective use of the Mekong's water and related resources to alleviate poverty reduction while protecting the environment. Among those, Goal 1 is to promote and support coordinated, sustainable and pro-poor development, which may very much reflect the objectives and principles of cooperation as states in Chapter 3 of the 95 Mekong Agreement. Furthermore, it has been acknowledged that over the next 20 years, the Mekong Basin will undergo great social, economic and environmental changes. Consequently, demands for food, water supply and energy will increase even more quickly, as a result of economic growth, industrialization and urbanization. For example, according to "Who's is Who in Cambodia 2008-2009"³, the population of Cambodia was estimated at around 14 million in 2006 (with the population growth rate of 1,78% estimated in 2006), compared to the official statistic⁴ 12,251,098 in 2002. Based on the national survey in March 2008, the official statistic of the population of Cambodia is 13.5 million up to 2008.

² MRC, 1998, Strategic Plan 1999-2003, MRC Secretariat, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

³ Narong S. Men, 2008, Who is Who in Cambodia, MBN International Co., Ltd., Phnom Penh, Cambodia

⁴ Council of Ministers, 2003, Significant Achievement made by the Royal Government of Cambodia from 1998 to 2002, Office of the Council of Ministers, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Poverty alleviation remains the main goal of water resources development in the MRC context. This also goes along with the Royal Government of Cambodia's (RCG) policies on poverty reduction. The Basin Development Plan (BDP) was designed to implement the 1995 Mekong Agreement, and support the MRC Vision of an "economically prosperous, socially just and environmentally sound Mekong River Basin", in line with the MRC mission "to promote and coordinate sustainable management and development of water and related resources for the countries". Derived from BDP Phase 1 finished in mid-2007, it was agreed that the BDP 2's objective is for the water resources of the MRB managed and developed in an integrated, sustainable, and equitable for the mutual benefit of the riparians".

Looking into the outputs and activities carried out by BDP, both during the final stage of BDP1 and the beginning of BDP2, it is clearly found out that the Strategic Plan was satisfactorily implemented, although some problems were met. Applying the principles of Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM), the MRC Strategic Plan 2006-2010 calls for a stronger integration of the various programmes within the Secretariat. Such integration requires increased communication and collaboration among the programmes. It was found that to support basin-wide planning, the most obvious level of integration and coordination occurred in the house, where the BDP uses acquired knowledge and services of the MRC programmes to build a basin-wide perspective of sustainable development options: developing a common understanding of development needs; crafting a planning framework and setting of procedures within which cumulative and trans-boundary aspects of individual projects can be assessed.

Coordination mechanisms are in place ensuring complementarities and synchronised delivery of contributions of MRC programmes to joint initiatives across sectors, for instance under the 'MRC climate change and adaptation' initiative or joint work relating to hydropower development. It was highlighted that the gaps in other sector knowledge are being addressed by the appropriate MRC programmes such as Flood Management and Mitigation Programme (FMMP), Fisheries Programme (FP) and Navigation Programme (NAP). The BDP will further support the improvement of the Decision Support Framework (DSF) and the Integrated Basin Flow Management (IBFM) process by Information and Knowledge Management Programme (IKMP) & Environmental Programme (EP), respectively. Hydropower & irrigation sector reviews have been undertaken to provide an updated understanding of the sector development dimension and information on significant projects.

In relation to IWRM strategy, several meetings were organized to discuss and agree on important technical directions for scenarios formulation and assessment, namely, the discussion paper on Approach and Overall Process to formulate and assess basin-wide development scenarios and BDP assessment framework. The rolling IWRM-based basin development is prepared in the context of the Mekong partnership programme aiming at promoting consensus among MRC Programmes, NMCs and national line agencies and other stakeholders on the purpose, scope and implementation modalities of the plan. The draft outline of the IWRM-based basin-wide strategy was discussed with the involvement of NMCs, national line agencies, MRC programmes. It is expected that the strategy would usefully guide the implementation of the IWRM principles and practices at the basin, national and sub-basin levels. Such strategy will be enhanced with the strategic directions for the long-term development of water and related resources in the LMB once the assessed development scenarios are available in 2009.

Water Utilization Programme (WUP)

The description of the Water Utilization Programme (WUP Start-up Project) was based on the first MRC Strategic Plan 1999-2003 resulting in current WUP. It was originally scheduled to end in 2006. Its development objective was “to establish effective mechanisms to improve water resources management for the economic and social development of the Mekong Basin in an environmentally sustainable manner (including reasonable and equitable water utilization by the countries of the Basin; protection of environment, aquatic life and the ecological balance of the Basin)”. The immediate objective was (1) to develop a computerized package of hydrological simulation modeling, knowledge base and analytical tools to serve as the technical basis for basin development planning and management; and (2) to develop procedures for water use and management.

The DSF, a computerized package of hydrological simulation modeling and analytical tools which were established and approved by the MRC member States, has been enhanced as suggested and widely used extensively within the MRC, MRCS (notably the BDP, IBFM, FMMP) and at national level as well with the intensive support of the TSD modeling team. In parallel, other activities relating to the DSF enhancement and modeling capacity building were also carried out by the team. DSF modeling and Knowledge Base enhancements has been realized. The application of DSF to actual eight case studies (each NMC identified two cases) was carried out in close cooperation with each NMC’s team with the support from the World Bank.

The seven-year WUP Start-up Project with clear milestones to be achieved produced five sets of Procedures for water utilization and inter-basin diversion as required by Article 5, 6 and 26. Due to some unfinished activities, the MRC JC approved to retain WUP Team Leader (WTL) until March 2008 subject to available funds, with a revised ToR to fit with new assignment focusing on coordination and facilitation for the project formulation, coordination and facilitation for Technical Review Group (TRG) to develop the Technical Guidelines to implement the Procedures for the Maintenance of Flows on the Mainstream (PMFM) and the Procedures for Water Quality (PWQ), making a plan to handover WUP activities to relevant MRC Programmes, making a plan to work on pending issues of approved Procedures, WUP Completion Report and Final Workshop. It seems that no clear activities to implement those two procedures were carried out as the WUP team leader resigned in early 2008.

The WB Supervision Mission, however, expressed satisfaction of over all progress of WUP activities, realizing that the process to develop Technical Guidelines to implement the PMFM and the PWQ need more time and provided strong support to WUP Team and NMCs activities. An Independent WUP Evaluation was carried out in May 2007, which concluded that WUP “...has been successful in meeting the legal requirements, commitments and expectations set out in key documents with one exception.” – the final adoption of the PWQ. The Evaluation Team also concluded “...that without a follow-up project, the achievements, outputs and long-term value of the WUP...will not be sustainable and have limited impact.”

Environmental Programme (EP)

The EP was assigned in the MRC Strategic Plan 2001-2005 as one of the three Core Programmes as it specifically addresses the key Articles of the 1995 Agreement and is central to MRC’s purpose, and was intended to remain with the MRC in the long term. The EP carried out studies and research, and built quality environmental, social and economic data and knowledge base for the Basin. In addition to their intrinsic social and scientific value, outputs from the environmental programme have contributed directly to WUP to formulate

the draft technical guidelines for implementation of the agreed procedures, and to sustainable development activities under the BDP to decide on development needs and priorities in terms of environmental and social bases.

For instant, a number of achievements should be noted. Several ongoing activities will be continued, such as the work under the Quality assurance/quality control (QA/QC) system for water quality sampling and analysis (will complete in 2009) and the technical support to an operational water quality monitoring network. Development of an ecological health monitoring (EHM) system has been completed. A number of annual technical reports and a synthesis report will be published and distributed in 2009. The social impact monitoring system will be implemented and further developed through fieldwork in early 2009. Vulnerability assessment in selected pilot sites in the member countries will be initiated during 2009.

During 2009 the IBFM Predictive Tool will be developed. The social assessment under IBFM will be closely linked to the development of a Social Impact Monitoring Vulnerability Assessment System. Project implementation of The Environmental Considerations for Sustainable Hydropower Development (ECSHD) is planned to start in 2009 and a set of comprehensive ECSHD will be put in place. The State of the Basin Report is planned in 2009. EP together with BDP, IKMP and other MRCS components will produce “the State of the Basin Report. A proposal on climate changed was prepared (will finalize in early 2009) aiming at formulating a detailed framework and project document for budgeted activities with clear milestones and indicative schedule of implementation. During 2009 work on Basin-wide Integrated Assessment on Impact and Adaptation to Climate Change will be initiated.

To manage both existing programmes and activities, the Environmental Programme filled a number of staff in the year 2008 providing good basis for further qualified work. In addition, the AusAID signed a Funding Arrangement with the MRCS providing a financial support for MRC Climate Change and Adaptation Initiative for the period of 2008-2012.

Information and Knowledge Management Programme (IKMP)

The IKMP was established aiming at building a solid foundation of data, information and knowledge products, systems and services that supports the goals of the Mekong River Commission. It facilitates access to and use of the data, information and decision support tools comprising the MRC-Information System (MRC-IS) which is necessary to promote and co-ordinate sustainable development of water and related resources in the Mekong Basin.

The IKMP is a newly established programmed. The programme document and the PIP were only approved by the Steering Committee in February 2008. Although a number of difficulties have been noted during the beginning, several achievements made. Designing data, information and knowledge products was partly done including data catalogue, metadata, geo-network. The National IKMP Units have been functioning with their work plan 2008. The hydro-meteorological data collected from Member Countries of up to 2005 are being processed. The CD-Rom Hydrological Yearbook for 2003-2004 was produced. The collection and supply of improved quality, quantity and timely hydro-meteorological information and maps to all programmes, forecasting, monitoring, strengthening and consolidation of the network and capacity involved is continuing.

The DSF has been extensively used in MRC programmes and activities, notably the BDP, the IBFM, and the FMMP with intensive support of the (TSD) Modeling Team. In parallel, other

activities relating to the DSF enhancement and modeling capacity building are also carried-out including upgrading the Isis dongle, developing a Reporting Tool Wizard, and DSF Online Support. Two projects have been implemented: namely (1) the Finish Funded Decision Support Services (FINDS) with national case studies developed a Tonle Sap Productivity Model, and (2) a model system for flood forecasting for Kok River Basin.

Technical cooperation with China under the Agreement on the Provision of Hydrological Information of Lancang/Mekong River in the Flood Season progressed well. The information provided under the Agreement is reliable for the timely flood forecasting operations of the MRC Secretariat. The present Agreement is now under consideration for renewal.

Integrated Capacity Building Programme (ICBP)

The ICBP was established to develop a comprehensive and long-term training programme that integrates the various MRC training activities, with the focus on cross-cutting knowledge areas, as well as related skills and competence. The main ICBP knowledge areas are IWRM, planning and management. In-depth, knowledge in thematic areas will not be the focus of ICBP as these are more specific and less cross-cutting issues and will be addressed through capacity building activities of respective programmes.

The Junior Riparian Professional (JRP) Project phase 1 (2002-2006), funded by SIDA and UNDP, has completed its activities in 2006. A new JRP phase 2 formulated 2006 and funded by Finnish Government (agreed in mid-2007) is expected to start in 2008. Gender sensitivity trainings in collaboration with NMCs and MRC capacity in gender responsiveness have been improved by organizing training activities of the national gender teams. Networking with gender activities and projects in other international organizations, agencies, and institutions was also undertaken.

Three significant problems within 2007 that ICBP encountered are: (i) Funding situation. Activities were limited because of the low level of funds available. (ii) Communication between ICBP and the other MRC programmes is not structured which makes it difficult for ICBP (and MRC) to maintain an overview of the on-going capacity building needs. It was expected that the comprehensive ICBP programme formulation to be conducted during 2008 would address this issue.

Flood Management and Mitigation Programme (FMMP)

Due to large floods of 2001 and 2002, which again caused loss of life and property, and devastated large areas in all the four riparian countries, the FMMP was established with its immediate objectives (1) To establish a regional FMM Centre in Phnom Penh; (2) To reduce vulnerability of society to floods; and to establish a management capacity for development and refinement of the implementation plan; (3) To enhance mediation and coordination capacity of the MRC in issues of non-compliance in flood management; (4) To strengthen competence in flood preparedness and flood mitigation at each management level; (5) To improve land use planning integrated into floodplain management and mitigation in the LMB.

The FMMP went through a preparatory period and the program gradually starts up its real/full implementation with some important achievements in the past three years. The MRC Regional Flood Management and Mitigation Center (RFMMC) in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, was inaugurated and Communication link between the MRCS and the RFMMC has been put into operation with the video conference facilities installed at RFMMC and MRCS. Two

institutional and technical reports on roadmap for improved short-term and medium-term flood forecasting describe the required overall and specific functionalities of the RFMMC providing a framework for improving the short and medium flood forecasting system. Hydrological Condition Report for the LMB for 2006-2007 was presented to the Twenty-fifth Meeting of the MRC Joint Committee, May 2007. A compilation of documents and materials reflecting the laws, regulations, agreements, and practices currently applied by the governments of the four MRC Member Countries as well as those practices of regional organizations other than the MRC such as ASEAN to address trans-boundary differences and disputes directly and indirectly related to natural resource management.

The problems encountered were (i) the delay of the RFMMC's road map due to the unavailability of the consultants resulting in the delay of the component 2 due to complex negotiation process with ADB on the TOR and modality of the project implementation; (ii) the delay of component 3 due to the complexity and sensitivity of the flood trans-boundary issues; and (iii) no river monitoring during 2006-2007 due to unavailability of the water level data at Ubon station. All these delays, however, have been solved successfully, namely (i) the implementation of component 2 started in late September 2007 with the launching workshop and followed by an inception phase; (ii) the regional consultation meeting on Component 3 document has been conducted on 14 September 2007. FMMP will work closely the Member Countries and MRCS management to finalize the documents and submit to JC members for approval; and (iii) the FMMP team has conducted a meeting with Thailand National Mekong Committee (TNMC) to discuss and find a solution. The meeting suggested that a long-term average of water level at Ubon station would be taken for flood forecasting and river monitoring purposes. Other delays were related to the OFDA project implementation in Lao PDR and Cambodia, the reason of which was already clearly stated in the previous parts and the delay of PIP approval due to an extensive consultation process with the concerned parties. In summary, all these problems, however, have been successfully addressed.

Navigation Programme

This programme is to “promote freedom of navigation on the Mekong River system” as stipulated in the 1995 Agreement which recognizes the member countries' common interest in facilitating river transport and increasing international trade. The Mekong River is an important transport route for goods and people in the basin. Inland river transport is possible on the whole Mekong River system and constitutes, in most areas, the only way of communication between remote villages. Co-operation and proper agreements between the riparian countries are required to ensure cross-border and safe passage in the Basin.

The NAP was designed with 5 different components, of which the first component will work on waterway and safety improvement designs and master plans. To meet this objective the Condition Surveys of Dangerous Areas for Navigation Improvement (a) between Luang Prabang and Pakse in Lao PDR and Thailand, and (b) from the Cambodia-Viet Nam border to Can Tho Port on the Mekong/Vam Nao/Bassac Rivers in Viet Nam were carried out. The field survey on Actual Condition Surveys of Dangerous Areas for Navigation Improvement between Phnom Penh Port and Kampong Cham in the Cambodia was started in April 2008. Feasibility Study on “Hydrodynamic and morphological impacts of channel dredging in Tonle Sap Lake” was completed in September 2007.

The activities to update and harmonize legal regime, consisting of legal and operational navigation agreements, to guarantee freedom of navigation progressed gradually. The negotiations between Cambodia and Viet Nam on establishing a legal framework for cross-

border navigation, with MRC's facilitation, have reached the final stage. Both parties are now making necessary consultations with their respective governments for finalizing and eventually signing the Agreement.

A comprehensive aids to navigation system composed of 56 buoys and 8 lead structures was put in place along the Mekong River between Phnom Penh Port and the Cambodia-Viet Nam border. Navigation is possible 24 hours a day now that lighted buoys and beacons are installed. Excellent and timely results were obtained thanks to the technical co-management of the contractor and the Phnom Penh Autonomous Port and Waterway Department of Ministry of Public Works and Transport in Cambodia.

The Management Information System (MIS), Phase I, for Phnom Penh Autonomous Port was put in place through a joint project between the Cambodia-Belgium Consultancy Fund, MRC and Phnom Penh Autonomous Port. The MIS maintains a database of goods movement into, through and out of the port and is used by all port departments and related agencies such as customs, shipping lines, freight forwarders, shipping agents, trucking companies and others. All aspects of the port's commercial operation, environment, safety and security will be enhanced through the implementation and operation of the MIS. The next step is MIS II focusing more on container tracking and software applications for billing and tariff management.

MRC and the People's Republic of China have reached a new level of cooperation in the field of Navigation in which the two parties agreed to jointly organize a series of seminars on Waterway Safety and Navigation Improvement. The preparation is now being made for the First Seminar which will be held in Jinghong in October 2008.

Fisheries Programme

It has been acknowledged that the Fisheries Programme Phase 2 which was initiated in January 2006, was built on the achievements of the first phase of the Programme, specifically in the areas of fisheries ecology; valuation of fisheries in the LMB; mitigation of the impacts of developments; fisheries management and governance; aquaculture of indigenous species; and communication of information to governments and planning agencies. With this, the development objective of the Fisheries Programme is Coordinated and sustainable development, utilization, management and conservation of the fisheries of the Mekong Basin.

A number of publication and documental films were produced and disseminated. Propagation techniques of at least two Mekong indigenous fish species will be defined and published. Biological synopses of nine indigenous Mekong fish species will be published, providing essential background for further development of aquaculture techniques for the species. Several important activities planned as part of the FP Phase 2 have not been able to be initiated because of the funding gap (the FP Phase 2 has funding to approximately 52% of the full budget). MRC continues to work to attract further donor support for the Fisheries Programme.

Other MRC Programmes

It is further found out that other MRC Programmes have progressed satisfactorily according to the planned outputs set out, especially in terms of activities related to their preparation stage for the newly established programmes. It seems that they have similar difficulties, the

funding support, such as Drought Management Programme, Hydropower Programme, and Tourism Program.

4. The alignment of the MRC Programmes

4.1. Cambodia as a member of the Mekong River Commission

The Cambodia National Mekong Committee (CNMC) was established by the Sub-decree No 10ANKR-BK dated 04 February 1999 of the RGC as national inter-ministerial institution directly managed under the RGC. The members of the CNMC are composed by nominated representatives from ten line ministries related to water resources management and development within the Mekong River basin context (i.e., Public Works and Transport; Water Resources and Meteorology; Environment; Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery; Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation; Industry, Mines and Energy; Planning; Land Management, Urbanization and Construction; Rural Development; and Tourism). In addition to these line agencies, aiming at smoothly implementing the MRC activities, the CNMC has further cooperate with other Ministries, such as Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Women's Affairs, and the National Committee for Disaster Management.

The CNMC has a mission to assist and advise the government in all matters relating to the formulation of water policy, strategy, management, preservation, investigation, planning, restoration and development of the water and other related natural resources of the Mekong River Basin within the whole country contributing to the sustainable development of national economy and infrastructure for the benefit of the country and people. The mandate and responsibilities of the CNMC are:

- to study and submit to the government on all matters relating to the planning and formulation of strategy for development, management and preservation of the Mekong River water and related resources;
- to coordinate and closely cooperate with other institutions concerned, including line agencies, provincial and municipal authorities in implementing all relevant decision of the government relating to the Mekong River; and
- to promote cooperation with other NMCs and donor community in the investigation, preservation, management and development of the Mekong water and related resources, in conformity with the principle of equitable and reasonable benefit for all member states of the MRC.

In practice the MOWRAM plays the main role on water resources uses in the Council of Ministers. As the national coordinating mechanism, the CNMC authority shall solve the eventual difference/conflict within the MRC context. But in the negative result, the question shall be brought to the Council of Ministers. In unresolved solution, the difference ought to be postponed and reported to the other time, let's time working for, instead of breaking the case. Never, the question will go to the court. The CNMC has the duty to create a good atmosphere of best understanding and good cooperation with junior officials. As the coordination institution at national level, the Head of Cambodian Delegation clearly confirmed other MRC members that, regarding the MRC Strategic Plan 2006-2010, CNMC submitted it to a central committee composed of representatives of relevant line agencies, including the Planning Departments⁵ for consultation. This is the normal practice applied.

The CNMC has an additional mandate to foster coordination, and strengthen communication and cooperation between national line agencies, international institutions, provincial

⁵ Mekong River Commission, 2006, Report of the Eleventh Meeting of the Donor Consultative Group, 14 December 2006, MRC Secretariat, Vientiane, Lao PDR

authorities and all civil society groups with regards to protection and management of Tonle Sap Biosphere Reserve Zones in a sustainable manner and knowledge exchange among all stakeholders. A number of training workshop were organized, supported by relevant MRC programmes, with the assistance of resources persons or experts from the Secretariat and local resources persons, such as BDP, WUP, IKMP, Navigation, FMMP, EP, etc.....

With the support from the Government of New Zealand through the MRC Secretariat, the CNMC established a Gender Team under the MRC Gender Mainstreaming Project to coordinate with line ministries, aiming at promoting gender awareness and roles in development and management of water and water related resources. In terms of national policy to uplift the gender issue⁶, the five years strategic plan called Neary Ratanak, was established in 1999. The National Council for Women was set up in 2001. The Royal Government has, furthermore, introduced gender issue into the educational curriculum, as well as into other programs, including, decentralization system and local governance throughout the country.

The current trend in water and related resources development management is towards the IWRM and Integrated River Basin Management (IRBM) that requires the coordinating agency to facilitate and coordinate the process more effectively. In this context, CNMC, for example, has been part of this effort to promote IWRM approach through the Mekong Delta Water Resources Management and Development, which is studied by the World Bank Study Team. There are some crucial management questions to be drawn in the research with respect to current roles and responsibilities of the CNMC relating to national and trans-boundary activities for water and water related resources management and the development in general and particularly the Mekong Delta. The working group of CNMC was assigned to assess the CNMC roles and proposed key CNMC capacity dealing with the national and trans-boundary activities and may also propose joint initiative projects for CNMC in terms of trans-boundary cooperation with Viet Nam in the Mekong Delta. In terms of trans-boundary activities, the CNMC is responsible in:

- Promoting cooperation with NMCs of all MRC Member States, donor countries and various international organizations to analyze, study, develop, manage and preserve water and water related natural resources of the Mekong River;
- Effectively coordinating and arranging with the MRC and donor community to mobilize funds to promote the study and development of projects.

Within the framework of cooperation with neighboring countries, some experiences can be highlighted as lesson-learnt:

- To strengthen and consolidate the cooperation and relations with other NMCs, CNMC signed an MOU with Vietnam National Mekong Committee (VNMC). The MOU deals with issues relating to both bilateral and multilateral – within the MRC context. The signed MOU provides a good mechanism or basis for Cambodia (CNMC) to also discuss the Se San case.
- Cambodia proposed, as well, the same mechanism applied with VNMC to Laos National Mekong Committee (LNMC) if they are interested in concluding such MOU for the strengthening and consolidating of cooperation and relations between the two NMCs. No reply has been obtained, but it is to note that LNMC signed similar MOU

⁶ Council of Ministers, 2003, Significant Achievements made by the Royal Government of Cambodia during 1998-2002, Office of the Council of Ministers, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

with VNMC. However, Cambodia and Laos have cooperation at provincial level between Stung Treng Province of Cambodia and Champasak of Lao PDR. The meeting on Trans-boundary wetland management in Stung Treng and Champasak, relating to the issues/activities regarding natural resources and environmental protection, namely, the management on fisheries, tourism, Dolphin pool and development⁷ was held on 24 March 2006 in Pakse, Lao PDR.

- In addition, the Government of Cambodia established a Joint Coordinating permanent Committee on Dams, Streams and Canals along the Border Areas (dealing with Laos, Thailand and Viet Nam), to which CNMC is also a member. The objective of this particular committee was to assist the government in dealing with issues relating to the construction of dams, and other water-related works along the streams or channels at the border area. The committee is now preparing the draft law/regulations on water utilization along the Cambodia-Vietnam border for the consideration and perhaps discussion by both parties in future. It is observed that both sides satisfactorily implemented the signed MOU. The meeting is organized alternatively once every year.
- Good lesson-learnt from CNMC-VNMC cooperation:
 - o Based on reports from Ratanakiri Province of Cambodia, as well as that from NGOs, regarding negative impacts to the downstream area of dams built in Vietnamese side, CNMC discussed with VNMC to find out a proper solution benefits to both sides. It is to note that Yali Dam was built before the signing of the 1995 Mekong Agreement. Thus, according to Article 36(A) stating about retroactive effect, the dam is considered as an existing structure. But the release of water needs to follow the 95-Mekong Agreement. As agreed by both sides, Vietnamese needs to inform relevant Cambodian authorities (those are CNMC, MOWRAM, and DWRAM) one week prior to the date of any release of water from the reservoir.
 - o Based on the MOU both sides, moreover, agreed that whenever the upper stream country wishes to build the dam, it is suggested that the EIA at the downstream of the dam should also be carried out. Thus, a joint technical team was also established for this purpose with the participation of the Ministry of Environment, MOWRAM, CNMC, etc....
 - o Regarding water fluctuation at the downstream below the Vietnamese dams, CNMC worked closely with VNMC to resolve the issue. With its goodwill, Viet Nam kindly spent its own budget to build a regulating reservoir before the flows go into Cambodia to ease the fluctuation problems in Cambodian side. Cambodian delegation visited the site (the regulating reservoir) hoping that once the reservoir is built the water fluctuation problems will be resolved.

In the area of policy reforms, the Royal Decree on the establishment of community fisheries management was signed in May 2005 and the Sub-decree on community fisheries management was promulgated in June 2006. These legal texts provide legal basis for the establishment of the community-fisheries. The new fishery law entered into force in May 2006. It indicates the role and mandate of the new Fisheries Administration for sector development. The proclamation on the functioning of the Fisheries Administration has been established. With the improved structure compared to in proceeding in Department of Fisheries, the new structure is expected to become a more effective service provider in the sector especially at the commune council where there are substantial fisheries demands.

⁷ Minutes of the Meeting on Transboundary Wetland Management in Champasak (Lao PDR) and Stung Treng (Cambodia) on 24 March 2006 in Pakse, Lao PDR.

The formulation of a Cambodia Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries is another noticeable improvement. It is expected to provide framework for more benefit to the development of rural community. Moreover, the Guidelines on Community Fisheries that set out a legal framework to ensure transparent, accountable and equitable implementation of the communities have been finalized and are expected to be implemented soon. Therefore, there has been considerable progress in the policy reform; however, concern remains as the clarity over rights to use fisheries resources and the incentives to manage capture fisheries in sustainable manner are still lacking.

In the field of environmental protection, the government took actions to strengthen sustainable environmental protection and management of forest resources based on three important pillars:

- a- Strict monitoring of forest exploitation according to the international best practices in forest management that requires adequate forest reserves for domestic consumption, protection against drought and floods as well as wetlands that serve as fish sanctuary;
- b- Protection of natural resources, biodiversity preservation and endangered species;
- c- Implementation of community-based forestry development programs which are sound, transparent and locally managed.

4.2. Alignment with the 1995 Agreement

The Article 2 of the 1995 Mekong Agreement calls for preparation of a Basin Development Plan (BDP), and, underpinning this must be rules for water quantity utilization and water quality issues, or, if located in only one or two member countries, substantially to regional knowledge and understanding. This approach is necessary because of the MRC has its regional mandate to minimize the potential for overlap with development activities which are essentially national in nature. The establishment of a basin development plan would be used to identify, categorize and prioritize the projects and programmes to seek assistance for and to implement at the basin level.

The development objective of the BDP is based on the Agreement and supports the MRC vision of “an economically prosperous, socially just and environmentally sound Mekong River Basin”, in line with the MRC mission “to promote and coordinate sustainable management and development of water and related resources for the countries’ mutual benefit and the people’s well being”. The development objective is stated as “the water resources of the Mekong River Basin managed and developed in an integrated, sustainable and equitable manner for the mutual benefit of the basin countries”. The BDP Phase 2 (2007-2010) is designed to prepare a rolling IWRM-based Basin Development Plan in support of sustainable development in the Mekong Basin, as envisioned in the Agreement, building upon the participatory planning process established during BDP Phase 1. This main aim of the Programme is supported by the further development of the assessment tools and IWRM planning capacity. The IWRM-based Basin Development Plan will be implemented by the Member Countries and their development partners with facilitation, coordination and other support of the MRC.

The Mekong Basin has a wide diversity of environmental values and all can be impacted upon, to one degree or another, by development activities. The environmental issues such as deforestation, water pollution, flooding, erosion and siltation, salinization and water

scarcity are impacting significantly on the basin and its people. Socio-economic problems arising from development and consequent environmental impacts include resettlement, flood damages, reduced agricultural productivity, health problems, cost of desilting and increased poverty. To response to these issues, Article 3 of the Agreement calls for the protection of the environment, natural resources, aquatic life and conditions, and ecological balance of the MRB from pollution or other harmful effects resulting from any development plans and uses of water and related resources in the basin.

The Environment Programme aims to assist the countries to fulfil the articles in the 1995 Agreement that relate to the protection of the environment (Article 3) and prevention and cessation of harmful effects (Article 7). The programme also supports the other programmes through cross cutting initiatives such as the provision of environmental data and development of tools for environmental planning and management. Assessment and monitoring of water quality and ecosystem health form an important basis for data provision. The programme also aims to improve environmental policy and management through advice to and promotion of cooperation among environmental agencies, directly supporting the BDP process.

It is obvious that local community knowledge forms a critical source of natural resources information in the basin, and arranges the MRC cooperation to access local unreliable information as an adjunct to conventional data monitoring networks. Furthermore, every effective, well functioning and innovative river basin organization world-wide has a strong data base of natural resource information and good systems to handle, manipulate and analyze this data. They also has a solid modeling capacity that can be used to provide analysis of particular area-specific problems as well as a basin-wide predictive capability to measure the impact of new policies or development and resource rehabilitation proposals. The MRC has its long history in collecting key hydro-meteorological data on the Mekong mainstream and each riparian member has maintained its own national data network, except Cambodia that went through a few decades of civil strife causing some interruption of data collection.

To successfully cooperate, as mentioned in Article 1 of the Agreement, in all fields of sustainable development, utilization, management and conservation of the water and related resources of the MRB including, but not limited to irrigation, hydropower, navigation, flood control, fisheries, timber floating, recreation and tourism, a number of programmes and projects have been established to serve this purpose. For example, the WUP was established to implement Articles 5, 6 and 26; the IKMP facilitates access to and use of the data, information and decision support tools; the FMMP, that would provide efficient flood management, including flood proofing measures, emergency flood management or disaster aid, is one of the important precondition for poverty reduction in the LMB. In this regard, it can be seen that the MRC established MRC programmes are well fit to the requirements of the Mekong Agreement.

4.3. Alignment with the Strategic Plan

At the International Conference on the Mekong River Commission in April 2007 in Hanoi, Viet Nam, Mr. Lim Kean Hor, Minister for Water Resources and Meteorology, Chairman of the Cambodia National Mekong Committee, and Member of the MRC Council for Cambodia reiterated Cambodia's strong commitment to move forward with full participation and close cooperation with other riparian countries to ensure the effective and successful implementation of the 1995 Mekong Agreement and the MRC

Strategic Plan 2006-2010 together with other instruments agreed upon within the framework of the MRC with a view to contributing to the materialization of the family spirit of the Mekong nations. This involves addressing water governance cooperation with other riparian countries with a strong political will from Cambodian side to ensure the effective and successful implementation of the 1995 Mekong Agreement and the MRC Strategic Plan 2006-2010 together with other MRC instruments⁸.

The need for MRC to be an important and valuable partner in the development and management of the Mekong Basin was clearly recognized by all. This could be achieved by a stronger linkage between the MRC and the national planning agencies in each country to ensure that development decisions were based on the best available information and especially the cross-border implications of investment and operational decisions. In particular, there was a need to ensure stronger ownership of the MRC programmes on the part of the CNMC, and consequently it requires a stronger leadership in decision-making processes concerning trans-national water governance.

It is found as well that the current MRC programme portfolio reflect the intension of the member countries to support the implementation of the Mekong Agreement. The IWRM process needs an integrated activity of the programme aiming at maximizing the development potential, while preserving the environmental conditions of the basin.

4.4. Alignment with other Regional Initiatives

4.4.1 Association of the South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN)

Cambodia, since 1999, is one of the five members of ASEAN (Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam) who share the Mekong River. As a member of the association, Cambodia participated in various ASEAN forums, in a regional context, for discussion to implement the relevant agreements established by the ASEAN. ASEAN sectoral Ministers' meeting is the forum for sectoral ministers to meet and discuss the regional issues relating to their particular field, involving with Ministers of energy, Agriculture, environment and economy.

4.4.2 Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS)

The GMS region, comprising of Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam, and Yunnan province of China, spread over 2.3 million square kilometers, houses a population of Public Disclosure Authorized about 260 million. The 10 year strategic framework for the GMS Program was formulated by the six countries with the assistance of ADB in 2001 and was endorsed by GMS Leaders at their first triennial Summit held in Phnom Penh, Cambodia in November 2002. It envisions a well-integrated and prosperous Mekong subregion – free of poverty and committed to protecting the environment that is vital to the subregion's future wellbeing, focusing on five development thrusts to achieve this goal.

The GMS countries at the Agricultural Ministers' Meeting in April 2007 in Bangkok approved a new program called the Strategic Framework for Subregional Cooperation in Agriculture, which is the latest in a series of cooperative strategies and programs among the six countries, in addition to the existing areas of strategic

⁸ MRC, 2007, Report on the International Conference on the Mekong River Commission, MRC Secretariat, Vientiane, Lao PDR.

cooperation including energy, environment, telecommunications, transport, and tourism. They endorsed a joint agricultural support program to address biofuel issues on a subregional basis. The program calls for concerted and coordinated efforts to speed up the development of biofuel technologies, drastically reduce the use of fossil fuels, effectively contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation, and help reduce rural poverty.

The GMS strategic pillar 4 is managing the environment and shared natural resources to help ensure sustainable development and conservation of natural resources. The GMS Core Environment Program (CEP) and its flagship component, the Biodiversity Conservation Corridors Initiative, which were recommended by the GMS Working Group on the Environment (WGE) and endorsed by the Second GMS Summit in 2005, is the central program to address the environmental challenges to sustainable growth and development in the GMS. It focuses on program development and project implementation through: (1) assessment of environmental sustainability for GMS sector strategy and economic corridor development; (2) implementation of biodiversity corridor activities in at least five selected pilot sites and (3) institutionalization of environmental performance assessment procedures and system.

4.4.3 Economic Cooperation Strategy

There are several established organizations in terms of economic cooperation among the riparian countries of the Mekong River aiming at strengthening cross-border economic cooperation. These sub-regional cooperation mechanisms provide good platforms to discuss the development at sub-regional levels.

4.4.3.1 Ayeyawady-Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy (ACMECS)

Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam (signed the Protocol of Admission to the Bagan Declaration only in 2004) at the Summit held on 12 November 2003 in Yangon, Myanmar identified and developed options and opportunities to implement their shared vision of national as well as regional socio-economic development for the benefits of their people within both the framework of the GMS and the entire Southeast Asian region. Five priority areas of cooperation were agreed upon, (1) cross-border trade and investment facilitation, (2) intra-regional relocation of investment for agriculture and industrial cooperation, (3) transport linkages, (4) tourism and services cooperation, and (5) technical assistance for human resources development.

4.4.3.2 Economic Cooperation Strategy a. Cambodia-Laos-Vietnam

The “Triangle Economic Development Strategy” has been initiated for socio-economic development cooperation of the border areas by Cambodia, La PDR and Viet Nam since 1999 focusing on (1) construction and upgrading of transportation that connect the provinces in the border areas, (2) promote trade relations, (3) enhance cooperation on tourism – “three countries, one destination”, and (4) inter-

connection electricity grids⁹. The Summit meeting of the head of governments held every two years starting since January 1999. The three countries also reiterated to deepen cooperation in the Mekong River Basin cooperation so as to ensure the interests in developing, utilizing and preserving natural resources of the Basin. They further affirm their strong cooperation in the framework of GMS context.

b. Cambodia-Laos-Thailand

The “Emerald Triangle Economic Development” initiated by Thai Prime Minister, Thaksin Shinawatra, is another mechanism of cooperation between Cambodia, Lao PDR and Thailand, under the framework of the GMS, directing for tourism, golf-course, eco-tourism and cultural tourism on the sub-region at the border areas of the three countries. They believe that besides natural beauty and important historical sites, the areas are abundant in geographic riches and natural landscapes which may attract tourists to come.

4.4.4 Bilateral Cooperation

According to collected documents in relation to bilateral cooperation with neighboring countries from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MFA-IC) of Cambodia, there is a number of bilateral cooperation documents that Cambodia signed with its neighboring countries. For instant, Cambodia and Lao PDR signed an Agreement on Tourism Cooperation since July 1995, stressing to further closely cooperate and take preventive measures to fight against all illegal logging activities, illegal trading of fisheries and forestry products and wildlife across their common border and to protect their natural environment including measures to combat trade in endangered species and the destruction of their natural habitats. They further encourage in the field of agriculture, livestock and fisheries through exchange of information, visits, experiences sharing on protection of forestry resources, environment, renovation of bio-diversity and to take appropriate prevention measures to fight against illegal activities which may cause harm or destroy natural environment of their countries.

Similar mechanisms were also established respectively with the other two neighboring countries, Thailand and Viet Nam. Apart from the agreements on bilateral cooperation signed, there are several specific commissions or committees at national or central levels to deal with particular issue of concerns for bilateral cooperation. At provincial cooperation, there are sister agreement between the two provinces which share the common border of Cambodia and Viet Nam, allowing the two sides, down to district and commune levels, to cooperate in various fields, such as security, agriculture, environment, water resources, trade, tourism, exchange of knowledge or experience on how to better protect or fight against insects which damage the crops, fishery, etc... To further strengthen bilateral cooperation, they exchange visits from political high level, Head of State or Government, down to local or technical levels, giving a good mechanism for the cooperation between the two countries.

⁹ MFA-IC, 2004, Press Release of the 3rd Summit of the three Prime Ministers of Cambodia, Lao PDR and Viet Nam on Triangle Development Cooperation, MFA-IC, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

In general, it is found that several existing multilateral cooperation initiatives were established, including the MRC, within the context of the Mekong River Basin for the economic development of the member countries. It seems that the needs for a better coordination among these bodies would help each other in making decision on the field of MRC cooperation, as well as for the economic development of the member States. The national Mekong Committee would need to coordinate with relevant line agencies within its national context.

5. MRC's Orientation towards UN Millennium Development Goals

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) summarize the development goals agreed at international conference and world summits during 1990s. The world leaders, including Cambodia, distilled the key goals and targets in the Millennium Declaration in September 2000, known as the “Millennium Development Goals - MDGs”, consisting of 8 goals, to be achieved between 1990 and 2015. This is the complex question that Cambodia has decided to assess in the year 2003. According to the UN Resident Coordinator Office-Cambodia, on an aggregated level, Cambodia has made good progress over the past decade. However, we need to understand what the key achievements are, the causes and consequences of these achievements and future challenges and obstacles.

The MRC Member States' long-existing desire for economic growth, poverty alleviation, and environmental protection was given a further boost with the Millennium Declaration. The UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) set real targets for development to be achieved by 2015. Goals that are particularly relevant to the MRC's mission are the ones which call for governments to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, promoting gender equality, and ensure environmental sustainable. Continuing high poverty rates and increasing challenges to the sustainable management of the Mekong Basin's natural resources are a major justification for continued donor support – with its legal mandate to promote cooperative sustainable development of the Mekong Basin's water and related resources, the MRC is a highly valuable development partner for the donors. Future MRC work will consider water resources development activities which enhance achievement of the MDGs, as appropriate.

The 12th MRC Council Meeting held in late 2005 adopted the “Strategic Directions for Integrated Resources Management in the Lower Mekong Basin”, believing that the IWRM will be an appropriate process towards poverty reduction and environmental protection, as defined by the Global Water Partnership (GWP) Technical Advisory Committee paper-4 that “IWRM is a process which promote the coordinated development and management of water, land and related resources, in order to maximize the resultants economic and social welfare in an equitable manner without compromising the sustainability of vital ecosystem¹⁰”. Along with this concept, Article 4 of the Law on Water Resources Management of the Kingdom of Cambodia, promulgated in June 2007, clearly states that “water and water resources management and development shall be based on Integrated Water Resources Management process¹¹”. The law further details that IWRM process shall consider all aspects of water resources, linkages between water resources and other natural environmental aspects and the needs for the uses of human, environment and other fields in a sustainable and effective manner. The implementation of the IWRM process shall be comprehensive and in a cooperative framework among all concerned institutions.

In its political platform for the third legislature of the National Assembly, 2003-2008, the Royal Government of Cambodia¹² (RGC), among the four main key prioritized areas for the country's development, paid very much attention on poverty reduction. To perform poverty reduction, many elements have been focused on, such as infrastructure, rural development, water resources, land policy implementation, land management, urban planning and

¹⁰ GWP Secretariat, 2000, TAC Background Papers No 4, Integrated Water Resources Management, SIDA, Stockholm, Sweden

¹¹ Ministry of Water Resources and Meteorology, 2007, Law on Water Resources Management of the Kingdom of Cambodia, MOWRAM, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

¹² Council of Ministers, 2003, Significant Achievements made by the Royal Government of Cambodia, 1998-2002, Office of the Council of Ministers, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

construction, education, etc..... It is widely understood that access to water is one of the most effective ways to alleviate poverty. Poverty alleviation can be realized through use of water as an input to achieve food security and generate income, for domestic water supply and sanitation, and as an essential element of a healthy environment. On the larger scale, water resources developments can provide Cambodia with a source of revenue and foreign exchange which can, with proper planning and effective monitoring, be channeled into investments for poverty alleviation and environmental protection.

The national water vision¹³ of the Kingdom of Cambodia is:

- Access for all to safe, adequate and affordable drinking water, hygiene and sanitation;
- Freedom for all from the threat of loss of life and livelihood as a result of floods and droughts;
- Sufficient water where it is needed, to provide for food security, people's livelihoods and economic activities; and
- A water environment that is unpolluted, and supports healthy fisheries and aquatic ecosystems.

The MOWRAM is the major government institution in Cambodia to manage water resources. It has handled total management of the water from meteorological and hydrological observation, water related infrastructure development in river works, irrigation, water supply and sanitation, water management and conservation and so on, including owning and administering data generated by the government departments, project funded by international organization/institutions. It is further found out that in the national water resources policy, two important concepts are described, namely, (1) river basin management and development, (2) appropriate management of freshwater resources. The "national water resources policy of Cambodia stipulates the following five key policies":

- To protect, manage and use water resources with effective, equitable and sustainable manner;
- To foresee and take measures to assist related institutions to settle the facing problems which might be occurred in water sector;
- To develop and implement the national strategy and formulate the national policy and sector policies on water resources management;
- To direct the water resources development, management and utilization in the Kingdom of Cambodia to all activities of institutions, private sectors and public sector; and
- To improve and uplift the people living to achieve the national policy on poverty reduction and sustainable national economy development.

Regarding water resources management between neighboring countries, the policy takes international agreements fully into account for the use and allocation of water during periods of water shortage in rivers, streams along the border with neighboring countries. Furthermore, the following policies for international aspects of water¹⁴ were highlighted:

- To take necessary measures and to use all means to closely cooperate with other countries that use water from shared rivers and streams and assure effective and sustainable water use with respect of mutual benefit;

¹³ Le Huu Ti & Thierry Facon, 2004, From Action to Vision: A Synthesis of Experiences in Least-Developed Countries in Southeast Asia, Bangkok, Thailand

¹⁴ NIRE, J-Green & CTI Engineering International, 2007, Options for Joint Water Resources Development and Management between Cambodia and Viet Nam, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

- To fully collaborate with neighboring countries to achieve the aims of the 1995 Mekong Agreement; and
- To integrate Cambodia into international arena in the water sector, and to use all available opportunities, particularly through international organizations and development banks such as UNESCO, WMO, ASEAN MDBC, ADB, World Bank, GMS and ESCAP to promote cooperation and international understanding in water sector.

In its development strategy for 2006-2010, MOWRAM set up principle areas to be carried out as follows:

Principle area of work		Over-arching goal for 2006-2010
1	Water resources management and development	Cambodia's water resources are managed and developed in an effective, equitable and sustainable manner. This achieves the greatest possible benefit for the people while conserving aquatic ecosystems
2	Flood	The impact of water related hazards, particularly floods and droughts, on the lives, property and livelihoods of Cambodian people and on public property, are minimized/mitigated
3	Water related legislation and regulation	Cambodia has a sound legal foundation for water resources management and development. It is implemented effectively and fairly
4	Water resource information management	Cambodia's water resources are developed and managed confidently and wisely, on the basis of adequate information
5	Administration, management, and human resources development	The administrative and management systems, technical practices, facilities and human resources of MOWRAM, provincial DWRAMs, related sub-provincial institutions, and community-based organizations enable them to carry out their water resources management-related functions efficiently and effectively

In terms of environmental protection and monitoring, both within Cambodian context and basin-wide context some laws and regulations in relation to environmental protection and monitoring were established. The table appeared in **Annex 5** provides some key points selected from some of those laws and regulations. In terms of climate change¹⁵, Cambodia – as a least developed country – clearly recognizes that climate change is a serious environmental threat to the country and to the rest of the world. With its limited capability and available resources, the RGC has actively worked with the international community to address this threat. The RGC signed the United Nations Convention of Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 1995, just two years after the establishment of the Ministry of Environment. In September 2002, Cambodia released its Initial National Communication under the UNFCCC, which presented the findings of the national Green House Gases (GHG) inventory for 1994, projection of GHG from 1994 to 2020, GHG mitigation options and a vulnerability and adaptation assessment to climate change. With the funding support from the GEF, Cambodia prepared a national adaptation program for action to climate change in 2004, in which priority activities to address urgent and immediate needs and concerns of the country for adaptation to

¹⁵ Tin Ponlork, 2003, Climate Change and the Clean Development Mechanism, Ministry of Environment, CRCD and IGES, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

the adverse effect of climate change in agriculture, water resources, coastal zone, forestry, and human health.

Although Cambodia does not have any commitment to reduce GHG emissions, to support the promotion of the Kyoto Protocol, it signed the Instrument of Accession to the Protocol on 4 July 2002, making Cambodia eligible to host emission reduction projects under the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM). One of the two key goals of the CDM is to assist developing countries who host the CDM projects to achieve their sustainable development objectives. To get the advantages from the projects, Cambodia met the three basic CDM requirements, namely (1) voluntary participation, (2) establishment of a Designated National Authority (DNA), and (3) ratification of the Kyoto Protocol. Cambodia considers that the CDM may be a source of new investment environmentally friendly technology and capacity building in the fields of energy, forestry, agriculture and waste management. The Ministry of Environment was assigned in July 2003 by the Prime Minister as the Interim DNA, and is responsible for assessing proposed CDM projects against the sustainable development objectives of the country. In this context, the MOE shall work closely with government institutions concerned, private sectors, and NGOs to assess and approve the projects, and serves as the liaison office and focal point for national and international communications related to CDM.

For instance, if designated and implemented wisely, CDM projects may offer the country opportunities to improve energy efficiency, to develop indigenous renewable energy, to transfer environmentally friendly technology and to help create new jobs. CDM projects may also help increase reforestation and afforestation activities, as well as associated environmental benefits and services such as waste watershed protection, control of soil erosion and degradation, biodiversity conservation, provision of non-timber products. These are very important aspects for local communities and for the whole of Cambodia. Up to now, Cambodian energy sector has based mainly on conventional, GHG-emission intensive, often out-of-date technology such heavy fuel or diesel generators. In the rural areas, fuel-wood still remains the major energy source. To cope with this issue, a study of the potential for sustainable energy projects (i.e., renewable energy, and energy efficiency) - the Integrated Capacity Strengthening for the CDM projects – was carried out and sponsored by the Institute for Global Environmental Strategy of Japan. Most of the projects were small-scale hydro, biomass, wind and solar installations. The study indicated that, if implemented, these projects would reduce almost 47 million tones of GHG per year.

With this it is found out that the water vision, water resources policies and the existing legal framework in Cambodia are going along with the MRC vision and the Millennium Declaration – the MDGs.

6. Prioritization of the Remaining Period of the Strategic Plan

The disparity of development among the MRC member countries may also be considered as a part of difficulties in implementing the activities within the MRC framework. Cambodia went through nearly three decades of a brutal period of horror, civil war, sorrow, losses and external interferences. The 1991 Paris Peace Accords, concluded by the parties to conflicts, allowed Cambodia to hold the general elections in 1993 under the auspice of the UN, but only after 1998 that Cambodia has enjoyed the full peace and stability, consenting Cambodian people to reconstruct the country from zero. It has been not easy to rebuild the country from nothing. Cambodia has tried its best to join the international and regional community, such the UN, ASEAN, MRC, GMS, WTO, etc.

Within the ASEAN framework, among the ten nations, two kinds of membership were clearly indicated, the old and the new members. The latter are the members (i.e. Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam - CLMV), who joined the association right after the 1991 Paris Peace Accord to end the civil war in Cambodia or, in another work, after the end of war in Southeast Asia. To implement all ASEAN agreements, in terms of trade and economic development, the CLMV enjoyed encouragement rendered by the old members. More time has been allocated for them and more assistance has also been provided so that the gaps of development within ASEAN can be reduced.

Within the context of the MRC, Cambodia, due to its still low economic development, the national budget allocated to support the operation cost of the MRCS is less than others. To improve capacity of the staff on DSF application, more training was also provided for Cambodia so that Cambodian young staff who involved with MRC activities can perform their task in implementing the MRC activities to support the development program of Cambodia accordingly. With this, it seems that in order to achieve the MRC set goals, Cambodia may wish to enjoy in terms of water resources management capacity building for their staff who involved with MRC activities at national and provincial/local levels. Narrowing the gaps of understanding on water and related water resources among the member States would help improve implementation of the 1995 Mekong Agreement. In this context, it would need more training for less developed members.

In addition, Cambodia is very much thirsty of energy, with the existing electricity power situation which is not enough, even for the use of urban areas, how can Cambodians develop their country. Power supply to the Capital City of Phnom Penh has been improved dramatically since 1993, and approximately 50MW of power were added to serve the city during 1995 and 1996. Despite large endowment of energy resources, the region's per capita consumption of electricity is low ranging from about only 63 kWh per annum in Cambodia to about 1,900 kWh per annum in Thailand¹⁶. However, demand in Phnom Penh and throughout the country is growing rapidly and the current power supply cannot meet the growing demand. Power blackouts in Phnom Penh continue to occur. Cambodia's electricity supply remains based on a large number of isolated systems, and does not have a major high voltage interconnecting grid. To cope with this situation, Cambodia is seeking energy from other sources. It has been estimated that there is an exploitable hydropower capability of upward of 8,000 MW in Cambodia, distributed among 43 sites. Decision about the pace and scope of hydropower development will be taken within a framework that carefully examines the costs and benefits of this development. The first step and immediate activities are to prepare project planning and seeking fund from donor community to support the Hydropower Programme.

¹⁶ GMS, 2007, Project Information Document, Appraisal Stage, Project ID P105329

A feasibility study of, for instant, the Kamchay hydropower project in Kompot province with an installed capacity of around 120MW is currently being conducted. A number of conduct feasibility studies of the potential areas being carried out on potential sites. Further support from donors is being sought to formulate technically sound and economically optimal multipurpose projects, and to strengthen program member of small scale hydropower projects are also being considered as priorities for local supply, such as Stung Battambang (60MW), Prek Thnot, Stung Chinit, and Sambo project. So far, no large hydropower plant has been built owing to a lack of financial resources. Electricity thus remains very expensive, especially in the provinces. Most of the electricity in the country is generated by diesel power plants. The provinces other than Phnom Penh, Sihanouk Ville and Siem Reap are badly in need of electricity. Private investment in this sector is entitled to receive tax holidays of up to nine years and a tax exemption on the import of machinery.

Procedures for Water Quality which were adopted by the MRC Council were not signed yet, awaiting the confirmation from one member country on the decision of the Cabinet. It is one of the five milestones set by the 1999 MRC Council Resolution on Water Utilization Program to be met during WUP Start-up Project. Along with this, the preparation of the Technical Guidelines for Implementation of the Procedures for the Maintenance of Flows on the Mainstream and that for the Procedures for Water Quality are still under discussion and needs to be focused on. In addition to this, some terms defined in the some adopted Procedures for water utilization are not clearly defined, for example, wet season, dry season, Mekong tributary, etc , which may cause some difficulties in implementing them. The need for discussion those issues by the member countries with the support from the MRC Secretariat should be considered.

It seems that at the International Conference on the Mekong River Commission a lot of interest among MRC countries in exploring ways of establishing closer links between the MRC and the GMS programme within water related issues, including through closer involvement of the MRC in the GMS programmes, not least environment, energy, transport and agriculture. The MRC had close cooperation with GMS, ASEAN, and ACMECS, and was pursuing the consolidation of these growing partnerships. The MRC was in the right place at the right time with the right capability to promote and coordinate the regional water programme¹⁷ for the LMB or MRB implemented by the countries themselves in cooperation with donors, investment banks, the private sector and other stakeholders. With this view it would be better to make a study on such a close cooperation between MRC and the GMS on any concrete activities to support sustainable development in the subregion, believing that the outcomes would help in the preparation of the next Strategic Plan 2011-2015 by avoiding overlap activities to be carried out.

It is found that in the past practice, the funding modalities of the donors to support the implementation of the MRC programmes were applied differently from one donor's policy to another, and, consequently, it may partly cause difficulties to the operational function of the MRC¹⁸, especially in relation with the programme implementation. In this connection, it would be better to see good coordination and harmonization among donor countries and development banks assisting the MRC in different areas of Mekong development, as this is very important and extremely needed for the MRC, as well as for the member countries.

¹⁷ MRC Secretariat, 2007, Report from the International Conference on the MRC , Vientiane, Lao PDR

¹⁸ *ibid*

7. Preparation for the next Strategic Plan 2011-2015

Poverty reduction is now the main goal of the Royal Government of Cambodia, as well as of other governments in the lower Mekong Basin. The RGC has its clear policy on civil societies' participation as mentioned in its political platform¹⁹ for the 3rd legislature, 2003-2008, stating that civil societies shall play the role of efficient partners with the government in building the country. It provides all the encouragement to NGOs and formal associations who are serving the interests of citizen in the entire country, and also welcomes the international NGOs in the process of improving and developing the socio-economy as well as supporting and promoting the practice of democracy and respect human rights. Thus, in line with the government's policy, a kind of win-win-win approach, the discussions with representatives of civil society organizations in Cambodia focusing on preparation of the next Strategic Plan 2011-2015 and how to advance tripartite cooperation arrangements, particularly in facilitating civil society inputs into the preparation process for the MRC and related country strategies and programs would be another option in helping the MRC. With this, wider involvement of key stakeholders at the upstream stage can promote enhanced quality of MRC-assisted activities, improve understanding of the MRC's core operational strategies, strengthen partnerships with stakeholders, and foster involvement and commitment among stakeholders.

In line with its overall coordinating role for the MRC program, the Secretariat should intensify its information dissemination campaign for MRC projects and activities with a view to generating greater support from key stakeholders. The MRC web page (<http://www.mrcmekong.org>) on MRC's website should be simplified to facilitate access to basic information on the MRC program.

Tourism is another sector, both cultural and natural tourism that has a huge potential in promoting economic growth. The government pays very much attention on this field to support the development of the country. Another important priority of the government is to preserve cultural and traditional heritage, as well as the natural environment based on principle "conservation with development". For this purpose, seven natural parks (natural and scenic areas) with the total area of 742,250ha has been protected for scientific, educational and resort purposes, ten wildlife sanctuaries covering 2,080,000ha of land have been safeguarded to ensure natural conditions, wildlife and natural plant protection and natural community or physical feature of environment, and 97,000ha of natural and semi-natural landscapes²⁰ have been allocated as protected landscape areas (three places).

In terms of external cooperation, Cambodia is a member of a number of existing regional and sub-regional cooperation framework, such as ASEAN, MRC, GMS, ACMECS, Triangle Development Cooperation, the GMS Mekong Tourism Development Project, etc.... and a party to several bilateral cooperation, especially with its neighboring countries. Those bodies have their own programmes dealing with tourism issue. Under the GMS framework, a sustainable tourism development project²¹ in Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam has been prepared to promote the GMS as a single tourist destination, establishing the Mekong Tourism Coordinating Office in Bangkok in 2006. To promote sustainable tourism development project and attract investments from the private sector at sub-regional level and to assess

¹⁹ Council of Ministers, 2003, Political Platform of the Royal Government of Cambodia for the third Legislature of the National Assembly, Office of the Council of Ministers, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

²⁰ Council of Ministers, 2003, Significant Achievements made by the Royal Government of Cambodia 1998-2002, Office of the Council of Ministers, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

²¹ <http://www.adb.org/gms/documents/>

mechanisms, including partnership between the public and private sectors and communities, annual tourism investment forums have been organized.

The Joint Declaration of the 3rd GMS Summit held in Vientiane, Lao PDR in March 2008, stressed that *“in tourism, we are moving forward on a concrete action plan for the next five years covering the promotion of the subregion as a single tourism destination and tourism-related infrastructure development. In agriculture, we are implementing a program that will further promote cross-border agricultural trade, ensure food safety, and improve farmers’ livelihoods”*²². The Declaration further emphasizes to strengthen the sustainable management of natural and cultural tourism sites, promote the joint marketing of tourism in the subregion, and strengthen the Mekong Tourism Coordinating Office in its future development plan 2008-2012.

In this context, the MRC tourism program should be appropriately directed to support the national program or to complement the national program avoiding overlapping activities in relation to tourism. This should be involved with all concerned parties, such as CNMC, line agencies, private sector and stakeholders. As the funding support for tourism program is still difficult to get support, it would be better to further consider prioritizing complementary activities to support the national strategy.

It its action plan for development 2008-2012, the 3rd GMS Summit further stresses the importance of implementing the GMS initiative on biofuel and rural renewable energy development, and expand trans-boundary animal disease control programs and access to agricultural information in rural areas. It would be useful, if this issue can be considered whether it is appropriate for the MRC to take into account for future activities.

Having learnt that, apart from bilateral cooperation, most of the existing economic development forums within the region - ASEAN or the sub-region, for instant, GMS, AMECS, Triangle Economic Development Strategy, which institutionalized the Summit meeting of the Head of State or Government level become stronger with close cooperation due the involvement of the highest level of the member countries. To reach the aim of real master of the Mekong, in the future, the MRC Summit with the participation of the Heads of Government of the MRC member States should be considered to be convened biennially or triennially in the future. Along with this, the NMCs in the member countries should also be further strengthened by which this institution would be headed by the Prime Minister. Moreover, the implementation of this initiative, the profile or image of the MRC can be effectively raised at both national and international arenas. Furthermore, with the involvement of the Prime Minister, the CNMC may have a high profile within national and regional context and the difficulties in engaging with line agencies may be solved accordingly. And as a result, tangible results may be seen easily.

Cambodia wants the IWRM to infiltrate and become the common language we all use. Not to agree about policy differences we have, but to agree about the goals. Resources alone are unlikely to be sufficient enough to ensure that Cambodia attains the goals, but donor resources can play an important role in strengthening the country’s ability to use resources effectively. This is a focus of development cooperation in Cambodia working in partnership with government and civil society especially in fostering decentralization. Human and institutional capacities need to be made stronger. They are complementary elements that are required for Cambodia to benefit from being a member of the regional river basin

²² Joint Declaration of the 3rd GMS Summit held on 30-31 March 2008 in Vientiane, Lao PDR

organization. Decentralization is critical to achieving and maintaining the IWRM. It is our hope that the IWRM will eventually infiltrate everywhere throughout the country for the sustainable development of water and water related resources to serve the socio-economic development. The challenge is to effectively mainstream the IWRM initiatives into local development planning process by fueling political and ultimately financial support for IWRM.

The MRC should pay more attention on Hydropower Programme in finding financial support. In this context national projects should be highlighted and incorporated into the MRC Strategic Plan 2011-2015.

The current Strategic Plan 2006-2010 should be continued within the next one. It seems that the MRC Strategic Plan focuses on wide-basin development approach. The approach is too wide and no inclusion of national plan or projects. It would be better if the MRC development plans complement to the national development plan or activities. To facilitate the process, it would be appropriate to include the national Strategic Plan into the MRC Strategic Plan. In result, as basis for the preparation for the next Strategic Plan, the national projects/activities should be included in the MRC Strategic Plan.

The current structure of the MRCS was designed in accordance with the current need to implement the Strategic Plan. Cambodia believes that it would be better to maintain the current structure for the next Strategic Plan 2011-2015. Consequently, concrete MRC supported projects to be implemented in the member countries would reduce misunderstanding, at national levels, between NMC and line agencies, and the same time it would raise the NMC image both at national and regional levels.

Success of implementation under NAP would help the riparian countries to develop their economies. Successful of NAP outputs will then require extensive cooperation from the NMCs as well as with the line agencies, stakeholders and beneficiaries in the country. Political commitment of the member countries who have endorsed the NAP should be translated into a high level of commitment at the operational and executive level within the NMCs and national line agencies involved. As most MRC programmes, the major risk that may affect the implementation of the NAP as planned above would be a lack of funds.

Three new important programmes were established: the Drought Management Programme, the Hydropower Programme and the Mekong Integrated Water Resources Support Programme (M-IWRM-P). A significant progress was made at their preparation stage, but the need for seeking financial support will be a big issue facing the MRC to implement them. The World Bank and the Asian Development Bank indicated their willingness to support the development of Master Plan for the Mekong Delta and the “3S” (“S” stands for Sekong, Se San and Srepok Rivers – transboundary rivers) project, and joint water resources management study²³. As of June 2008, the project (M-IWRM-P) concept has been finalized and submitted to countries for consultation and endorsement. Funding has been obtained from AusAID for the preparation phase of the regional component and overall coordination of the project preparation phase.

²³ Sin Niny, 2006, Statement for the 11th Meeting of the Donor Consultative Group, 14 December 2006, Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam

8. Conclusion

To meet the MDGs, it is a combined responsibility to undertake this either through raising public awareness or promoting study, scholarship and debate around these great development challenges. Strengthening cooperation alliances, renewing political commitment and helping the country and donors create deep, better financed and trusting partnerships will be needed for success.

Cambodia welcomes and endorsed the findings and recommendations of the review team for the independent organizational, financial and institutional review. Cambodia concurs with the review team's conclusion that the Strategic Framework remains relevant and serves as a sound basis for our moving forward over the next five years. However, we also believe, as the review rightfully noted, that there is a need to fine-tune the GMS program so that it will better harness the opportunities from increasing globalization and regional integration.

To sharpen our competitive edge, our achievements in physical connectivity should be translated into full and sustainable connectivity. We should promote the use of the improved and expanded MRC achievements and knowledge by building the necessary human resource capacity, and sustainably managing our environment and natural resources. It would be necessary to continue working toward more closely linking local, national and subregional policies and programs in these areas. In addition, streamlining the various subregional projects and initiatives, from basin development and environmental protection to tourism to avoid duplication and achieve greater complementarity, synergy, and efficiency should be further considered.

In implementing the 1995 Mekong Agreement, up to early 2006, only one notification was recorded at the 14th MRC Joint Committee meeting held on 6-7 July 2001 in Phnom Penh regarding the Vaico irrigation project. It is further observed that in general there were no notifications in relation to bridges built across the Mekong mainstream within the LMB. It seems that it is a practice of the MRC member countries ignoring the requirement under the Procedures for Notification, Prior Consultation and Agreement. There were three bridges built across the mainstream linking Lao PDR and the Kingdom of Thailand. Another was planned to link Thailand with China at the upper part. Within Cambodian context, one bridge stretched out across the mainstream at Kompong Cham provincial town, one is being built by Chinese experts and another is planned to be built with the assistance from Japanese government at Prek Neak Luong town.

The MRC is one of the best mechanisms in dealing with issues/differences/disputes that may arise within the MRC context. Many dispute preventive instruments were agreed by the member countries – MRC procedures for water utilization, but there is a need for further strengthening the effective implementation, as well as dissemination, of those agreements/instruments. In general, it is found out that the government pays more attention on the cooperation for development, in particular the within the GMS framework, which deals with economic development and trade facilitation rather than on natural resources conservation alone. It would say that development and natural resources protection were discussed within one forum.

Within the national context, it would be most valuable if concerned authorities were further strengthened and cooperated with CNMC, as the coordinating role, on any issue/problem related to the Mekong River basin. In addition, cooperation between NMCs is also an additional way of cooperation in the framework of MRC which may provide another

mechanism to strengthen their cooperation bilaterally as well as within the context of the MRC as the whole. Since the CNMC is the national coordinating body within the context of the MRC cooperation, it would be most valuable if the representative of the CNMC could be invited to any meeting/discussion/preparation of project within the Mekong River Basin, including border issues with Cambodia's neighbors, so that it can provide any information or share any idea regarding the project planning or implementation. On the other hand, CNMC should continue to closely cooperate with concerned institutions for the success of its responsibility.

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Annex 1

Terms of Reference Facilitator and Resource Persons for the Mid-term Review of the Implementation of the MRC Strategic Plan 2006-2010

1. These Terms of Reference remain in draft form; their review by the Member Countries of the Mekong River Commission is pending.

1 Background

Mekong River Commission

2. The MRC, established on 5 April 1995 by the Governments of Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Viet Nam, provides the institutional framework to implement the Agreement on [Cooperation for Sustainable Development of the Mekong River Basin](#). The Agreement concerns water resources such as fisheries, agriculture, and hydropower, and related issues including flood management, navigation, and environmental protection.

3. The 1995 Mekong Agreement establishes the framework and mechanisms for pursuing a coherent strategy of integrated water resources management (IWRM) on a regional scale. Article 2 of the Agreement relates to projects, programmes and planning: *To promote, support, cooperate and coordinate in the development of the full potential of sustainable benefits to all riparian states and the prevention of wasteful use of the Mekong River basin waters, with emphasis and preference on joint and/or basin-wide development projects and basin programs through the formulation of a basin development plan, that would be used to identify, categorize and prioritize the projects and programs to seek assistance for and to implement at the basin level.*

4. The MRC consists of three permanent bodies: The Council, the Joint Committee (JC) and the Secretariat (MRCS). National Mekong Committees (NMCs) act as focal points for MRC in each of the Member Countries and are served by respective National Mekong Committee Secretariats. MRC maintains regular dialogue with the two upstream countries of the Mekong River Basin, China and Myanmar, as well as with its development partners.

MRC Strategic Plan 2006-2010 and programme structure

5. The implementation of the first Strategic Plan 1999-2003 was reviewed in 2000. This review, which included the participation of the MRC Member Countries, provided the first input into the participatory planning process for the following Strategic Plan 2001-2005.

6. The current Strategic Plan 2006-2010, again produced in a participative way with the Member Countries, capitalises on the progress achieved in the two previous planning cycles namely establishing a procedures framework agreed by Member Countries pursuant to articles 5, 6 and 26 of the 1995 Mekong Agreement, a regionally recognised knowledge base and capacity development.

7. Under the overall goal *'More effective use of the Mekong's water and related resources to alleviate poverty while protecting the environment'* the Plan sets forth four goals, they include:

- a) To promote and support coordinated, sustainable, and pro-poor development;
- b) To enhance effective regional cooperation;
- c) To strengthen basin-wide environmental monitoring and impact assessment; and
- d) To strengthen the Integrated Water Resources Management capacity and knowledge base of the MRC bodies, NMCs, line agencies, and other stakeholders.

8. The MRC programme portfolio covers the sectors Flood Management and Mitigation, Agriculture, Irrigation and Forestry, Navigation and Fisheries and cross-cutting themes such as Environment, Information and Knowledge Management, and Water Utilisation. Within this structure the basin planning function through the Basin Development Plan Programme uses acquired knowledge and services of other programmes to build a basin-wide perspective of sustainable development options. Activities under programmes on Integrated Capacity Building, Drought Management, Hydropower and Tourism are currently limited.

9. The Strategic Plan clarifies the hierarchy of goals, objectives, and strategic outputs. The latter directing MRC programmes on the nature of services and products to be delivered. Programme documents in turn link MRC programmes back to the Strategic Plan by connecting programmes' contribution to the Strategic Plan objectives and expected results. However, some inconsistencies exist, as several programme documents predate the current Strategic Plan.

Recent changes in the development context

10. Development in the Mekong Basin is accelerating. This secures continued economic growth in the MRC Member Countries and opens opportunities for poverty alleviation and to achieve social development goals, but is also creates pressure on the available water and related resources of the basin. The role of the private sector in hydropower development, including on the Mekong mainstream, mining, industrial development, urbanisation, agro-industry and tourism has rapidly gained importance. Investment from the private sector now outweighs public sector investments in these areas and may lead to changes in the basin over the next few years on a scale that has so far not been seen. In comparison to conventional strategy-driven public sector and water resources planning approaches, private sector driven development emerging in the Lower Mekong Basin is more opportunity-driven and compresses planning cycles. It commonly employs less inclusive processes, and would focus on shorter term and less comprehensive objective settings. This brings opportunities as well as risks, and constitutes a considerable change since the Strategic Plan was drafted.

2 Objectives

11. The 27th Meeting of the MRC Joint Committee agreed on the need for a mid-term review of the MRC Strategic Plan 2006-2010. It recommended: *"...the alignment of MRC programmes to the Strategic Plan could be reviewed together with recommendations of elements of the work programme that may be considered marginal to the direction of the Strategic Plan. Similarly, aspects not covered by the reporting of the Secretariat, such as achievements of water-related Millennium Development Goals in the Lower Mekong Basin, could be considered."*

12. Consequently, the objectives of the mid-term review are to:
- a) Review the present state of the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2006-2010 against the goals, objectives and strategic outputs set forth in the Plan;
 - b) Assess the alignment of MRC programme portfolio towards the Strategic Plan 2006-2010;
 - c) Assess MRC's orientation towards UN Millennium Development Goals' targets and approaches in the Member Countries.
 - d) Recommend a prioritisation of the remaining period of the Strategic Plan 2006-2010, taking into account emerging opportunities and challenges, as well as budgetary and other resource constraints at the MRC; and
 - e) Make preliminary recommendations for the formulation of the Strategic Plan 2011-2015.

3 Review Process

13. The mid-term review will capture and integrate the perspectives of the four MRC Member Countries, the development partners and the Secretariat of the implementation of the Strategic Plan. The MRC Dialogue Partners PR China and Myanmar will also have the opportunity to provide inputs. A step-wise process will be adopted:

- a) The international facilitator proposes the analytical framework for the evaluation, and develops an annotated outline for Member Countries', development partners' and MRCS' mid-term review papers;
- b) NMCs, supported by riparian resource persons, develop country mid-term review papers;
- c) In parallel to the country reviews, the international facilitator the Secretariat and the development partners (if required) to prepare the their mid-term review papers;
- d) The international facilitator, supported by the four riparian resource persons, synthesises these six papers and Dialogue Partners' comments into a preliminary draft mid-term review report;
- e) At a regional consultation Member Countries present the four country mid-term review papers, and the international facilitator and the development partners present the regional-level papers. All discuss the preliminary draft mid-term report;
- f) The international facilitator incorporates comments as appropriate and issues the final draft mid-term review report; and
- g) The 15th MRC Council Meeting discusses the final draft mid-term review report in early November 2008.

4 Thematic Areas Covered by the Mid-term Review

14. Thematic areas covered by the mid-term review shall include, but not necessarily be limited to, the following:

15. Concerning the present state of implementation of the Strategic Plan 2006-2010:
- a) Assessment of MRC achievements against Strategic Plan goals, objectives and strategic outputs, from a regional perspective with a particular focus on regional coherence, and likely achievement of outcomes and development impacts; and

- b) Assessment of MRC achievements from the perspectives of the four Member Countries, with particular focus on integration and up-take at policy and technical levels.
16. Regarding the alignment of MRC programme portfolio towards the Strategic Plan:
- a) Assessment of the prioritisation of the MRC programme portfolio, and listing of elements which significantly contribute towards the implementation of the 1995 Mekong Agreement, and the Strategic Plan; and
- b) Review of implementation arrangements put in place vis-à-vis alignment of programmes to the Strategic Plan; the synchronisation of the programmes' planning cycles to the five-years strategic planning cycle of MRC and inter-programme coordination.
17. With respect to MRC's orientation towards UN Millennium Development Goals:
- a) Analyse National Millennium Development Goals Reports of the four Member Countries, in particular baseline, targets, approaches and indicators for MDG 1 Eradication of Poverty and Hunger; MDG 7 Environmental Sustainability; and MDG 8 Partnership for Development;
- b) Identify concrete linkages of countries' targets and approaches to the 1995 Mekong Agreement, the MRC Strategic Plan and the MRC programme portfolio; and
- c) Propose pragmatic steps for regionally coherent alignment of the MRC programme portfolio towards countries targets under the Millennium Development Goals, within the objectives and scope of the current Strategic Plan.
18. Prioritisation of the remaining period of the Strategic Plan, based on the above:
- a) Identification of gaps in the MRC programme portfolio vis-à-vis the Strategic Plan;
- b) Analysis of changes in the Mekong development context; identification of emerging key water resources and related development opportunities and risks, e.g. MRC's role in the coordination of hydropower development and climate change adaptation, and their implications for MRC's strategic directions and working principles;
- c) Re-prioritisation of goals, objectives and strategic outputs of the Strategic Plan and outputs and activities of MRC programmes, including proposal for portfolio consolidation as well as inclusion of new thematic areas, if appropriate;
- d) Review of current programme funding, as well as earmarking towards thematic areas, and assessment of realistic funding perspectives; and
- e) Proposal for resource re-allocation, and identification of additional priority funding requirements, if needed.
19. Preparation of the next Strategic Plan 2011-2015, based on the above:
- a) Outline of a timely and inclusive planning process for the next Strategic Plan 2011-2015, including preparatory works required as inputs to the process; and
- b) Preliminary ideas of goals and objectives, and implementation strategy for the next strategic planning cycle, taking into account the organisation's riparianisation²⁴, and

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Draft Strategy and Action Plan for Riparianisation of MRCS, outlining a process to increase ownership and sustainability of the MRC through strengthening capabilities and responsibilities of qualified riparian staff within MRC who can replace the international experts where applicable.

recent considerations on the organisational structure and permanent location of the MRCS.

5 Team Composition and Qualifications of Facilitator and Resource Persons

20. The team facilitating the mid-term review will be composed of:
 - a) International facilitator, will act as team leader – 30 person days; and
 - b) Four riparian resource persons – 20 person days each.
21. Required qualifications of the international facilitator:
 - a) Excellent facilitation and interpersonal skills;
 - b) Excellent report writing skills in English.
 - c) 10 years experience in international technical cooperation, preferably including experience at conceptual/managerial level and in a river basin organisation or comparable agency;
 - d) Substantial experience in strategic planning, and evaluation of large and complex cooperation programmes;
 - e) Experience in water resources management in Asia and at least two other comparable settings;
 - f) In depth understanding of the Mekong Basin development context.
22. Required qualifications of the riparian resource persons:
 - a) Excellent facilitation and interpersonal skills;
 - b) Excellent report writing skills in English;
 - c) 10 years experience in planning, water resources and environmental management, in governmental agencies and private sector, substantial involvement in development partner funded initiatives;
 - d) Experience in strategic planning, and evaluation of cooperation programmes;
 - e) Experience in water resources management;
 - f) In depth understanding of the Mekong Basin development context; and
 - g) Well established access to national-level governmental agencies, contextual initiatives of development partners, and senior resource persons in the Member Countries.

6 Scope of Work

23. The scope of work of the mid-term review facilitator and resource persons shall include, but not necessarily be limited to, the following:
24. Scope of work of the international facilitator:
 - a) Coordinate mid-term review resource persons and ensure their effective collaboration;
 - b) Desk review of relevant documents, to the extent necessary to be able to draft an annotated outline of country mid-term review papers, to provide NMC review members with data and information, and to conduct analysis at regional level;
 - c) Familiarise with the hierarchy of goals, objectives and strategic outputs set forth in the MRC Strategic Plan, as well as their prioritisation;
 - d) Prepare annotated outline of country mid-term review papers;

- e) Review drafts of country specific issue lists;
- f) Facilitate regional level review at MRCS, draft regional-level review paper;
- g) Compile preliminary draft mid-term review report and facilitate regional consultation;
- h) Incorporate comments and issue final draft mid-term review report, de-brief with MRCS.

25. Scope of work of the riparian resource persons:

- a) Desk review of relevant documents, to the extent necessary to be able to draft country issue lists, provide NMC review members with data and information, and to facilitate analysis at country level;
- b) Familiarise with the hierarchy of goals, objectives and strategic outputs set forth in the MRC Strategic Plan, as well as their prioritisation;
- c) Prepare country specific issue lists;
- d) Facilitate country-level meetings to solicit inputs to country mid-term review papers;
- e) Support compilation or draft country mid-term review papers, as requested by respective NMC;
- f) Support international facilitator in synthesising papers into draft mid-term review report, and facilitating a regional consultation.

7 Reporting Line

26. The international facilitator reports to the CEO of the MRCS and will work closely with the Technical Coordination Advisor and the Chief, International Cooperation and Communication Section.

27. The riparian resource persons report to the member of the MRC Joint Committee of their respective country, and submit the country mid-term review papers to the international facilitator.

8 Timing and Itinerary

28. Tentative timing:

- a) Assignment to start on 21 Jul 08;
- b) Six Mid-term Review Papers of MRC Member Countries, development partners and Secretariat ready by 22 Aug 08;
- c) Draft Mid-term Review report available by 19 Sep 08;
- d) Regional Consultation, on 03 Oct 08; and
- e) Final draft mid-term report available by 10 Oct 08, to be included in documentation for 15th Council Meeting, scheduled for 03 Nov 08.

29. Itinerary (working days only):

<i>Itinerary (day)</i>	<i>Tasks international facilitator</i>	<i>Tasks riparian resource persons</i>
1	Desk review of documents (home office)	Desk review of documents, compilation of draft country issue lists (home office)
2		

3		
4	Mobilisation to VTE	
5	Briefing with MRCS, meetings with MRC programmes	
6		
7	Annotated outline of country papers	Mobilisation to VTE
8	Working session on outline and issue lists	Working session on outline and issue lists
9	Compilation of regional-level mid-term review paper; meetings with MRC programmes, development partners, contextual initiatives and organisations, as appropriate	De-mobilisation to home country
10		Facilitation of country mid-term review papers (in home country, 10 working days within one calendar month)
11		
12		
13		
14	De-mobilisation to home country	
15		
16		
17		
18		
19		
Review break: 2 calendar weeks		
20	Synthesis of country mid-term review papers and regional-level mid-term review paper, compilation of draft mid-term review report (home office)	
21		
22		
23		
24		
25		
26		
27		
Review break: 1 calendar week		
28	Mobilisation to VTE	Mobilisation to VTE
29	Preparation of regional consultation	Preparation of regional consultatio
30	Regional consultation	Regional consultation
31	Editing of final draft mid-term review report; de-briefing at MRCS	De-mobilisation to home country
32		
33		
34		
35	De-mobilisation to home country	

9 Selected Background Documents

30. Relevant background documents, to be reviewed by the international facilitator and the riparian resource persons, include:

- a) 1995 Mekong Agreement;
- b) MRC Strategic Plans 1999-2003, 2001-2005 and 2006-2010;
- c) MRC Work Programmes 2006, 2007, and 2008;

- d) MRC Results-Based Monitoring and Evaluation System, Draft Proposal for System Development and Implementation, 2008;
- e) Report of the Independent Organisational, Financial and Institutional Review of the MRCS and the NMC, Jan 2007;
- f) Joint Statement of the International Conference on the MRC, Hanoi, 23-24 Apr 2007;
- g) Draft Strategy and Action Plan for Riparianisation of the MRCS, April 2007;
- h) Report on Enhanced Cooperation between MRC and IFI for Sustainable Development of the Mekong Basin, 2007;
- i) MRC Programme Documents, Programme Implementation Plans, and Annual Programme Work Plans; and
- j) Independent programme and project reviews and evaluations.

Annex 2**[Name] Country Paper for the Mid-Term Review of the
MRC Strategic Plan 2006-2010****Introduction**

A short introduction should set out the background to this report (why was it prepared), its purpose and how it is expected to be used.

Process for the Review

This section should outline the process under which the Country review took place. In particular it should indicate the consultation undertaken at Country level and the range of agencies/NGOs or other stakeholders consulted.

Assessment of the implementation of the MRC Strategic Plan

This section should provide an assessment by the Country of how well it considers that the Strategic Plan (SP) has been implemented so far (from 2006 to now).

This should be done by considering the detailed content of the SP – its goals, objectives, strategic outputs and the specific outcomes set out in the plan - and undertaking an assessment of MRC achievements against these. How well are these specific aspects of the SP being met by the range of MRC activities and by the institutional framework of the MRC, in particular on fostering regional coherence and achieving specific outcomes and development impacts at the regional level?

The SP contains a number of statements that describe what Countries were seeking from the plan when it was prepared – see the issues that were noted as important by the Member States (page 4 of the SP) and the member countries' expectations for the MRC (pages 9 and 10). Again, how well are these expectations by Countries being met including to what extent has it effected changes, adoption and integration into national policies and implementation procedures, strengthened riparian ownership and provided tangible benefits to the concerned countries?

The assessment should indicate both major positive achievements and major gaps. Note that the assessment should cover both the thematic and technical aspects of the SP as well as the organisational arrangements of the MRC to deliver these.

The alignment of MRC programmes**(i) Alignment with the 1995 Agreement**

This section should provide an assessment by the Country of the how well the prioritisation of the MRC programme portfolio contributes towards the implementation of the 1995 Mekong Agreement. During the formulation of the current SP Countries expressed a desire in seeing the MRC move toward a more comprehensive implementation of the 1995 Mekong Agreement.

For this mid-term review, Countries should consider how well the various components and activities under the Programmes are directly supporting the implementation of the Agreement and identify any major gaps.

(ii) Alignment with the Strategic Plan

This section should provide an assessment by the Country of the how well the MRC programme portfolio, and prioritisation of activities within that, contributes towards the implementation of the SP. This should be done by considering the various components and activities under the Programmes and assessing how well they align with the goals, objectives, and strategic outputs set out in the SP.

Countries should also consider arrangements for programme coordination and its institutionalization at all levels - how are the various Programme initiatives being coordinated at MRC level, between MRC and the NMCs, and with the line agencies in the Country. They should also consider integration and up-take at policy and technical levels within the Country – how have the various Programme initiatives of the MRC been taken up within the Country. The synchronisation of the Programmes' planning cycles to the five-year strategic planning cycle of MRC could also be considered.

Note that the assessment should cover both the thematic and technical aspects as well as the organisational arrangements to deliver these.

(iii) Alignment with other Regional Initiatives

This section should provide an assessment by the Country of the how well the prioritisation of the MRC programme portfolio is aligned with other regional initiatives such as the GMS and ASEAN initiatives. A guiding principle of the SP is that the MRC's role should complement the comparative advantages of others and avoid duplication of efforts. Countries should consider the various components and activities under the Programmes and assess how well they align with other regional initiatives, particularly to identify any areas of overlap or duplication, or where the MRC has a competitive advantage that is currently not being exploited.

MRC's orientation towards UN Millennium Development Goals:

This section should provide an assessment by the Country of how the Strategic Plan and the activities of the MRC align with its National Millennium Development Goal Reports. There is an increasing trend internationally for the assessment of the development of countries and regions to be made in terms of progress against the MDGs.

In particular, the review should consider the relationships of the Country's MDG to the 1995 Mekong Agreement, the MRC SP and the MRC Programme portfolio (especially in relation to the Country's baseline, targets, approaches and indicators for the MDGs. While all MDG should be considered, particular attention should be paid to MDG 1: Eradication of Poverty and Hunger; MDG 7: Environmental Sustainability; and MDG 8: Partnership for Development.

The aim here is to identify where the alignment is strong and where it is weak, as a basis for considering what appropriate action, if any, should be taken. This assessment will also provide a strong basis for considering how this aspect can be accommodated in the current Plan as well as the formulation of the next SP.

Prioritisation of the remaining period of the Strategic Plan

This section should provide an indication of any urgent concerns by the Country over issues that are currently not being dealt with within the MRC framework, or urgent issues which are not being addressed to the extent that a Country desires, and make recommendations for activities to respond to these concerns during 2009 and 2010.

The concerns should be identified by an assessment of:

- *any gaps in the various MRC components and activities under the Programmes compared to the current SP. Concerns under this item will arise from the analysis undertaken to complete Sections 1 to 5 of this paper; or*
- *any current major issues that have emerged in the time since the SP was approved. Concerns under this item will be guided by consideration of a list of water resources management and development issues that the country has identified (please include this list as an appendix to this Paper). This should be done by considering changes in the Mekong development context since 2005; identification of emerging key water resources and related development opportunities and risks (e.g. MRC's role in the coordination of hydropower development and climate change adaptation), and their implications for MRC's strategic directions and activities. Note that the assessment should cover both thematic and technical aspects of water management and development, as well as the organisational arrangements to deliver these.*

As a result of this strategic analysis, the Country should, where and if necessary, propose re-prioritisation of activities under the MRC framework, or to outputs and activities of MRC programmes, including any new areas of activity. This should be guided by consideration of the 2009 Work Programme which was approved at the recent Joint Committee meeting. It would be useful to categorise such recommendations – Category A (those that must be started in the first 6 months of 2009), Category B (those that should be started during 2009) and Category C (those that should be started during 2010).

The analysis should also include proposal for resource re-allocation to accommodate the Country's recommendations, and/or identification of additional priority funding requirements, if needed.

Preparation of the next Strategic Plan 2011-2015

This section should include suggestions by the Country for a timely and inclusive planning process for the next Strategic Plan 2011-2015, including preparatory works required as inputs to the process. The Country should provide preliminary ideas for the strategic planning process – what aspects of the process will be particularly important. Based on the analysis for Section 6, the Country may wish to indicate major themes for the next SP or major directions for Programmes and activities for the next strategic planning cycle.

Conclusion

This section should draw together the major conclusions of the paper.

Appendices

Attach any Appendices (eg the list of the major Country issues).

Annex 3: Key findings on the MRC mid-term Strategic Outputs 2006 – 2010

Goals / objectives <i>What is our purpose?</i> <i>What do we want to achieve?</i>	MRC Key actions / outputs <i>Goods and services to be delivered</i>	Findings
GOAL 1: To promote and support coordinated, sustainable, and pro-poor development		
1.1 To establish a system for analysing water demand, water supply and water use in the basin to support the basin development planning process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upgraded modelling toolkit and decision support framework (DSF) • Water supply and demand maps • Basin-wide water resources development scenarios and options • A series of water accounts and verifiable water use indicators to guide decision-making and development strategy formulation 	<p>The Decision Support Framework (DSF) has been extensively used in MRC programmes and activities, notably the Basin Development Plan (BDP), the Integrated Basin Flow Management (IBFM), and the Flood Management and Mitigation Programme (FMMP) with intensive support of the (TSD) Modelling Team. In parallel, other activities relating to the DSF enhancement and modelling capacity building are also carried-out including upgrading the Isis dongle, developing a Reporting Tool Wizard, and DSF Online Support.</p> <p>The updated report on sub-areas is going on and to be ready early 2009 for the formulation of the basin wide development scenarios.</p> <p>BDP1 achieved: (1) A basin planning process established and ongoing; (2) Data systems implemented and functional; (3) Capacity built and training provided within MRCS, NMCs and national organizations; (4) Sub-area and basin-wide scenarios and strategies formulated; and (5) A Projects Database (long-list) set-up and projects prioritized (short-list).</p> <p>The updated sub-area reports includes most of the additional information needed for the formulation of basin-wide development scenarios, based on analysis of the strategic development options and the description of the related water resources development projects in each sub-area.</p> <p>Hydropower & irrigation sector reviews have been undertaken to provide an updated understanding of the sector development dimension and information on significant projects.</p>
1.2 To establish processes and mechanisms enabling the balancing of trade-offs between economic and political net benefits of different sectors, areas, and regions; and benefits from environmental and social protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baseline thematic maps of water and related resource and beneficiaries • Consolidated trade-off analysis of development scenarios based on assessed and quantified net impacts on economic, ecological and social values ▪ Process of discussions on trade-offs and mutual benefits in basin development, including 	<p>Information on values has been collected and added to the wetland map as a tool for BDP Phase 2. Assessment of people vulnerable to changes in aquatic resources was initiated aimed to provide a spatial description of vulnerability. Work on environmental impact of tourism was initiated.</p> <p>Relevant documents and tools were reviewed. A discussion paper is was prepared in 2007 on the assessment framework for basin planning in BDP Phase 2.</p> <p>The existing ten sub-area studies were reviewed with TOR was considered by the NMCs to strengthen the role of key stakeholders in the formulation and evaluation of basin-wide development scenarios and the IWRM-based basin strategy, and promote consensus and acceptance of the outcomes.</p>

Goals / objectives <i>What is our purpose?</i> <i>What do we want to achieve?</i>	MRC Key actions / outputs <i>Goods and services to be delivered</i>	Findings
	forum/ policy dialogue meeting.	
1.3 To produce a regularly updated rolling plan applying the planning process for identification, categorization and prioritization of projects and programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An IWRM rolling plan • Collaborative basin development planning processes for project identification and prioritization in water related sectors • Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) Strategy supported by assessed development scenarios and options • MRC projects and programmes database • Cumulative impact assessment studies of development scenarios 	<p>The draft outline of the IWRM-based basin-wide strategy was discussed with the involvement of NMCs, national line agencies, MRC programmes. It is expected that the strategy would usefully guide the implementation of the IWRM principles and practices at the basin, national and sub-basin levels. Such strategy will be enhanced with the strategic directions for the long-term development of water and related resources in the LMB once the assessed development scenarios are available in 2009.</p> <p>The gaps in the sectoral knowledge base for basin planning are identified and work packages for other MRC Programmes prepared. The existing ten sub-area studies were reviewed and draft terms of reference prepared for the implementation of the next steps in sub-basin planning. A plan is prepared for the consolidation of the existing longlist of projects and the promotion of the shortlisted projects.</p> <p>The rolling IWRM-based basin development is prepared in the context of the Mekong partnership programme aiming at promoting consensus among MRC Programmes, NMCs and national line agencies and other stakeholders on the purpose, scope and implementation modalities of the plan.</p> <p>Several meetings were organized to discuss and agree on important technical directions for scenarios formulation and assessment, namely, the discussion paper on Approach and Overall Process to formulate and assess basin-wide development scenarios and BDP assessment framework.</p> <p>The first draft of IWRM-based basin strategy, based on the existing strategic directions for IWRM in the LMB and other documents prepared. The strategy must usefully guide the implementation of IWRM principles and practices at the basin, national and sub-basin levels.</p> <p>BDP2 highlighted that the gaps in other sector knowledge are being addressed by the appropriate MRC programmes such as FMMP, FP and NAP.</p> <p>The BDP will support the improvement of the DSF and the IBFM process by IKMP & EP, respectively.</p> <p>The project database improved to include the relevant data and information of all significant projects with potential transboundary implications, including any newly identified projects through the above sector and sub-area activities.</p> <p>It is expected that by the end of 2008, the hydrological impact assessments of basin-wide development scenarios using the DSF will be carried out.</p>
1.4 To screen, formulate and promote wise development options at the transboundary and basin levels for preparation and	1.4.1 Support to identification and preparation of balanced sustainable development options in partnership with donors, development partners and investment banks.	Integrated Flood Risks Management report (IFRM) for LMB, prepared by FMMP, enables BDP staff to understand, identify and broadly assess flooding impacts and considerations when evaluating water resource development and infrastructure projects proposed for inclusion in the BDP.

Goals / objectives <i>What is our purpose?</i> <i>What do we want to achieve?</i>	MRC Key actions / outputs <i>Goods and services to be delivered</i>	Findings
implementation by other appropriate development agencies ²⁵	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support to Line Agencies with knowledge and expertise in preparation of project proposals, focusing on joint and basin-wide projects and national projects with significant basin impacts • Project promotion and fund-raising services for joint and basin-wide projects 	<p>Training provided with (1) scenario-based planning & use of assessment tools, (2) IWRM principles in planning including the preparation of water & related resources strategies and identification of the associated projects, and (3) identification & facilitation of trade-off.</p> <p>BDP team, in consultation with ICBP and NMCs, will assess the feasibility of IWRM training capacity in some existing institutes in the LMB.</p> <p>The new Funding Arrangement between AusAID and MRC was signed in June 2008 to support the Climate Change and Adaptation Initiative for the year 2008-2012.</p> <p>The first joint donor review of BDP2 was conducted in May 2008 with members from DANIDA, SIDA and AusAID. The review concluded with positive assessment on “solid footing” of the BDP2 despite its understandable delays.</p>
1.4.1 To support sustainable land and water development through more effective and integrated utilization of agricultural, irrigation, drought, and watershed management systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watershed management policy guidelines and proceedings • Best practices on watershed management and technologies • Support to line agencies on identification and preparation of BDP watershed management projects • Basin-wide irrigation efficiency improvement strategy • Institutional and managerial guidelines to improve irrigation efficiency • Assessment of irrigation 	<p>Final draft on analysis of existing policies and legal framework for watershed management and final draft with proposals for optimizing the institutional framework for watershed management finalized.</p> <p>Guidelines for efficiency irrigation water use drafted and presented to member countries for review at wrap-up workshop in mid-2008. this is also complete this three-year project</p> <p>Draft Watershed Management Resource Kit version 2.0 finalized. It was approved for publication, fully translated into riparian languages and used for Capacity Building; Learning Centers established, equipped, and the move from establishment to operation supported.</p> <p>Watershed management resource kit, Version 1.0 was finalized, and main parts translated into relevant national languages and operational as a draft working documents for capacity building. The kit version 2.0 will be finalized, translated into local languages and approved for publishing in 2008.</p> <p>Watershed management learning centers in all four pilot watersheds established (around 30 capacity building workshops conducted).</p> <p>Guidelines for efficient irrigation water use is drafted and presented to Member Countries for their review. A follow-up project is formulated and the project goes into implementation.</p> <p>Watershed Management Resource Kit Version 1.0 finalized, main parts translated into riparian languages and operational as a draft working document for capacity building.</p> <p>Database and information system needs assessment in Thailand and Laos. Watershed Management learning centers in all four pilot watershed established. Database and information system needs assessment in Thailand.</p> <p>Analysis of several paddy fields’ functions was completed and the summary result was presented at the symposium of International Network for</p>

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Supported by sector specific objectives: 1.3.1 through 1.3.7.

Goals / objectives <i>What is our purpose?</i> <i>What do we want to achieve?</i>	MRC Key actions / outputs <i>Goods and services to be delivered</i>	Findings
	<p>efficiency in the basin</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment of groundwater potential for irrigation • Support to line agencies in identification and preparation of BDP priority irrigation development and rehabilitation projects 	<p>Water and Ecosystem in Paddy Fields (INWEPF) and the 4th regional workshop of Demonstration of Multi-functional Paddy Fields (DMPPF). Hydropower and Irrigation sector reviews have been undertaken to provide an updated understanding of the sector development dimension and information on the significant projects.</p> <p>A brief technical report focusing on dry season water balance analysis is planned to be published to 3rd Southeast Asia Water Forum and the Paddy and Water Environment (PWE) Journal.</p> <p>Intensive dry season data collection at field level in four pilot sites has been completed, and interim reports from most of the member countries are also completed. Another series of field level observations covering rainy season is on-going and will be completed in early 2008. The report will be published in 2008.</p>
<p>1.4.2 To assist in the development of the basin's hydropower potential to ensure safeguarding of the environment and social interests while meeting the Basin's increasing need for energy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and update assessment of hydropower potential in the Mekong Basin • Update basin-wide hydropower development strategy • Update hydropower database of planned and existing dams • Impact assessments of hydropower projects • Best practices to mitigate negative impacts of hydropower focussing on environmental and social impacts 	<p>Cooperation structures with hydropower segments in the riparian countries will be established and advice on the planning, development and operation of hydropower plants in the LMB will be provided in close consultation with the riparian governments and the BDP.</p> <p>Operations Division</p> <p>The implementation of the 'Initial Analysis of Hydropower Potentials in the Lower Mekong Basin in Relation to Cumulative Trans-boundary Impacts' started in the second half of 2007 with action to recruit a riparian project manager and international technical advisor, but the positions are, however, not yet filled.</p> <p>The 'Initial Analysis of Hydropower Potential in the Lower Mekong Basin in Relation to Cumulative and Transboundary Impacts' funded by the Japan ASEAN Integration Fund (JAIF) will support formulation and implementation of the Hydropower programme.</p> <p>In addition EP, BDP and FP are addressing some aspects of hydropower development and operation through their own programmes. Operations</p> <p>Draft Concept note on environmental considerations for hydropower development have been prepared in consultation with WWF and ADB.</p> <p>Operations Division</p>
<p>1.4.3 To achieve more active and efficient</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional master plan for 	<p>The Project "Design of the Master Plan for Navigation on the Mekong River System in Cambodia" which started in 2005, together with the other national navigation strategies and plans, will feed into the formulation of the Regional Master Plan (Comprehensive Investment Programme) for</p>

Goals / objectives <i>What is our purpose?</i> <i>What do we want to achieve?</i>	MRC Key actions / outputs <i>Goods and services to be delivered</i>	Findings
<p>river transportation through increased freedom of navigation to increase social development, international trade and tourism opportunities</p>	<p>navigation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal Framework for Cross-border Navigation • Aids to Navigation Systems • Traffic safety management system • Improved risk and emergency management capacity as related to navigation • Navigation emergency management plan • Navigation pollution control system and environmental management tools and best practices for navigation and river works • Mekong River Navigation 	<p>waterborne transportation.</p> <p>Another important activity under this component will be the study and implementation of pilot projects to better understand and mitigate morphological changes resulting in riverbank instability; including causes, impacts and solutions. One such activity will study the impacts of dredging in the Tonle Sap Lake. Other activities will include the development of pilot studies to reduce the potential for riverbank erosion in the Lao PDR, Thailand and Vietnam.</p> <p>MRC and P.R. China agreed on a new level of cooperation in the field of Navigation. They agreed to Jointly organize a series of seminars on Waterway Safety and Navigation Improvement. Some necessary documents were prepared for the planned workshop in Jinhong in October 2008.</p> <p>A comprehensive legal study on the current regime of the Mekong River between Cambodia and Vietnam to assess and evaluate the existing 1998 Hanoi Navigation Agreement was completed.</p> <p>The negotiations between Cambodia and Vietnam on establishing a legal framework for cross-border navigation, with the MRC's facilitation, reached final stage. Both parties are now making necessary consultations with their respective governments for finalizing and eventually signing.</p> <p>As requested, the ToR was developed to conduct a study to provide recommendations for establishing a legal framework for cross-borer navigation between Laos and Thailand on the stretch downstream of Luong Prahbang.</p> <p>Aids to international standard navigation, consisting of buoys, beacons and shore marks were installed and operational on the stretch between Phnom Port and Cambodia-Vietnam border. Cambodia will perform maintenance and operational repairs.</p> <p>The project "hydrodynamic & morphological impacts of channel dredging in Tonle Sap Lake" completed in early 2007, providing a firm basis for evaluating the sustainability of dredging the Tonle Sap for navigation.</p> <p>The NAB, a high level of NMCs and national line agencies, established and operational (twice a year)</p> <p>Under the cooperation between Upper & LMR navigation between MRC and China, with focus on Waterway Safety and Environmental Protection, a second Regional Seminars on Waterway Safety, navigation Improvement and Environmental Sustainability in China will be organized.</p> <p>A comprehensive aids to navigation system composed of 56 buoys and 8 lead structures was put in place along the Mekong River between Phnom Penh Port and the Cambodia-Viet Nam border.</p> <p>Currently there are no environmental protection measures, no provisions for pollution mitigation, and no contingency plans in place for the Mekong River. This output will involve a risk assessment of major ports and waterway safety hazards, and an estimation of risk levels.</p> <p>The condition survey of dangerous areas for navigation (Dangerous Areas) to be carried out in Component 1 will provide detailed designs and full sets of bidding documents for manufacturing and installation of aids to navigation along priority areas. Upon selection of the contractors, the channel markers and beacons will be manufactured and installed.</p> <p>The Management Information System (MIS) for Phnom Penh Port (phase 1) was developed and operational, maintaining a database of goods</p>

Goals / objectives <i>What is our purpose?</i> <i>What do we want to achieve?</i>	MRC Key actions / outputs <i>Goods and services to be delivered</i>	Findings
	Information Systems <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support to line agencies in identification and preparation of BDP priority navigation development projects 	movement into, through and out of the port and using by all port departments and related agencies such as customs, shipping lines, freight forwarders, shipping agents, trucking companies and others. All aspects of the port's commercial operation, environment, safety and security will be enhanced through the implementation and operation of the MIS. The next step is MIS II focusing more on container tracking and software applications for billing and tariff management. NAP NAP
1.4.4 To build regional flood and drought management capacity for prevention, minimization or mitigation of people's suffering and economic losses due to floods and droughts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flood probability maps Fully operational flood forecasting and warning system using a comprehensive data set Hydro-meteorological monitoring network (real-time) Hydro-meteorological data base Hydro-meteorological year book (bulletin, CD ROM) Annual hydro-climatic assessment report 1.4.2 Guidelines for flood proofing and mitigation measures <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transboundary flood mediation and coordination mechanisms 	Flood probability information available for selected pilot area in Cambodia: The flood probability data sets and the maps at a suitable scale are available for land use planning purposes. Guidelines and training modules in using improved flood probability information for land use planning is available. Two institutional and technical reports describe the required overall and specific functionalities of the RFMMC and a framework for improving the short and medium flood forecasting system. Annual flood report for 2006, emphasizing on data analysis and the temporal and spatial nature of floods and flooding in the Mekong region, prepared. This enables MRC to build up a complete picture of all aspects of the Mekong flood regime and becomes a valuable source of data for the FMMP and a solid source of information for all those involved in flood management and mitigation in the basin. FMMP The hydro-meteorological data collected from Member Countries of up to 2005 are being processed. The CD-Rom Hydrological Yearbook for 2003-2004 was produced. FMMP/IKMP Hydrological Condition Report for the LMB for 2006-2007 was presented to the 25 th MRC JC Meeting in May 2007. The report enables BDP staff to understand, identify and broadly assess flooding impacts and considerations when evaluating water resource development and infrastructure projects proposed for inclusion in the BDP. A comprehensive analysis on the prevention, mitigation and resolution of differences and disputes between the Member Countries, as well as review of key provisions of general international law and of practices adopted by the international community, which may apply to relations between the Member Countries as well as all riparian Countries, or which may facilitate and/or support the interpretation and application of the

Goals / objectives <i>What is our purpose?</i> <i>What do we want to achieve?</i>	MRC Key actions / outputs <i>Goods and services to be delivered</i>	Findings
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flood emergency management and preparedness system with full coverage • Land use planning and management guidelines • Support to line agencies in identification and preparation of BDP priority flood management projects identified through BDP • Drought forecasting and early warning system based on detailed data • Drought risk maps • Drought mitigation and management policy guidelines 	<p>relevant provisions of the 1995 Mekong Agreement.</p> <p>The programmes capture all system needs at this level for improving flood preparedness and mitigation together with an implementation plan, which identifies i) consolidation of response capacities and actions; ii) activities oriented to enhancement of response capacities in the short and medium term; and iii) activities oriented towards implementation of mitigation measures in the short and medium term.</p> <p>The report describes an overview of flood vulnerability of the LMB and its requirements in terms of provision of flood warning and dissemination; and an overview of institutional framework of member country agencies responsible for flood warning and dissemination and Regional Flood Management and Mitigation Center; and general requirements for strengthening the flood early warning information and dissemination systems in the LMB.</p> <p>Flood probability information available for selected pilot area in Cambodia: The flood probability data sets and the maps at a suitable scale are available for land use planning purposes.</p> <p>Guidelines and training modules in using improved flood probability information for land use planning will be available.</p> <p>National reports of perspectives on trans-boundary flood issues: identifies and prioritizes the key issues at the national level to enhance the MRC capacity in addressing trans-boundary flood issues.</p> <p>Regional report on trans-boundary flood issues of the LMB: provides a list of regionally concerned trans-boundary flood issues, which will be compiled to set out at a general level the key issues of focus for the FMMP-Component 3. This will be done through bilateral / regional discussions between the NMCs and concerned National Line Agencies.</p> <p>Due to fund availability the compilation of a concise report on the hydrologic characteristics of Mekong basin droughts, as well as their socio-economic dimension for the drought report preparation. This document would provide background information for fundraising activities. It is based on a previous internal report of the MRCS, more recent research presented at the regional consultation workshop on the programme as well as research collaboration with IWMI.</p> <p>DP</p> <p>DP</p>
1.4.5 To maintain productive Mekong fisheries and enhance aquaculture of indigenous species for increased food security and economic output	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report on commercial fish species and production 	<p>Publications in the Technical Series and the Technical Advisory Body's Management Recommendation Series; the regular newsletter Catch and Culture (in English and riparian languages); and a film on the fisheries of the Mekong delta (similar films for Lao and Thailand are currently being finalised). In addition, translation and publication of technical and Development Series publications in riparian languages had continued. One of these is the Khmer version of the book on "Fishing Gears on the Cambodian Mekong".</p> <p>3 Technical Series papers published: (1) Consumption and yield of fish and other aquatic animals from LMB, (2) Triggers for fish immigration, and (3) importance of fisheries in Delta, Vietnam.</p> <p>A major field study on compiling statistics and information on fisheries production in the Mekong delta was completed.</p>

Goals / objectives <i>What is our purpose?</i> <i>What do we want to achieve?</i>	MRC Key actions / outputs <i>Goods and services to be delivered</i>	Findings
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="477 347 808 400">• Inland fisheries development strategy <li data-bbox="477 608 808 660">• Increased capacity of local and national fisheries bodies <li data-bbox="477 831 808 884">• Technologies for aquaculture of indigenous species adopted <li data-bbox="477 1075 808 1150">• Coordination services in the field of sustainable fisheries development <li data-bbox="477 1257 808 1353">• Support to line agencies in identification and preparation of BDP priority sustainable fisheries development projects 	<p data-bbox="831 347 2074 422">Several fisheries development strategies, at country level and for particular fisheries, were already available. National partners would build on these activities to determine whether a regional strategy would complement the national strategies, or whether the necessary components were already covered at national levels.</p> <p data-bbox="831 438 2074 513">The FP worked with a consortium of partners in developing conservation strategies for the giant Mekong catfish, including technical work in developing models which might assist in indicating the conservation status of the species, as well as the more practical aspects of implementing a moratorium on fishing for the species in the Mekong in northern Thailand and Lao PDR.</p> <p data-bbox="831 529 2074 572">Establishment of data collection procedures for fisheries valuation studies; Documentation of lessons learned from participatory fisheries management on local, provincial and national levels from more than 80 sites in four riparian countries;</p> <p data-bbox="831 608 2074 683">The TAB, that is now well established and operational, continued implementing a series of three-day learning events on regional fisheries management in Member Countries, targeting at mid-level provincial fisheries managers in the national languages. With positive results, the TAB is looking to extend the activity in its next 3-year work programme.</p> <p data-bbox="831 699 2074 799">A series of research training activities (on fisheries ecology, economics and management) was completed at the fisheries institute in Cambodia. These activities provided specialised training at all stages of projects design and implementation as well as in institutional management of the projects. Further on-the-job training had also been completed particularly within the Fisheries Management and Governance and Aquaculture of Mekong Indigenous Fish Species components.</p> <p data-bbox="831 831 2074 975">It is expected that the development of a project on fish passage (facilities enabling fish to pass upstream and downstream of barriers) in Lao PDR, which would be based in Lao, the FP will have broader regional applicability, and that fisheries technicians in other countries would have observer status during the course of the project. The project started in 2007 for 2-3 years. The project is planned by FP to review and analyse the data from three fisheries that had been monitored in the Mekong for approximately 10 years. An initial scoping study was conducted in 2006, funded by the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research. The report was very favourable, and was now being reviewed by ACIAR to determine follow-up action.</p> <p data-bbox="831 991 2074 1043">Propagation techniques of at least two Mekong indigenous fish species will be defined and published. Biological synopses of nine indigenous Mekong fish species will be published, providing essential background for further development of aquaculture techniques for the species.</p> <p data-bbox="831 1075 2074 1219">Facing the new focus on proposals for dams on the mainstream, the FP need to produce information specifically related to the possible impacts of dams on fish migration, spawning and fisheries production, identifying important fish spawning grounds along the length of the Mekong mainstream in the LMB. Similarly, the FP will bring forward plans for generation of information on methods for mitigating the impact of dams on fisheries. The first step will be the production of a document outlining common mitigation practices elsewhere in the world and their applicability in the Mekong region. Also, an expert group meeting is being organised, in conjunction with the HP, on the barrier effect of dams on fish migration, and the possibilities for mitigation.</p> <p data-bbox="831 1257 2074 1300">The FP continued to provide input into several regional planning initiatives, such as the integrated basin flow management studies being organised by the EP and WUP, and a range of activities coordinated by the Mekong Wetlands Biodiversity Programme.</p>

Goals / objectives <i>What is our purpose?</i> <i>What do we want to achieve?</i>	MRC Key actions / outputs <i>Goods and services to be delivered</i>	Findings
1.4.6 To develop the tourism potential of the Mekong benefiting local economies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourism development strategy to benefit local people • Development of tools and best practices to reduce negative impacts of tourism on environment and social conditions • Support to line agencies in identification and preparation of BDP priority sustainable tourism development projects 	<p>TP activities is to be linked with related projects carried out under the ADB's initiatives tourism sector of the GMS and those being carried out by the Transport, Communications and Tourism Division of UNESCAP, especially the Mekong/Lancang River Tourism Planning Study.</p> <p>The assessment on environmental impact of tourism, under EP Component 3 People and Aquatic Ecosystems, for the year 2008 relates to the national and regional reports. The activity will be completed when the regional report on environmental impacts of tourism in the LMB is finalized in June 2008.</p> <p>The regional report will synthesize the findings of the national reports. It will highlight at regional scale aspects of tourism development in the LMB, current and anticipated environmental impacts of tourism sector, prioritized actions. Recommendations will be made on, alternative approaches for the development of an MRC tourism programme, and the role and responsibility of the MRC as the River Basin Organization to address impacts.</p> <p>The main activities under the assessment on environmental impact of tourism, under EP Component 3 - People and Aquatic Ecosystems, for the year 2008 relates to the national and regional reports. Based on the national report on environmental impacts of tourism of the member countries, a regional synthesis report is drafted and scheduled for the fourth quarter of 2008 (as recommended by the 12th Council Meeting).</p> <p>Three national reports on the environmental impact of tourism have been completed.</p> <p>It will link (where appropriate) to the socio-economic components of the relevant sector programmes (Navigation, Watershed Management and Fisheries). This assessment will also include an analysis of the MRC's comparative advantage in tourism, if any, thus allowing for future programme development. It will be important to look at the impact of both mass tourism and eco-tourism as they pertain to the MRC's mandate.</p>
1.4.7 To assess domestic water supply and sanitation options to ensure adequate protection and improvement of peoples' lives and the environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report on domestic water supply and sanitation needs in the basin • Water supply and sanitation development strategy • Support to identification of BDP priority water supply and sanitation projects 	<p>Operations Division</p> <p>Operations Division</p> <p>Operations Division</p>
GOAL 2. To enhance effective regional cooperation		
2.1 To increase MRC's function as a transparent and effective cooperation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased cooperation between MRC Member States 	ICCS

Goals / objectives <i>What is our purpose?</i> <i>What do we want to achieve?</i>	MRC Key actions / outputs <i>Goods and services to be delivered</i>	Findings
<p>mechanism among Member States and to develop and demonstrate enhanced linkages, compatibility and complementarities of partnerships with other regional organizations and initiatives such as GMS, the World Bank's MWRAP, ACMECS, ASEAN, etc., including sub-basin organizations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partnership agreements (MoUs) with developments partners, International River Basin Organisations, and research institutions 	<p>ICCS</p>
<p>2.2 To complete, adopt and make applicable mechanisms, procedures and guidelines as required under the 1995 Mekong Agreement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technical guidelines for implementing the procedure for maintenance of flows on the mainstream Guidelines for transboundary environmental impact assessment Procedures/Guidelines for water quantity Technical Guidelines for implementing the procedures for water quality Adopted procedures are implemented 	<p>Specialists' reports for the IBFM predictive tool were completed and are now ready for trial and use by other programmes, and eventually line agencies.</p> <p>Methodology for assessing environmental flows has been completed and is ready for adoption and use by line agencies in the riparian countries. Workshop on IBFM has been conducted and national consultations were held to negotiate national pilot studies on IBFM.</p> <p>The framework of the guideline transboundary EIA (TbEIA) was essentially completed (with one outstanding issue on the language used), work on guidance and institutional support continues. The transboundary environmental impact assessment framework continues to be revised for the year 2008 in consideration of Member States' concerns.</p> <p>Seven Transboundary critical areas/issues of the Mekong River Basin are identified providing a basis for initiating capacity building for the year 2008. A better understanding of the TbEIA tool by learning and sharing experiences with other basins was promoted in February 2008 at a regional seminar. In 2008, capacity building on TbEIA will be emphasized.</p> <p>Based on identified knowledge gaps IBFM work in 2006 focused on improving hydrological modelling, sediment and geomorphology as well as fisheries, development of a database driven expert tool was initiated.</p> <p>WUP</p> <p>It seems that the implementation of the adopted procedures and their relevant guidelines depends very much on each member country. The dissemination activities of those legal documents were carried out during the WUP Start-up project, but some NMCs wish to have it further disseminated. It is to not that among the five procedures, one – Procedures for Water Quality - is pending the decision of one government cabinet before signing.</p>
<p>2.3 To identify potential transboundary issues for</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased capacity for 	<p>A better understanding on the TbEIA tool by learning and sharing experiences with other basins was promoted in Feb 2008 at a regional</p>

Goals / objectives <i>What is our purpose?</i> <i>What do we want to achieve?</i>	MRC Key actions / outputs <i>Goods and services to be delivered</i>	Findings
negotiation, mediation and conflict prevention; and develop mediation and conflict management capacity	managing transboundary issues <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of awareness of tools and approaches to mediation and conflict management in natural resources issues • Inventory of issues and areas with potential for conflicts in use and impacts related to water • Development of mechanisms to address environmental issues 	seminar. The capacity building on TbEIA will be emphasized. The transboundary environmental impact assessment framework continues to be revised for the year 2008 in consideration of Member States' concerns. A better understanding of the TbEIA tool by learning and sharing experiences with other basins was promoted in February 2008 at a regional seminar. In 2008, capacity building on TbEIA will be emphasized. Seven Transboundary critical areas/issues of the Mekong River Basin are identified providing a basis for initiating capacity building for the year 2008. Training modules for capacity building on conflict prevention and mediation were partly completed and proposed standard terminology was translated into riparians languages in 2008. a regional training on Trans-boundary Waters Dispute Prevention and Management was organized and by the end of 2008 pilot areas chosen from identified trans-boundary critical areas will be used in a learning and information exchange process on conflict prevention. Seven trans-boundary critical areas/issues of the MRB are identified providing a basis for initiating capacity building for 2008. A regional training on Transboundary Waters Dispute Prevention and Management was held in May 2008. By the end of 2008, pilot areas chosen from identified transboundary critical areas will be used in a learning and information exchange process on conflict prevention. Based on identified knowledge gaps IBFM work in 2006 focused on improving hydrological modelling, sediment and geomorphology as well as fisheries, development of a database driven expert tool was initiated.
2.4 To promote and improve dialogue and collaboration with China and Myanmar.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased cooperation with upstream riparian countries through joint studies and projects 	MRC and P.R. China agreed on a new level of cooperation in the field of Navigation. The Fishery TAB also undertook a study tour to the inland fisheries of Myanmar. Technical cooperation with China under the Agreement on the Provision of Hydrological Information of Lancang / Mekong River in the Flood Season progressed well. The information provided under the Agreement is reliable for the timely flood forecasting operations of the MRC Secretariat. The present Agreement is now under consideration for renewal.
GOAL 3. To strengthen basin-wide environmental monitoring and impact assessment		
3.1 To improve monitoring of the environmental condition of the Mekong River basin, focusing on water quantity and quality, ecological health and social impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental water quality monitoring system • Social impact monitoring system 	A report card on water quality was presented to member countries for approval before publication. Work on water quality monitoring network continues with improved quality and high efficiency. All national laboratories are now able to analyze two new additional water quality parameters testing of laboratories indicates an improvement of laboratories competence to standard. MRC Technical Paper No 15 - Diagnostic Study of Water Quality in the LMB describing baseline conditions for environmental contaminants in the LMR and its tributaries, was published. MRC Technical Paper No 13 – Biomonitoring of the Lower Mekong River and selected tributaries was also published. The 2 nd phase of Social Impact Monitoring (SIA) System is ongoing and by end of 2008, the technical guidelines for SIA will be ready for NMCs' consideration. The field studies to verify the socio-economic indicators start in 2 nd half of 2008.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mekong River ecological health monitoring system • Model of the Mekong Basin's aquatic ecosystems • 	<p>The ecological health monitoring completed the first 4-year monitoring cycle in 2008. A first round of samples at selected sites is complete at the beginning of 2008.</p> <p>A synthesis of the first four seasons of completed ecological health monitoring data for the Lower Mekong Basin is to be published as MRC Technical Paper report on aquatic ecological health.</p> <p>Draft Indicative Mekong River report card – ecological health: has been prepared in an easy to read document to inform the people of the Lower Mekong Basin of the water quality conditions of the Mekong river mainstream.</p> <p>The report card on Aquatic Ecological Health (2004-2007) is developing in consultation with the member States aiming at getting approval from NMCs & line agencies in 2008.</p> <p>The final draft 2007 Bio-monitoring Report completed in January 2008 and will be published within this year.</p>
3.2 To regularly report on the environmental condition of the Mekong River basin and disseminate this information widely	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updated environmental status report • Updated State of the Basin Report • Updated Basin Report Cards on environmental and social conditions • Guidelines on best environmental management practices 	<p>The final draft 2007 Biomonitoring Report completed in January 2008 and will be published within this year. The Report Card on Aquatic Ecological Health of Mekong River Basin (2004-2007) is being developed in consultation with the Member States in 2008 and EP aims at final approval from NMCs and line agencies within this year.</p> <p>Two technical papers on water quality assessment, providing a summary of MRC's 20 years experiences on water quality will be published in 2008.</p> <p>A technical report on the assessment methodology for environmental flows was ready in 2008 for testing and adoption under the IBFM process and for further evaluation.</p> <p>Reports on flows assessment under BDP scenarios have continued in order to refine IBFM in order to integrate into the BDP in 2008.</p> <p>Draft Indicative Mekong River report card - water quality: has been prepared in an easy to read document to inform the people of the Lower Mekong Basin of the water quality conditions of the Mekong river mainstream.</p> <p>Principles and mechanisms for conflict mediation and resolution: The work plan on the MRC transboundary framework conflict management initiative in the LMB has been completed and is ready for implementation by Member Countries.</p>
3.3 To raise awareness of MRC, NMCs, and line agencies on transboundary and basin-wide environmental issues and to increase the capacity to address them	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training modules on the use of EIA, SEA, and other tools • Environmental educational kits • Environmental awareness on 	<p>EP</p> <p>EP</p> <p>The risk assessment focuses on transboundary concerns on water quality and the results finalised in early 2007. The Programme took the lead in coordinating awareness raising and capacity development in conflict management and mitigation. A transboundary impact diagnostic study was</p>

Goals / objectives <i>What is our purpose?</i> <i>What do we want to achieve?</i>	MRC Key actions / outputs <i>Goods and services to be delivered</i>	Findings
	transboundary issues	initiated for Sesan, Sre Pok and Sekong sub-basins.
3.4 To ensure that development initiatives are planned and implemented with a view to minimize negative environmental impacts;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To support line agencies in identification and preparation of BDP priority environmental management projects and protection • Upon request of Member States, screening of projects for environmental impacts (technical support to project level SEA, independent review of EIA) • Promote and support the implementation of transboundary EIA 	<p>Priority areas (hot spots) for environmental conflict prevention have been identified and are being discussed with Member Countries with a view to conducting case studies and developing procedures for addressing regional differences and disputes.</p> <p>EP</p> <p>EP</p>
3.5 To ensure that social, economic and environmental concerns are incorporated into basin-wide water resources development strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic environmental impact assessment (SEA) • Environmental impact assessment (EIA) • Promote stakeholder discussions to identify valuable assets in water resources which are to be protected • Providing information and knowledge to decision makers through the IBFM process on economic benefits and environmental and social impacts of development as related to changes in the flow regime. 	<p>EP</p> <p>EP</p> <p>EP</p> <p>A technical report on the assessment methodology for environmental flows was ready for testing and adoption under the IBFM process and for further evaluation.</p> <p>Reports on flows assessment under BDP scenarios has continued to refine IBFM in order to integrate into the BDP in 2008.</p>

Goals / objectives <i>What is our purpose?</i> <i>What do we want to achieve?</i>	MRC Key actions / outputs <i>Goods and services to be delivered</i>	Findings
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A set of spatial tools to enable planners to take into consideration environmental and social aspects of development plans and projects. Initially covering, wetlands, protected areas, vulnerability and dependence on aquatic resources. 	Capacity development of government staff in field survey and GIS for wetlands: Line agency staff have been trained in wetland mapping techniques using remote sensing.
GOAL 4. To strengthen the Integrated Water Resources Management capacity and knowledge base of the MRC bodies, NMCs and line agencies and other stakeholders		
4.1 To improve management systems to allow MRC to operate as a highly effective, transparent and innovative International River Basin Organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Management policies, systems and manuals 	OCEO
4.2 To establish a technical coordination capacity for preparing and coordinating the implementation of MRC's Work Programme applying IWRM principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technical coordination advisor and efficient programme coordination mechanisms in place Annual work programmes Harmonized project progress reports 	<p>OCEO</p> <p>Annual Work Programmes for 2006, 2007, 2008 and 2009 published</p> <p>OCEO</p>
4.3 To enhance and maintain a common GIS-based information and knowledge management and dissemination system to support all MRC activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operational information system and information management and dissemination tools (GIS, remote sensing, portal) supporting all MRC programmes Information and datasets provided to outside users 	<p>Component 2 provides primary data necessary for all functions of the MRC. Hydrographic data is needed in flood management, basin planning, fisheries management, navigation, environmental monitoring and other purposes.</p> <p>The first priority is auditing existing data holdings. The second high priority is to develop a manual of standards and guidelines for data and information management. The other high priorities are as follows: data and information needs assessment; data acquisition and generation plan; new data (acquired and generated); and hardcopy printing services for map and 3D products.</p> <p>Designing data, information and knowledge products is partly done including data catalogue, metadata, geo-network.</p> <p>All bibliographical data records have been successfully migrated from MRC MS Access format to a new format. The database can be accessed by both internal and external users through WEB gateway embedded in MRC's portal, enhancing various ELIB searching facilities for the</p>

Goals / objectives <i>What is our purpose?</i> <i>What do we want to achieve?</i>	MRC Key actions / outputs <i>Goods and services to be delivered</i>	Findings
		database.
4.4 To maintain partnerships with leading organizations, universities and civil society stakeholders for programme-focussed collaboration of common interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Network of partners (universities, research institutes, civil society and other interested and relevant organizations) established Assessment of research priorities to support MRC's mission 	<p>ICCS</p> <p>OCEO</p>
4.5 To strengthen the human resources capacities of the MRC, NMCs and the line agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capacity needs assessment reports Training modules and toolkits Training sessions and study tours for JC, NMCs, MRCS staff and line agencies 	<p>In 2007, AusAID wished to provide significant funding for ICBP in the coming years. TOR and other preparatory works for the ICBP programme formulation have been finalised.</p> <p>ICBP</p> <p>Training for MRC staff under OEB fund was continued and JRP2 with Finnish funding support progressed.</p>
4.6 To develop and update as new knowledge becomes available regional assessment tools (EIA, SEA, DSF, TB-EIA, RAM, SIA etc.) for all development projects to be implemented in the lower Mekong River basin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional assessment tools available and promoted for use by NMCS and Line Agencies Training/orientation sessions in the use of assessment tools for NMCs and line agencies 	<p>The DSF, EIA, TB-EIA, SEA, RAM SIA, etc were established by particular program and the training and on-the-job training were organized as well both at national and regional levels when they carried out the preparation of such tools. In this context do we need ICCS to organize a regional training?</p> <p>ICCS</p>

1. The uncompleted activities of the WUP also made clear transferred to the relevant programme and section of the MRCS for follow up and further development
2. As of June 2008, the project concept has been finalized and submitted to countries for consultation and endorsement. Funding has been obtained from AusAID for the preparation of the regional component and overall coordination of the project preparation phase. Hiring of

short-term experts at MRCS has been initiated. The final results on the Japan PHRD to support the preparation of activities in the National and Transboundary components are expected by the end of June 2008.

3. A revised and down-scaled DMP Start-up Project was prepared. The fundraising activity for the programme start up continued. If fund is available in 2008, the following further activities may be conducted, such as compilation of a concise report on the hydrologic characteristics of Mekong basin droughts, as well as their socio-economic dimension and setting up of programme management structure, identification and start up of priority (quick impact) activities. MRCS is now seeking for funding support from development partners for the DMP Start-up Project.
4. Regarding Hydropower Programme formulation, a Discussion Brief on the HP, refining the strategic orientation of the programme, conducted at the informal JC Meeting in June 2008. Development of a coordinated MRC database on proposed and existing hydropower projects, to include technical information and also copies of EIAs, social studies and survey data compiled by individual projects (mainstream and tributary).
5. The main activities under the assessment on environmental impact of tourism, under EP Component 3 People and Aquatic Ecosystems, for the year 2008 relates to the national and regional reports. One remaining national report would be drafted and reviewed by the NMC by the first quarter of 2008. Three country reports on environment impacts of tourism were completed, a fourth is underway. Drafting of a regional synthesis report is scheduled for the fourth quarter of 2008.
6. The most significant problem of the NAP is lack of funds. 60% of the programme is still unfunded and development objectives can only be attained provided the programme is fully financed. MRC continues its fundraising for the NAP.

Annex 4**List of Issues Summarized****Remaining period of SP 2006-2010:**

1. Less developed member may need more training than developed ones on water and related resources management to reduce gaps of understanding which facilitate the implementation of the 1995 Mekong Agreement.
2. Cambodia is very much thirsty of energy, with the existing electricity power situation which is not enough for the consumption, even for the urban areas, how can Cambodians develop their country. The first step and immediate activities are to prepare project planning and seeking fund from donor community to support the Hydropower Programme.
3. MRC Council resolution of 1999, establishing WUP, requested WUP to, besides producing tools and knowledge base, formulate five sets of Rules/Procedures for water utilization and inter-basin diversion as required by Article 5, 6 and 26 of the Agreement. Among the five Procedures, the Procedures for Water Quality is still not yet signed. It is suggested to follow up on this matter seeking confirmation from the party concerned.
4. The activities in relation to the drafting of the Technical Guidelines for Implementing, both the Procedures for the Maintenance of Flows on the Mainstream and the Procedures for Water Quality need to be carefully followed up.
5. In the Approved Procedures, some terms need to be clearly defined to facilitate their smooth implementation. It would suggest further consider defining those terms, such as wet and dry season, Mekong tributary, etc.....
6. Based on current situation of good cooperation between the MRC and GMS, it would be better to further improve and strengthen such a close cooperation between these two bodies on any concrete activities to support sustainable development in the subregion, believing that the outcomes would help in the preparation of the next Strategic Plan 2011-2015 by avoiding overlap activities to be carried out.
7. Based on past cooperation within the MRC context, it would be necessary to continue further coordinate and harmonize among donor countries and development banks in assisting the MRC in different areas of Mekong development, as this is very important and extremely needed for the MRC, as well as for the member countries.
8. WUP Start-up produced a number of achievements. After this phase finished, there is a need of implementation of those achievements within the context of water resources management in the LMB. Activities related to dissemination of approved Procedures and other achievements need to be further carried out and strengthened, especially on notification. For instance, the M-IWRMS-P and the 3S Project, which deals with transboundary cooperation, would be an example in implementing those achievements made in relation to water utilization
9. Cambodia wants the IWRM to infiltrate and become the common language we all use. Not to agree about policy differences we have, but to agree about the goals. Resources alone are unlikely to be sufficient enough to ensure that Cambodia attains the goals, but donor resources can play an important role in strengthening the country's ability to use resources effectively. This is a focus of development cooperation in Cambodia working in partnership with government and civil society especially in fostering decentralization. In this context, it wants to see more involvement of civil society in terms implementation of BDP2 and IWRM process. To reach this goal, human

capacities and institutional strengthening need to be made stronger, requiring capacity building from central down to local level. They are complementary elements that are required for Cambodia to benefit from being a member of the regional river basin organization. Decentralization is critical to achieving and maintaining the IWRM. It is our hope that the IWRM will eventually infiltrate everywhere throughout the country for the sustainable development of water and water related resources to serve the socio-economic development. The challenge is to effectively mainstream the IWRM initiatives into local development planning process by fueling political and ultimately financial support for IWRM.

10. Having seen past events, drought issue brought about negative social and environmental impact that may cause problem for the economic development. The establishment of Drought Programme is aiming at managing this natural disaster. Drought Programme should be further accelerated seeking donor's support so that it can progress steadily and sustainability of the center.
11. FMMP has made a very good progress as planned. The RFMMC has been in place and functional. Further effort needs to be focused on strengthening of this programme to its full capacity and sustainability of the Center.
12. Apart from necessary specific technical training provided within certain programmes, the emphasis should focus on integrated training activities emphasizing on knowledge of integrated water resources management, skills of strategy formulation, programme and project planning, organizational development and communication skills.
13. M-IWRMS-P which is focusing on transboundary cooperation should go in parallel with the BDP2 since it may complement each other in terms of water resources management and economic development.
14. Acknowledging progress of regional cooperation made, the MRC should initiate or update formal agreements with major regional development initiatives and organizations, clarifying the strategic relationships and the mechanisms for implementation. In addition to the existing cooperation, new initiatives related to technical or scientific matters should be made for enhancing cooperation with the upper riparian countries.

Preparation for Strategic Plan 2011-2015:

1. In line with the government's policy, a kind of win-win-win approach, the discussions with representatives of civil society organizations focusing on preparation of the next Strategic Plan 2011-2015 and how to advance tripartite cooperation arrangements, particularly in facilitating civil society inputs into the preparation process for the MRC and related country strategies and programs would be another option in helping the MRC. With this, wider involvement of key stakeholders at the upstream stage can promote enhanced quality of MRC-assisted activities, improve understanding of the MRC's core operational strategies, strengthen partnerships with stakeholders, and foster involvement and commitment among stakeholders.
2. The Secretariat should intensify its communication system and its information dissemination campaign for MRC projects and activities with a view to generating greater support from key stakeholders. The MRC web page (<http://www.mrcmekong.org>) on MRC's website should be simplified to facilitate access to basic information on the MRC program.
3. The MRC tourism program should be appropriately directed to support the national program or to complement the national program avoiding overlapping activities in relation to tourism. This should be involved with all concerned parties, such as CNMC, line agencies, private sector and stakeholders. As the funding support for

tourism program is still difficult to get support, it would be better to further consider prioritizing complementary activities to support the national strategy.

4. The current Strategic Plan (SP) 2006-2010 should be continued within the next one. It seems that the current SP is too wide-basin development. It would be better if the MRC development plans complement to the national development plan or activities. To facilitate the process, it would be appropriate to include the national SP into the MRC SP. In result, as basis for the preparation, the national project should be included in the MRC SP.
5. Hydropower Programme should be focused on during the preparation of the next SP. In this context national projects should be highlighted and incorporated into the MRC Strategic Plan 2011-2015.
6. As IWRM is key tool for the sustainable development, it is necessary to infiltrate and transform the IWRM into a common language, focusing on development of working cooperation in partnership with government and civil society. In this context, it wants to see more involvement of civil society in terms implementation of BDP2, IWRM process and the M-IWRMS-P. To reach this goal, human capacity and institutional strengthening need to be made stronger, requiring capacity building from central down to local level. They are complementary elements that are required for Cambodia to benefit from being a member of the regional river basin organization. Decentralization is critical to achieving and maintaining the IWRM. It is our hope that the IWRM will eventually infiltrate everywhere throughout the country for the sustainable development of water and water related resources to serve the socio-economic development. The challenge is to effectively mainstream the IWRM initiatives into local development planning process by fueling political and ultimately financial support for IWRM.
7. Success of NAP would help the riparian countries to develop their economies. Successful of NAP outputs will then require extensive cooperation from the NMCs as well as with the line agencies, stakeholders and beneficiaries in the country. Political commitment of the member countries who have endorsed the NAP should be translated into a high level of commitment at the operational and executive level within the NMCs and national line agencies involved. As most MRC programmes, the major risk that may affect the implementation of the NAP as planned above would be a lack of funds.
8. Learning experience from other sub-regional organization, Cambodia used to raise for consideration by the MRC whether the MRC should institutionalize its Summit. Once again, it is suggested to consider this matter.
9. As necessary specific technical training was provided within certain programmes, we should continue emphasize on integrated training activities emphasizing on knowledge of integrated water resources management, skills of strategy formulation, programme and project planning, organizational development and communication skills.
10. Having seen past events, drought issue brought about negative social and environmental impact that may cause problem for the economic development. The establishment of Drought Programme is aiming at managing this natural disaster. Drought Programme should be further accelerated seeking donor's support so that it can progress steadily.

Annex 5

The table below provides some key points selected from some laws and regulations related to environmental protection and management in Cambodia.

Laws	Scope	Responsible institution
Law on Biosafety	The objectives of the law are to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - prevent adverse impact on the conservation of biodiversity and natural resources in the kingdom caused by the trans-boundary movement, development, handling, transfer, use, storage and release of living modified organisms resulting from modern biotechnology; - ensure effective conservation of biodiversity and sustainable use of biological resources, taking into account risks to human health; - provide a transparent process for making and reviewing decision on living modified organisms and related activities and operations; - develop biotechnology education while preventing environmental and health hazards associated with the use and release of living modified organisms; - implement the Cartagena Protocol on Biodiversity to the Convention on Biological Diversity to which Cambodia is a party. 	Ministry of Environment
Fishery Law	The objectives of the law are aimed at ensuring the sustainable management of fishery for the economic, social and environmental benefit including biodiversity conservation and cultural heritage. The law gives a chance for the Ministry of Environment to manage its wetland biodiversity inside protected areas and Ramsar sites. Articles 65, 66, 67 and 68 are related to import and export of fishery products.	Ministry of Agriculture, forestry and Fishery (MAFF)
Forestry Law	The law regulates forest management framework, harvesting, use, development and forest conservation in the country. Its objective is to ensure forest is managed in a sustainable manner for social, economic and environmental benefits including biodiversity conservation and natural heritage. Its scope applies to all aspects of forest including natural species and plantation. Article 34 focused on export and import of wild seeds and plants which shall have an assessment from forest administration before issuing a permit from the Minister of MAFF.	MAFF
Law on Environmental Protection and Natural Resources Management	The law is aimed at: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protecting and upgrading the environment quality and public health by means of prevention, reduction and control of pollution; Assessing the environmental impacts of all proposed projects; Ensuring rational and sustainable development and management and the use of natural resources; and Encouraging public participation in the protection of natural resources and the environment. 	MOE
Phyto-sanitary Inspection Sub-Decree	It identifies and inspects phyto-sanitary measures to prevent the spread of diseases and dangerous pests, from one area to another in Cambodia. This could be brought about by all articles, which are imported into or transit in Cambodia. The Sub-decree is necessary to protect agricultural production and biological resources. The most relevant articles to biodiversity conservation and biosafety are 1, 2, 5, 6, 7-10, 20-23, and 27-29.	Dept of Agronomy and Land Improvement/MAFF
Law on Protected Areas	The law aims at managing public domains in protected areas designated and new designated protected areas under MOE's	MOE

	<p>jurisdiction. The objectives are to:</p> <p>Identify competent and administrative responsibility of the protected areas of MOE in protected areas management; manage and effectively implement the protected areas conservation of biodiversity and natural resources and their use in a sustainable manner; set standard and procedures for protected areas management; provide mechanisms and procedures for protected areas establishment or change the name of protected areas; identify responsibility and public participation in protected areas protection; implement international conventions, protocols and agreements on biodiversity and ecology protection in protected areas; and define liability and punitive measures for criminals who destroy resources and public properties in the protected areas.</p>	
Decision on Public Health	<p>The Decision is to:</p> <p>establish a basis for preparing the pharmacological procedures; choose the appropriate pharmacies to fulfill the important and needed health service; improve the management system and appropriate pharmacy supply; promote the local production of pharmaceutical products in order to improve the supply of pharmaceuticals so as to reduce imports; create a control system in order to guarantee the quality of pharmaceuticals including shelf-life or expiry dates so as to avoid waste and risk of using medicines which have expired and with reduced efficacy; and promote the consumption of the national traditional medicines including improving the quality of local pharmaceutical medicines.</p>	Ministry of Health (MOH)
Sub-Decree on Production of Import, Export and Commerce of Traditional Medicine in Public Sector	<p>The objective is to manage the import and export production and commerce of traditional medicines in Cambodia. It also covers the rights to run traditional medicine business, production, import-export and commerce.</p>	MOH
Sub-Decree on the Environmental Impact Assessment	<p>The Sun-decree has the following objectives:</p> <p>identify and carry out EIA on all private and public projects which are under the responsibility of MOE, before these are submitted to the government; define types, scale of the project proposed and existing activities in both private and public sectors that need to be assessed for environmental impact; Encourage public participation in the process of EIA as well as collecting comments and feedbacks for consideration in the adoption process.</p>	MOE
Law on the Management of Quality and Safety of Products and Services	<p>The aims of the law were not clearly specified, but the scope was focused on all commercial enterprises, all manufacturing for commercial purposes, importers, exporters and merchants, service providers, advertisers of products, goods, and services and civic association and non-governmental agencies engaged in manufacturing, commerce or humanitarian relief activities.</p>	MOH
Sub-decree on Food Sanitary for Human	<p>The sub-decree aims at identifying hygienics measures for products to be used as human food including production facilities, employees, micro-organisms and cleanliness of the products.</p> <p>Article 2 covers the scope of the Sub-decree which addresses the need for inspection during handling, transporting, distributing, harvesting, fishing and so forth. However, the main objective of the Sub-decree is to ensure safety of foods and products for human.</p>	Dept. of Camcontrol/ MOC

Marks and Trade Names and Acts of Unfair Competition	<p>The objective is to protect the marks and trade names that duly registered in the register marks in Cambodia and prevents acts of unfair competition on the creation, the utilization of marks and trade names.</p> <p>The law could be related to the protection of intellectual property rights related to discoveries and innovations in biotechnology. It is, however, not directly related biosafety and biodiversity, except in the trade of fauna and flora such as in marks and trade names.</p>	Dept. of Camcontrol/MOC
Copy Right and Related Rights	<p>The law is aimed at providing the rights of the author and the right of related persons thereon with respect to works and protection of cultural products, performance, programme and transmission of broadcasting organization in order to secure a just and legitimate exploitation of those cultural products and thereby continue with the development of culture.</p>	Min. of Culture and Fine Arts
Water Resources Management	<p>The main objectives aim at enhancing effectiveness & sustainability of water resources management for socio-economic development and people wellbeing</p> <p>It also identifies the rights and obligation of water users, fundamental principles for water management and the participation of water user community in the development of water resources in a sustainable way.</p> <p>Water and water resources are belong to the State and should be managed and developed based on IWRM (Art. 4).</p> <p>Cambodia has the rights to use, develop and manage international river basin on her territory within her reasonable and equitable share, consistent with rights and obligations state in the international agreement to which Cambodia is a party, including the MRC principles (Article 34).</p>	MOWRAM
Land law	<p>The objectives of the law is to define the rights on any immobilized property in the Kingdom of Cambodia aiming at ensuring the rights to ownership and other rights on immobilized property.</p>	Min of Land Management, urbanization and Construction
Sub-decree on Waste Solid Management	<p>The purpose of this Sub-decree is to regulate the solid waste management with proper technical manner and safe way in order to ensure the protection of human health and the conservation of bio-safety.</p> <p>This sub-decree applies to all activities related to disposal, storage, collection, transport, recycling, dumping of garbage and hazardous waste.</p>	MOE
Sub-decree on Water Pollution Control	<p>The objective is to regulate water pollution control in order to prevent and reduce water pollution of the public water areas so that the protection of human health and the conservation of bio-diversity shall be ensured.</p>	Dept. Pollution Control/MOE

Source: Ministry of Environment, National Biodiversity Framework, Phnom Penh, 2004.

Mid-term Review of the MRC Strategic Plan 2006 - 2010

Appendix H

Mid-term Review, Country Paper Lao PDR

APPENDIX H

**Lao PDR Country Paper for the Mid-Term Review of the
MRC Strategic Plan 2006-2010****Introduction**

The 1995 Mekong Agreement has established the framework and mechanisms for pursuing a coherent strategy of integrated water resources management (IWRM) on a regional scale. The implementation of the first Strategic Plan 1999-2003 was reviewed in 2000, which included the participation of the MRC member countries, provided the first input into the participatory planning process for the second Strategic Plan 2001-2005. The current Strategic Plan 2006-2010, again produced in a participative way with member countries, capitalises on the progress achieved, a procedures framework agreed by member countries pursuant to articles 5, 6 and 26 of the 1995 Mekong Agreement, a regionally recognised knowledge base and capacity development.

Under the overall goal '*More effective use of the Mekong's water and related resources to alleviate poverty while protecting the environment*' the Plan sets forth goals including:

- To promote and support coordinated, sustainable, and pro-poor development;
- To enhance effective regional cooperation
- To strengthen basin-wide environmental monitoring and impact assessment; and
- To strengthen the Integrated Water Resources Management capacity and knowledge base of the MRC bodies, NMCs, line agencies, and other stakeholders

The Lao National Mekong Committee paper focuses on the Mid-term Review of the MRC Strategic Plan 2006-2010, which strongly links with the National Strategic Plan 2006-2011, the purpose of this review is to provide some inputs for consolidate with other MRC riparian country in to the MRC Strategic Plan mid-term review. This paper assesses how well LNMC contribution toward the implementation currently Strategic Plan in order to find out the achievement and the gaps of the implementation as well as to provide the further need and give recommendation for MRC to consider the country issues in the last two years of the Strategic Plan 2009-2010 as well as the next five year Strategic Plan 2011-2015.

Process for the Review

The Mid-term review for LNMC was started by desk reviewed; various documents related to the mid-term review were provided by the Technical Advisory the initial meeting of the riparian resource person and the team leader was conducted at MRC on the 1 September 2008. The guideline of the review was drafted and submitted to CEO for consideration. An introduction letter for the review was sent out to LNMC for further cooperation. The following week, the early consultation meeting between resource person and coordinator of LNMC was held and planned accordingly in order to achieve the timeframe of the mid-term review which aims to have the review document available for the Fifteenth Meeting of the MRC Council in early November.

Line agencies representatives were informed about the mid-term review consultation and individual discuss by the LNMC (see attached list of people met). The resources person took individual interview with main line agencies to discuss deeply on their view on the overall achievement goal of the MRC strategic Plan; identifying the major gaps and further needs of cooperation. The analysis of the review was undertaken after the consolidation data and information. The production of the first draft was submitted to the final consultation workshop with key LNMC coordinators and line agencies members. The discussion was made frequently between the resources person and the LNMCs, moreover, the internal meeting LNMCs took place in order to provide more inputs.

1st Consultation workshop was conducted on 26 September 2008 and 2nd consultation workshop with line agencies on 1 October 2008 were conducted in Vientiane to consolidate their valuable inputs in to the mid-term review.

Moreover, the first draft of the review brought out in the final consultation workshop in order to receive more feedback and comments from key LNMC coordinators and line agencies members. The pre-final draft was given for the internal LNMCS in order to get final inputs into the final draft of the mid-term report.

I would like to thank for all valuable inputs toward the mid-term review especially for LNMCS, LNMC members who gave a lot of support in discussion and views.

Assessment of the implementation of the MRC Strategic Plan

Overall, MRC Strategic Plan 2006-2010 is the main reference documents for all programmes to work throughout the five year period. It is also valuable orientation for all programmes to implement and follow up. LNMC has made a significant contribution toward the MRC Strategic implementation plan 2006-2010 with a high level of inputs. The work programmes 2006, 2007 and 2008 are designed details in various programme with programme components, since 2006 until 2008, each programme have been developed progressively in terms of the need of the riparian countries as well as the funding provided. One of them, Water Utilization Programme has been completed recently in 2008. The hydropower Programme has initiated in beginning of this year. However, there is a programme which has not been started namely Drought Management Tourism Programme.

To achieve the four goals of MRC, work programmes with components were developed to address the priority setting each year since 2006 – 2008. The details work programmes have been further spell out into the project and activity level. Based on the observation, work programme has been developed more comprehensive in 2008, compared to the work programme in 2006 and 2007. The progress can be seen in term of setting priority needs each programme, further developing in detail with time frame. These have shown that the progress was made gradually toward the end of the Strategic Plan.

Based on the view of LNMC, the Strategic Plan has shown the strong integration between the programmes. Overview of the four MRC's goals, there are objectives and outputs of the SP. There are many programmes take turn to be the lead programme to address the outputs of each objective and goal.

Goal 1: To promote and support coordinated, sustainable, and pro-poor development. There are four main objectives.

- 1.1 To establish a system for analysing water demand, water supply and water use in the basin to support the basin development planning process.

Two programmes, WUP and BDP are working together to achieve this objective and the following outputs:

- *Upgraded modelling toolkit and decision support framework (DSF) -*
- *Water supply and demand maps*
- *Basin-wide water resources development scenarios and options*
- *A series of water accounts and verifiable water use indicators to guide decision-making and development strategy formulation*

Moreover, there is BDP focusing the following objectives:

- 1.2 To establish processes and mechanisms enabling the balancing of trade-offs between economic and political net benefits of different sectors, areas, and regions; and benefits from environmental and social protection; and

- 1.3 To produce a regularly updated rolling plan applying the planning process for identification, categorisation and prioritisation of projects and programmes, are specializing only the BDP programme

These objectives have required the BDP to concentrate to the following outputs:

- *Baseline thematic maps of water and related resource and beneficiaries*
- *Consolidated trade-off analysis of development scenarios based on assessed and quantified net impacts on economic, ecological and social values*

- Process of discussions on trade-offs and mutual benefits in basin development, including forum/ policy dialogue meeting.
- An IWRM rolling plan
- Collaborative basin development planning processes for project identification and prioritization in water related sectors
- Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) Strategy supported by assessed development scenarios and options
- MRC projects and programmes database Cumulative impact assessment studies of development scenarios

LNMC has made the progress on the on-going programme according to the above outputs. Moreover, the management mechanism of programme has shown a very high achievement by the management team, the BDP assists implementation of the MRC Strategic Plan by supporting: 1) improvement of the coordination and programming of other MRC programmes towards achieving the organization's strategic goals; 2) the visible engagement of the MRC in transboundary assessment, based on IWRM.

However, LNMC has seen some gaps, which were identified substantial as follows:

- Based on the first phase of BDP (2001-2006) achieved much in terms of establishing processes and creating a framework for participatory planning, the second phase of the BDP Programme was delayed due to the regional-transition period in 2006, the initiate of the BDP2 has started in early 2007, the BDP2 new team has been formed recently in 2008
- Inception report was delayed, the final version was not approved yet, there is a need to be refined
- National human resources person as professional staff for this field was not easily recruited on time, due to no qualified resource person applying, this has shown that LNMC has difficult to find out the qualified professional resource person, because of lacking the resource persons in this field in the country.
- Taking time for administration purpose to consider the recruitment of regional TA as well as the Lao resources person to fill the position,
- LNMC has made the challenge to move forward to new institutional arrangement.
 - Recently the new institutional arrangement, Water Resources and Environment Administration was established in May 2007, the line agencies working on water related have been integrated more under the same umbrella namely the Department of Hydrology and Meteorology moved from the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Department of Water Resources has been created new department which replaced from the Water Resources Coordination Committee Secretariat.
 - Some skilled and expertise professional are remaining and working in the various water related agencies including the Water Resources and Environment Administration, this will be potential contribution toward the SP remaining year as well

Another good point of the SP is that in the objective:

- 1.4 To screen, formulate and promote wise development options at the transboundary and basin levels for preparation and implementation by other appropriate development agencies.

This is a very broad and led by BDP, with major outputs: support to identification and preparation of balance sustainable development options in partnership with donors, development partners and investment banks, support to Line Agencies with knowledge and expertise in preparation of project proposals, focusing on joint and basin-wide projects and national projects with significant basin impacts, project promotion and fund-raising services for joint and basin-wide projects.

However, there are sub-objectives below have been addressed to the same objectives, they also have shown the good integration many programmes toward the same goal to promote and support coordinated, sustainable, and pro-poor development:

- 1.4.1 To support sustainable land and water development through more effective and integrated utilization of agricultural, irrigation, drought, and watershed management systems, which is headed by AIFP;
- 1.4.2 To assist in the development of the basin's hydropower potential to ensure safeguarding of the environment and social interests while meeting the Basin's increasing need for energy, cored by Operation Division;
- 1.4.3 To achieve more active and efficient river transportation through increased freedom of navigation to increase social development, international trade and tourism opportunities, which is being led by NAP;
 - This programme has been made a certain point to meet the achievement of the SP, however, there is a need to continue to put more effort the study the both river bank erosion site along the Mekong between Lao and Thai border.
- 1.4.4 To build regional and national flood and drought management capacity for prevention, minimization or mitigation of people's suffering and economic losses due to floods and droughts, which led by FMMP and DP;
- 1.4.5 To maintain productive Mekong fisheries and enhance aquaculture of indigenous species for increased food security and economic output, which led by FP;
 - LNMC has been progress on the on-going programme to address the following outputs: Inland fisheries development strategy, increase capacity of local and national fisheries bodies, technologies for aquaculture of indigenous species adopted and support to line agencies in identification and preparation of BDP priority sustainable fisheries development projects;
 - Moreover, the support mechanism for the programme has shown a very high satisfied by the management team;
 - However, there are some gaps needed to consider in the followings:
 - Increasing the Technical Assistant from the four riparian countries or local experts into the programmes in order to reduce the high rate of the international exporters, this also give a support the local institution to strengthen the local capacity and expertise to see the long term sustainable development;
 - Addressing more the need of the country, especially the Lao case, the study research should have been focused to the country need, based on the economic and social development plan, frankly, the research reports of the fishery programme should serve the LNMC to be able to develop further. Some limitations of the country should be strongly considered as the need of the country;
 - In terms of funding, there is the need to provide the fund to support not only the research, but also to increase the building capacity both central line agencies as well as the local provincial, this will increase the role of the MRC as the international knowledge based capacity building;
 - The Basin Development Plan needs to address the country's desires, the synergy and the integration of BDP and national socio economic development plan needs to be made

- 1.4.6 To develop the tourism potential of the Mekong benefiting local economies; and
- 1.4.7 To assess domestic water supply and sanitation options to ensure adequate protection, which led by Operation Division

Goal 2: To enhance effective regional cooperation.

Four objectives of this goal:

2.1 To increase MRC's function as a transparent and effective cooperation mechanism among Member States and develop and demonstrate enhanced linkages, compatibility and complementarities of partnerships with other regional organisations and initiatives such as GMS, the World Bank's MWRAP, ACMECS, ASEAN, etc., including sub-basin organisations. The following outputs are led by the ICCS with the high priorities:

- Increased cooperation between MRCS and member states
- Partnership agreements (MoUs) with development partners, International River Basin Organisations, and research institutions

The below section No. 4.c will assess the effective cooperation with other regional initiatives. There are two objectives:

2.2 To complete, adopt and make applicable mechanisms, procedures and guidelines as required under the 1995 Mekong Agreement, and

2.3 To identify potential transboundary issues for negotiation, mediation and conflict prevention; and develop mediation and conflict management capacity, which led by WUP with high priority. This programme has nearly concluded recently in 2008 with the following achieved outputs:

- Technical guidelines for implementing the procedure for maintenance of flows on the mainstream;
- Guidelines for transboundary environmental impact assessment
Procedures/Guidelines for water quality;
- Technical Guidelines for implementing the procedures for water quality;
- Adopted procedures are implemented;
- Increased capacity for managing transboundary issues;
- Development of awareness of tools and approaches to mediation and conflict management in natural resources issues;
- Inventory of issues and areas with potential for conflicts in use and impacts related to water;
- Development of mechanisms to address environmental issues

The last objective of this goal,

2.4 To promote and improve dialogue and collaboration with China and Myanmar with expected output, increased cooperation with upstream riparian countries through joint studies and projects, in underway taken by the OCEO with high priority.

Although some progresses have been made in enhancing the regional cooperation, the cooperation between MRC and other initiatives such as : GMS, ASEAN, etc in the region has not yet concretized , the joint programme should be developed to promote the regional cooperation not only between member countries themselves but between regional programmes as well.

Goal 3: To strengthen basin-wide environmental monitoring and impact assessment.

There are five objectives:

3.1 To improve monitoring of the environmental condition of the Mekong River Basin, focusing on water quantity and quality, ecological health and social impact;

3.2 To regularly report on the environmental condition of the Mekong River Basin and disseminate this information widely;

3.3 To raise awareness of the MRC, NMCs, and line agencies on transboundary and basin-wide environmental issues and to increase the capacity to address them;

3.4 To ensure that development initiatives are planned and implemented with a view to minimise negative environmental impacts; and

3.5 To ensure that social, economic and environmental concerns are incorporated into basin-wide water resources development strategies.

This goal has led by the EP with the following expected outputs:

- Environmental water quality monitoring system
- Social impact monitoring system
- Mekong River ecological health monitoring system
- Model of the Mekong Basin's aquatic ecosystems
- Updated environmental status report
- Updated State of the Basin Report
- Updated Basin Report Cards on environmental and social conditions
- Guidelines on best environmental management practices
- Training modules on the use of EIA, SEA, and other tools
- Environmental educational kits
- Environmental awareness on transboundary issues
- Support line agencies in identification and preparation of BDP priority environmental management projects and protection
- Upon request of Member States, screening of projects for environmental impacts (technical support to project level SEA, independent review of EIA)
- Promote and support the implementation of transboundary EIA
- Strategic environmental impact assessment (SEA)
- Environmental impact assessment (EIA)
- Promote stakeholder discussions to identify valuable assets in water resources which are to be protected
- Providing information and knowledge to decision makers through the IBFM process on economic benefits and environmental and social impacts of development as related to changes in the flow regime.
- A set of spatial tools to enable planners to take into consideration environmental and social aspects of development plans and projects. Initially covering, wetlands, protected areas, vulnerability and dependence on aquatic resources

The programme has made some progresses in developing the framework for environmental monitoring and impact assessment, however, some weaknesses have been identified as follows :

- Many good products from MRCS works have not much interaction with national practices or guidelines
- Data on water demand, water supply and water use are not provided yet
- Most of the works implemented by MRCS such as : Hydropower development environmental considerations, Strategic Environmental Assessment Framework, etc was left in the MRCS after the programme/project completion , there is no initiative to further develop from basin wide level to the national level

Goal 4: To strengthen the Integrated Water Resources Management capacity and knowledge base of the MRC bodies, NMCs, Line Agencies, and other stakeholders.

Objectives

4.1 To improve management systems to allow MRC to operate as a highly effective, transparent and innovative International River Basin Organisation and

4.2 To establish a technical coordination capacity for preparing and coordinating the implementation of MRC's Work Programme applying IWRM principles,

These objectives are led by the OCEO with the following outputs:

- Management policies, systems and manuals
- Technical coordination advisor and efficient programme coordination mechanisms in place
- Annual work programmes
- Harmonized project progress reports

This can be seen that the progress of the above outputs are on-going, an effective approach to achieve these objectives as more efficient programme coordination mechanism taken in place, annual work programme have been produced respectively 2006 until 2009, accordingly year by year, an updated more functional document for the riparian countries to follow up the work program.

4.3 To enhance and maintain a common GIS-based information and knowledge management and dissemination system to support all MRC activities,

with the following outputs, which is headed IKMP with high priority:

- Operational information system and information management and dissemination tools (GIS, remote sensing, portal) supporting all MRC programmes
- Information and datasets provided to outside users

These outputs have been made effectively in terms of providing some on-the-job training for the key partners from the line agencies; however, the limitation of the training itself could not provide the tools and some equipments for the various line agencies to practice, some other staff who have been trained could not able to continue to practice, the knowledge and skills would be reduced and no longer being with those who were trained. In order to address to this point, the next strategic plan should consider the long term training as well as follow up plan how to use the people having trained.

4.4 To maintain partnerships with leading organisations, universities and civil society stakeholders for programme-focused collaboration of common interest;

This objective is headed by ICCS and OCEO with the following outputs:

- Network of partners (universities, research institutes, civil society and other interested and relevant organizations) established
- Assessment of research priorities to support MRC's mission

Even though, human resources are limited in the related field, LNMCS has gradually made progress to cooperate the National University of Lao to initial develop the cooperation. In order to bring knowledge and skills from various research study, the institution will be part of this conducting process in order to expand the knowledge and skill through their teaching for undergraduate students.

4.5 To strengthen the human resources capacities of the MRCS, NMCs and the Line Agencies; which is headed by ICBP with the high priority to achieve the following outputs:

- Capacity needs assessment reports
- Training modules and toolkits
- Training sessions and study tours for JC, NMCs, MRCS staff and line agencies

LNMCS has just done the training need assessment recently, submitted to MRCS for consideration for approval for funding. Moreover, the good point of the Junior Riparian Professional project should be continued to support, however, the criteria should be more focused on the undergraduates with some experiences would be more advantage from this programme.

4.6 To develop and update as new knowledge becomes available regional assessment tools (EIA, SEA, DSF, TB-EIA, RAM, SIA etc.) for all development projects to be implemented in the lower Mekong River Basin.

This is headed by ICCS with high priority with the following outputs:

- Regional assessment tools available and promoted for use by NMC, NMCS and Line Agencies
- Training/orientation sessions in the use of assessment tools for NMCs and line agencies

LNMCS has commented that the training should be focused as series of training courses, setting up priority of training activity should be clarified in the early year of the Strategic Plan, this should support the riparian countries benefit from this program by selecting the appropriate staff to recruit in the position in the future and long term human resources development planning are more advantage to LNMCS to take further initiative to build capacity and skills for its line agencies as well as the LNMS. Building capacity should be expanded toward the national sector such as waterway construction, hydrographical atlas, etc. Moreover, young skilled professionals will be able to apply various positions at the regional position at MRCS in order to increase ability and capacity of the local people to be able

to compete in the international and regional position. This will also increase the ownership of the country as the member state of the MRC in general.

Moreover, three broad issues were noted as important by the Member states for the development of the 2006-2010 strategic plan:

15. More tangible results focusing on poverty reduction through sustainable development;
16. Strengthening national ownership and value-added;
17. Adopting an integrated water management approach.

These three broad issues were addressed by the LNMC, the contribution of the line agencies of the LNMC to focus on more tangible results toward the sustainable development, increasing the ownership and value-added and adopting the integrated water management in a way of coordination approach. Working together with line agencies in various programmes is very importance to enhance the capacity building as well as to address the need of the country. Various technical as well as management consultation meeting were the places to exchange and share knowledge and expertises among the water related sectors. Moreover, many technical staff have been increased their understanding on the IWRM approach. These lead them to be able to increase their participation in the region interest.

LNMC has also expectation to see the MRC move toward a more comprehensive implementation of the 1995 Mekong Agreement and MRC complement to avoid duplication with other development partners. This shows that LNMC has made its mandate and role more clearly in the new organizational reform under the Water Resources and Environment Administration. The new organization was establish last year May 2008, however, a broader perspective of the WREA is more clearer when the line agencies of the LNMC has increased number of capacity staff on the water resources management. The updated function of the LNMCS and the water resources department is affecting ahead toward the contribution to the output of the implementation of SP currently.

The most direct terms, the LNMC would like to see the benefits of the work that MRCS deliver for the sustainable development and management of the Basin's water resources. The outputs of the SP should have a realistic effect on the lives of the people within the basin. Linking the work of the MRCS with such tangible benefits will require a well-coordinated afford on the part of all the basin's development partners.

Based on the role of MRC as a knowledge-based International River Basin Organization, the MRCS should have broad knowledge and expertise to hand over and work together with LNMC immediately when it is needed.

To promote cooperation for Sustainable and Coordinated Development – the primary value-added of MRC as an international river basin organization is to focus on joint and basin-wide issues, including the analysis of long-term development scenarios, the identification of important joint and basin-wide project and programme, and the analysis of economic, social and environmental implications of major on-going and proposed developments in the basin, including cumulative impacts of national developments.

This will be achievement through an IWRM approach within the framework of the 1995 Agreement which combines the four roles of the MRC, namely knowledge management and capacity development, a framework for regional cooperation for sustainable development, and environment monitoring and protection. This should maintain and increase the value added to be more broaden way to delivery knowledge-based and skills to riparian countries.

Institutional Arrangement

MRC is well maintaining its roles to promote cooperation Sustainable Development including providing a regional cooperation framework, environmental monitoring and protection, knowledge management and capacity development. The MRC management mechanism is well organized in terms of management tools, including technical advisory group meeting, the JC meeting, and board council members meeting. These are needed to be continued in the remaining Strategic Plan years.

MRC should play role on water resources management assets: including technical skills, data and knowledge, a regional perspective for problem analysis, a structured forum for regional negotiations and a network of NMCs and line agencies related to basin development planning. It is now time to put these assets to work for the benefit of the region. MRC has been given a mandate to take a leading role in transboundary and basin-wide water resources development and management.

The major specific outcomes of this Strategic Plan are on track based on the documents reviewed and viewpoints of line agencies as well as LNMCS. The work programmes from 2006-2008 have been developed respectively and progressively based on the common need of riparian countries as well as funding provided by the development partners. However, major general weaknesses are identified as followings:

- Some administrative delay;
- Funding available, delay transferring;
- Workload with limited number of skilled professional staff;
- Low number of human resources in a specific field especially water resources and related to water resources

The alignment of MRC programmes

(a) Alignment with the 1995 Agreement

Introduction

In 1995 four countries: Cambodia, the Lao PDR, Thailand and Vietnam signed the intergovernmental treaty 'Agreement on the Cooperation for the Sustainable Development of the Mekong River Basin'. In order to implementing the Agreement, Mekong River Commission (MRC) formulated the Strategic Plan (SP), which outlining various components for fulfill the commitment toward the 1995 Mekong Agreement.

The third Strategic Plan 2006 – 2010 was formulated basing on three broad issues summarized from the previous SP 2001 – 2005 which include:

- *Tangible results focused on poverty reduction through sustainable development*
- *Creating ownership and value-added with a broadened interpretation to include better integration of MRC and national development plans*
- *Adopting an integrated water resource management approach which is necessary for the MRC to jointly promote development and conservation to ensure sustainable cooperation for the utilization of the Mekong's common resources.*²⁶

Beside the above issues the three articles, (i) article1 Areas of Cooperation, (ii) Article 2 Projects, Program and Planning and (iii) Article 3 Protection of the Environment and Ecological Balance, characterize the scope and mandate for MRC to use for formulating the Strategic Plan.

Assessment

This mid-term review aims to assess the SP 2006-2010 program on how this plan supports the implementation of the 1995 Mekong Agreement which can be summarized as follow:

1. Goals/Areas/Work Plan

What MRC aims to achieve from the SP 2006-2010 is 'To support Member States for More effective use of the Mekong's water and related resources to alleviate poverty while protecting the environment'²⁷ which set out 4 goals:

²⁶ 'Exclusive summary', Strategic Plan 2006 – 2010 'Meeting the need, Keeping the balance' Mekong River Commission December 2006

²⁸Goal 1: To promote and support coordinated, sustainable and pro-poor development

Goal 2: To enhance effective regional cooperation

Goal 3: To strengthen basin wide environmental monitoring and impact assessment

Goal 4: To strengthen the Integrated Water Resources Management capacity and knowledge base of the MRC bodies, NMCs, Line Agencies, and other stakeholders

These four goals aligned with the content of article 2 of the 1995 Mekong Agreement ‘To promote, support, cooperate and coordinate in the development of the full potential of sustainable benefits to all riparian States and the prevention of wasteful use of Mekong River Basin waters,...’²⁹

Article 1 of the 1995 Mekong Agreement mentioned that ‘To cooperate in all fields of sustainable development, utilization, management and conservation of the water and related resources of the Mekong River Basin including but not limited to irrigation, hydro-power, navigation, flood control, fisheries, recreation and tourism,...’³⁰ Keep this ideas in mind, the MRC develop the Work Plan areas as follow:

- Basin Development Plan;
- Environment;
- Information and Knowledge Management;
- Integrated Capacity Building;
- Water Utilization;
- Flood Management and Mitigation;
- Agriculture, Irrigation and Forestry;
- Navigation;
- Hydropower;
- Fisheries;
- Drought Management;
- Tourism.

2. Objective and main outputs

Within each goal in 2006-2010 Strategic Plan contents several sub-objectives and main outputs for achievement. According to the study of the SP (desk review), most of objectives prioritized in SP supported the objective of the 1995 Mekong Agreement.

The following table³¹ shows one of the objectives that support the 1995 Mekong Agreement. The right column indicates how MRC would like to achieve these objectives; the main outputs are the requirement under article 5, 6 and 26 of the 1995 Mekong Agreement.

Objective	MRC key action/ out put
2.2 To complete, adopt and make applicable mechanisms, procedures and guidelines as required under the 1995 Mekong Agreement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical guidelines for implementing the procedure for maintenance of flows on the mainstream
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidelines for transboundary environmental impact assessment

²⁷ Strategic Plan 2006 – 2010 ‘Meeting the need, Keeping the balance’ Mekong River Commission December 2006

²⁸ Exact from article 1 Areas of Cooperation, ‘Agreement on the cooperation for the sustainable development of the Mekong River Basin 1995’, Mekong River Commission

²⁹ Exact from article 2 Areas of Cooperation, ‘Agreement on the cooperation for the sustainable development of the Mekong River Basin 1995’, Mekong River Commission

³⁰ Same as note 3

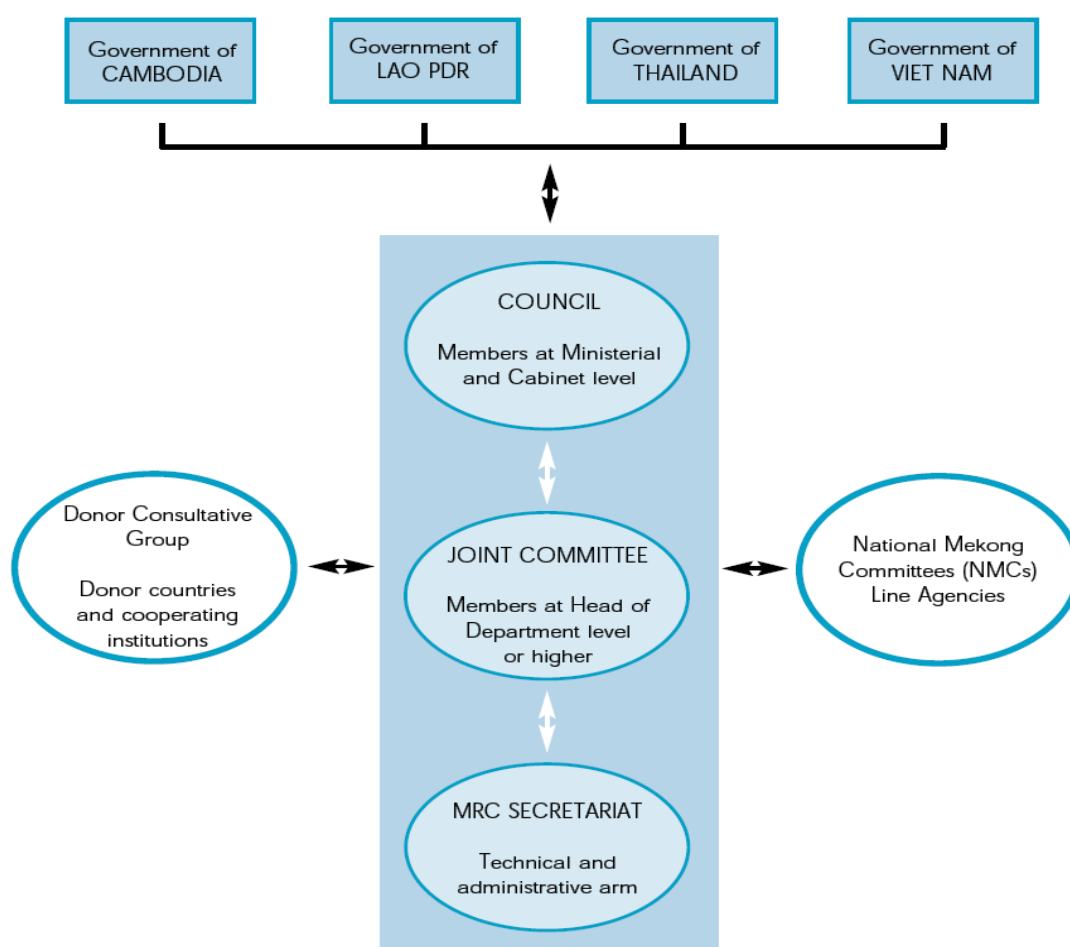
³¹ Exact from Strategic Plan 2006 – 2010 ‘Meeting the need, Keeping the balance’, page 52 Mekong River Commission December 2006

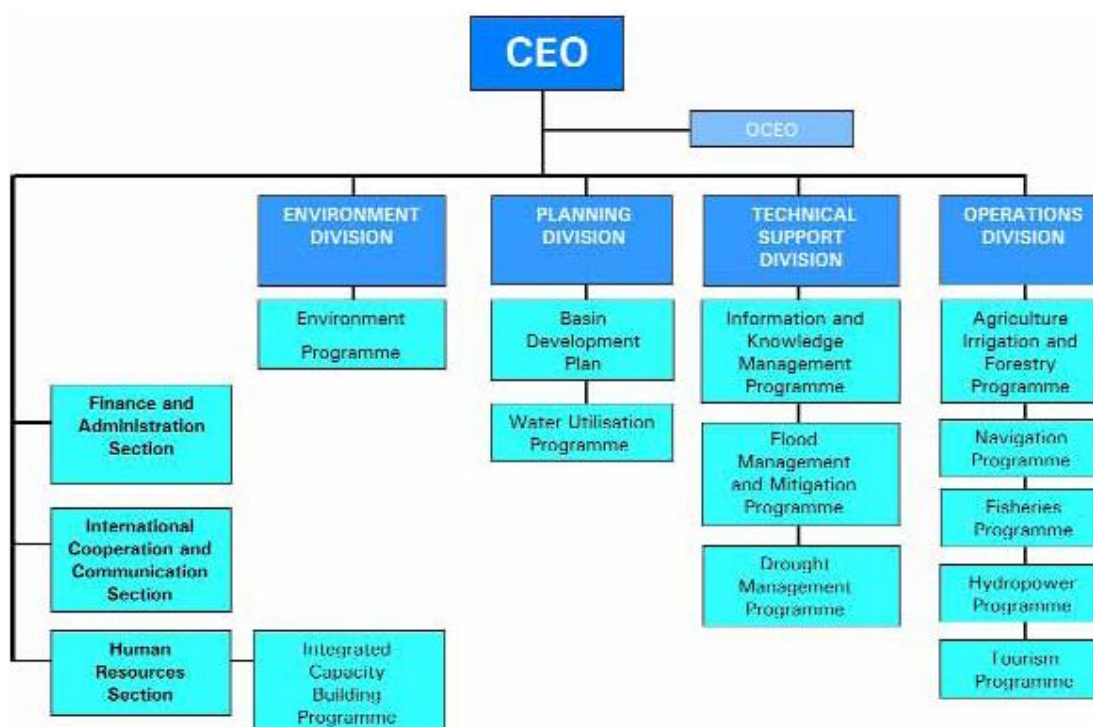
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procedures/Guidelines for water quality
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical Guidelines for implementing the procedures for water quality
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopted procedures are implemented

There is more than one objective was set out to fulfill the Agreement. Goals 3 ‘*To strengthen basin wide environmental monitoring and impact assessment*’, which outline 5 objectives and a numerous of outputs, is just to accomplish one objective of the 1995 Mekong Agreement is to protection of the environment and ecological balance (article 3). It can be said that in order to protect the environment, there is a need for a systematic procedure. For instance, there is a need for good monitoring system, the negative impact of environment are being inform widely. It is also important for capacity building on environment assessment and monitoring. These issues have been address in the objectives of third goal of SP 2006 – 2010.

3 The management structure

The governing structure of MRC was established in accordance to institutional frame works set by the 1995 Mekong Agreement. The two graphs below show how MRC management structure, which is adapting the model from the Agreement. The role of each section is define separately though still follow with the outline of the Agreement.





Summary

From the theoretical view point, the Strategic Plan 2006 – 2010 support the 1995 Mekong Agreement in three main areas:

- The main goals are following by the main objectives of the Agreement
- The objectives and outputs of the Strategic Plan were adopt from the Agreement's aims
- The management structure of MRCS including the role of each section is directly taken from the institutional frame work of the 1995 Mekong Agreement.

The comprehensive of the 1995 Mekong Agreement are also based on the performance of the country who implement the programmes, which can be considered as the practical view points.

(b) Alignment with the Strategic Plan

Generally, the SP 2006-2010 has made some progress in the mid-term of the SP, various programmes have been integrated in terms of achieving the same objectives and goals, however in practice, and there are tasks to improve as follows:

In terms of administration, rules and regulations are set out for all programme to obey, some procedures are needed to be short cut but followed by the rules. These should be considered as the major important for the head of division to approach more efficiently.

Recruitment is another aspect which needed to proceed quicker, some positions were advertised, short list was selected, and however, the announcement took places longer more than enough time provided by the administration rule and regulation.

Funding delay is the most important point to stuck some programmes, which could not able to develop the detail work programme, this shows that most the programmes of the MRC is donors' driven. The SP was set up, timeframe could not put in the Strategic Plan. Based on international experience, while developing the SP, the organization might not find the funding until completing the SP, however, the SP was completed since 2006, in Mid-term of the SP in 2008, some programmes have not been funded, some programmes are funded but not full budget. It could be very difficult for the MRC to approach to donors' interests. Therefore, MRC has to work harder to raise funding in the last two year of the SP. In the work programme in 2009, fund raising should one issue that MRC should increase its effort to approach various donors.

However, LNMCS have made progressively in terms of re-organization with in the country in July 2008. New organization was set up to address the water resources and environment, with in the WREA, the new Water Resources Department was set up to address the need of the country on water resources, Department of hydrology and Meteorology has moved from the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. Ministry of Energy and Mining has established to address the hydropower and mining areas. Moreover, one new organization focused on Land management as Land Authority. These new mechanism of the institutional arrange of the line agencies have moved toward to address the need of the country.

Ministry of Public Works and Transport has established the Inland waterway transport department which responsible for the riverworks such as bank protection, ports, navigation network improvement along the Mekong River and its tributaries, management of sand and gravel excavation along the Mekong River, coordination with Thailand for the joint committee for management on the Mekong and Heung River (JCMH) and etc.

Therefore, some aspects are needed to consider in the following Strategic Plan as follows:

- Building capacity for the LNMCS – coordinating and monitoring body and line agencies to increase ownership and participation in the research study;
- Funding should be available not only for the research study or pilot project but also for the implementation of the SP in various programmes; some difficulties the 1995 agreement has to be amended;
- MRCS is concentrating more on the knowledge based however, MRC should provide tools and equipment for further action in a suitable way, as well as the research study should be more openly for public to use and share knowledge and expertise;
- Increasing local expertise to involve in the programmes in order to build capacity in the long run;

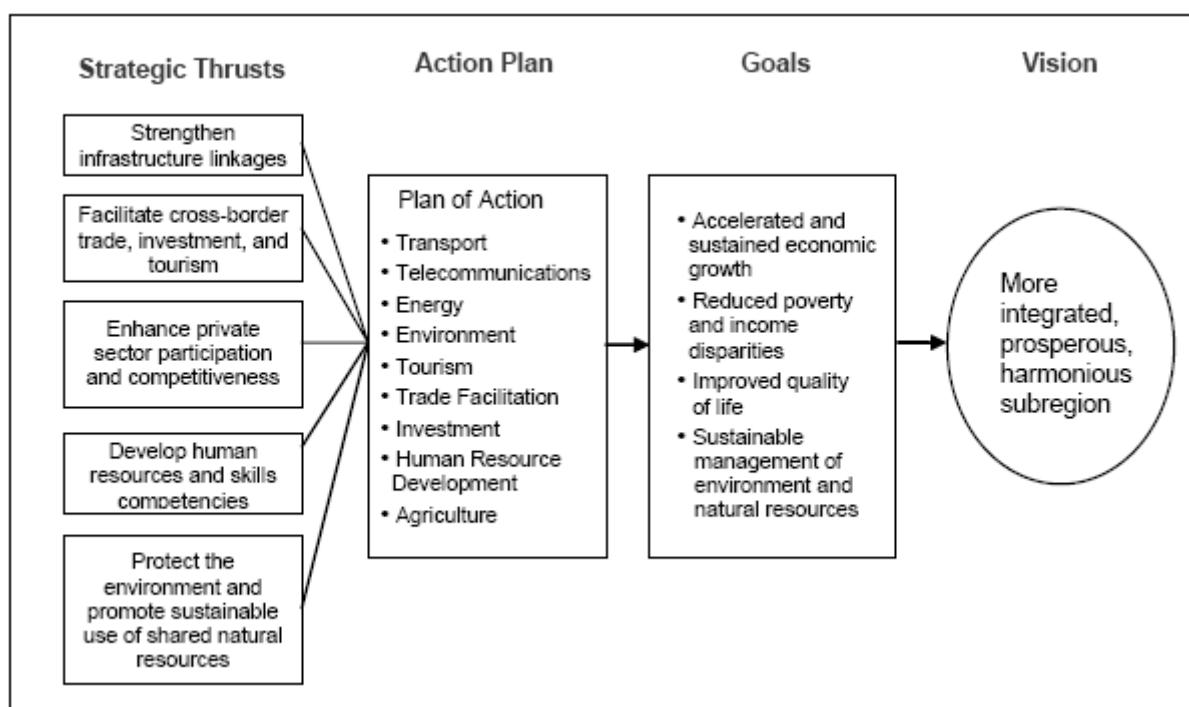
(c) Alignment with other Regional Initiatives

In order to move toward a comprehensive of implementation the Strategic Plan 2006-2010, the MRC set out the implement strategy as a guideline for implementation. One of the strategies is to forges effective links with other regional economic cooperation initiatives.

The following section will assess how well the prioritisation of the MRC programme portfolio is aligned with other regional initiatives such as the GMS and ASEAN initiatives;

1. GMS Strategic Framework 2002 - 2012

GREATER MEKONG SUBREGION Strategic Framework 2002–2012³²



From the graph above, GMS Strategic Framework 2002-2012 has two goals that share common target with the MRC Strategic Plan which are (i) Accelerated and sustained economic growth and (ii) Sustainable management of environment and natural resources. In short both plans aim to boost economic development while minimize harmful negative impact to environment and natural resources.

GMS formulated the plan of action into nine sectors which include transport, telecommunication, energy, environment, tourism, trade facilitation, investment, human resource development and agriculture. The most relevance sector between GMS and MRC is the environment sector.

Beside the flood and drought management and environment assessment³³, where both GMS and MRC share common target, there are others environment sectors that can be enhance for further cooperation. For instance, Mekong Water supply and sanitation project will begin from 2009 – 2011, which take place in Cambodia, Lao PDR and Vietnam, this project could also offer a room for MRC to implement their objectives ‘To assess domestic water supply and sanitation options to ensure adequate protection and improvement of peoples’ lives and the environment’.³⁴

Others areas beside environment cooperation, MRC may seek the enhancement in transportation. From 2008-2012 GMS has plan many projects aiming to develop the transportation system within state members areas; particularly the northern transport network improvement³⁵, upper Mekong Navigation channel improvement, the four countries involved with an assistance from GMS. In addition to this MRC should take into account on enhancing the cooperation on tourism development and hydropower. These two areas have not been developed progressively since 2006.

³² Mid term review of Greater Mekong Sub-region Strategic Framework 2002-2012

³³ Vientiane Plan of Action for Greater Mekong Sub-region Development 2008-2010

³⁴ Strategic Plan 2006 – 2010 ‘Meeting the need, Keeping the balance’, page 51 Mekong River Commission December 2006

³⁵ Vientiane Plan of Action for Greater Mekong Sub-region Development 2008-2010

For the next two year 2008 – 2010 MRC should work closely with the GMS to enhance the successful implementation of the Strategic Plan.

ASEAN

In 1995, the ASEAN Heads of State and Government reaffirmed that fundamental goals of ASEAN shall be “cooperative peace and shared prosperity.” Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam are members of ASEAN. China, being a core member of ASEAN Mekong Basin Development Cooperation Framework, is on equal status with all ASEAN

Member States.¹⁵ ASEAN operates on an informal, consensus-building basis. Primary programmes for cooperation include:

- ASEAN+3, which includes China, Japan, and Korea.
- The ASEAN Mekong Basin Development Cooperation Framework.
- The Cambodia-Lao PDR-Viet Nam Development Triangle.

The MRC’s role and accomplishments in promoting regional cooperation is a key area in which ASEAN could take an interest. The MRC should explore ways to raise its profile within the context of ASEAN, most likely through increased participation and communication with relevant ASEAN environment and development initiatives. Likewise, ASEAN could be encouraged to adopt occasional Ministerial resolutions recognising the progress made by the MRC.

In addition to a stronger link with broader economic development and cooperation initiatives, this type of regional recognition could build the trust and political will to reach acceptable solutions to difficult and complex issues.

MRC should play an important role to share knowledge and skills by increasing awareness, more open the existing research study to public and involve into the regional initiative frequently as well as fund raising for the MRC in the current programmes as for the next strategic plan.

MRC’s orientation towards UN Millennium Development Goals:

Poverty reduction is the most important task that many states have to put great effort to fulfill the commitment to achieve the UN Millennium Goals. Like other states in the world, ‘the MRC’s member States long existing desire for economic growth, poverty alleviation, and environmental protection was given further boost with the Millennium Declaration’³⁶.

The following appraisal aims to identify how the Strategic Plan and the activities of MRC align with its National Millennium Development Goals Reports. The review mainly focuses on MDG 1: Eradication of Poverty and Hunger, MDG 7: Environment Sustainability; and MDG 8: Partnership for Development.

MDG 1: Eradication of Poverty and Hunger

According to the Millennium Development Goals Progress Report Lao PDR, the National Growth and Poverty Eradication Strategy (NGPES) set out three years action plan focus on the four key sectors in poverty alleviation: **agriculture**, health, education and **transport**; as well as some cross cutting issue such as **environment**. Emphasizing on basic infrastructure investment, resources development knowledge management³⁷

If these emphases are the driven engine for poverty reduction, the Strategic Plan and the MRC’s activities will contribute to this issue. There are some objectives of the Strategic Plan which will boost the agriculture development such as

1. To establish a system for analysing water demand, water supply and water use in the basin to support the basin development planning process.

³⁶ Strategic Plan 2006 – 2010 ‘Meeting the need, Keeping the balance’, page 21 Mekong River Commission December 2006

³⁷ Millennium Development Goals Progress Report Lao PDR January 2004, Page 11

2. To support sustainable land and water development through more effective and integrated utilization of agricultural, irrigation, drought, and watershed management systems
3. To build regional flood and drought management capacity for prevention, minimization or mitigation of people's suffering and economic losses due to floods and droughts

Other areas that Strategic Plan can contribute to the poverty alleviation is transportation particularly navigation. The Strategic Plan 2006 – 2010 aims to develop the navigation system within the MRC's states member in order to boost the economic development 'To achieve more active and efficient river transportation through increased freedom of navigation to increase social development, international trade and tourism opportunities'³⁸,

MDG 7: Environment Sustainability

It is also interesting to note that 'NGPES place priority on environmental strategies to support poverty alleviation efforts'³⁹. Target 9 of the MDG stated that 'integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmers, and reverse the loss of the environment'; this target share common the first goals of Strategic Plan 'To promote and support coordinated, sustainable, and pro-poor development'.

One priority for development assistance define by the MDG is capacity building – 'improving the institutional capacity in environmental management for integrated planning, effective supervising, controlling and monitoring the implementation of such plans, to improve law enforcement and to enhance cooperation with local authorities'⁴⁰. This idea is what the third goals of Strategic Plan want to achieve within 5 years time.

Although both MDG and Strategic Plan are placing attention on environment development; their indicators or targets address are different. While Strategic Plan focusing on the improvement of basin wide environment, which is mainly about the water quality/pollution, fisheries, negative impact result from the water utilization; the MDG focusing on the protected areas (forest), the reduction of carbon dioxide and the reduction of population using solid fuels. It can also said that both of them have not address also issue of the environments

MDG 8: Partnership for Development.

The targets of MDG to achieve this goals is strengthen the cooperation in terms of trade and economic; whereas Strategic Plan (goals 2) does not put emphasis on this areas. The only common share between them is an increasing cooperation with other partners to facilitate in terms of implementing the objectives.

For the next SP 2011-2015, MDG 1, there should be more focused on the accessible clean water for the people living in the Mekong basin, fishery program should be important role to reduce the poverty and hunger for the people living in these areas. MDG 7, there should be more focus on the forestry cover in the basin, study research on forest cover should be paid more attention to develop in EP. Lastly, MDG 8, MRC should be more paid attention to the human resources development plan in order to increase ability of human resource in the level of professional standard to be able to negotiate and confront to speak on behalf of the nation interests as well as benefits. These will help the LNMC to increase its ownship and partnership in the regional level as well as in the international level.

³⁸ Strategic Plan 2006 – 2010 'Meeting the need, Keeping the balance', page 49 Mekong River Commission December 2006

³⁹ Millennium Development Goals Progress Report Lao PDR January 2004, Page 52

⁴⁰ Millennium Development Goals Progress Report Lao PDR January 2004, Page 53

Prioritisation of the remaining period of the Strategic Plan

Urgent concern by the country issues:

Human recourse development is a major aspect needed to consider in the following remaining SP years

- Increased ability and capability of line agencies staff, series of training and long term training are needed to consider by the LNMC. The training need assessment has recently completed, moreover, there is a need to expand these training activities through the line agencies
- Junior professional attachment is needed to continue to support in order to help the LNMC increase capacity
- Comprehensive understanding by all concerned LNMC and line agencies on the integrated water resources management is a central aspect to put more effort

Various tasks have been identified during the analysis as follows:

- Fish migrations should be addressed to the four riparian country's need, major fund was allocated to the fishery program, and however the result of the study on the fishery migration has not been presented yet. The fishery programme has to re-study by the key coordinators in order to focus on the understanding on the SP and re-consider the programme;
- Under the flood management and mitigation programme, the programme was mostly focused on the flooding areas in the lower part of downstream. The programme has denied focusing on major reasons of flooding in the upper areas. There is a need to investigate the reason of the flooding in the upper stream of the Mekong. There is required to conduct a study on the water level in the most recent need. For instance, the case of flooding occurred in August 2008, it was found that the early flood warning, preparedness system was a failure to address the need of the LNMC. Therefore, the early flood warning system should be established at National (Lao) level, re-allocation of fund for this purpose has to be considered in the 2009 work programme;
- ICBP has to take further detailed development of the training plan for not only the LNMCs but also for line agencies counterparts in order to increase level of professional expertise and skills;
- Although the limitation of the funding, IBFM is being studied in the Environment Programme should be considered again based on the need of the LNMC
- Drought Management Programme has been approached to donor to fund, however, this programme has to link to FMMP and Forestry Programme under the watershed management links with HP. There is requirement to conduct a study on the possibility two programmes that cooperate and work pararell in the same division;
- Navigation programme has been implemented on track to address to the need of the country. This programme has helped the Water Way Division to improve the navigation in Laos. However, there is a need to complete the Inland Water way study on river bank between Lao and Thai border area;
- Access to MRC data and information for social and economic development should be opened for public. These information will be useful for other organization like ADB, GMS, ASEAN initiative and other development investors to study further the potential development for the country;
- Some follow up from the various consultation meetings should be brought up for action, this helps divisions as well as LNMC to take further implementation and recommendation

- Based on the MRC Strategic Plan, there was not issue on clean water and sanitation except water quality, based on the MRC role as international knowledge based, the MRC should play an important role focusing on the integrated water resources management. This includes not only water resources for agriculture, hydropower, tourism, basin planning. However, accessing to clean water of the people living in the basin, sanitation and health issue related to water resources should be considered as the major part in the river basin planning. This issue should be covered in 2010, if not this should be considered in the following Strategic Plan 2011-2015;
- MRC should maintain its strength to develop strategic plan as well as fund raising, the approach toward the fund raising should be focused on the possibility to increase the mutual interest and benefit. The next strategic plan should cover the timeframe for the implementation

Head Office of MRCS

- As agreed to rotate the head of MRCS, however, LNMC is very keen to see the permanent location of MRCS Headquarter, due to the fact that the permanent location of MRCS HQ would reduce the running cost for MRCS and encouraging the riparianization of MRCS

Preparation of the next Strategic Plan 2011-2015

The next SP should be put more effort to conduct the survey and research study on the navigation along the Mekong river in order to boost the economic growth in terms of Tourism, navigation development and river bank protection.

The cooperation with China under the Navigation programme has made progress as Lao PDR with cooperation with China to manage the navigation in the north of Lao PDR from Houaxai to Luangprabang and navigation from Lao-China border to Bokeo province. Moreover, the fair transportation improvement should be considered between Lao and Thai.

For the next SP 2011-2015, to consider the three MDGs as above mentioned: to reduce hunger and poverty, next SP should focus on clean water assess and sanitation for the people living in the Mekong basin. Fishery program should be based on the production more as well as the study of the indigenous fishery programmes.

The environment should be more focused on water quality as well as the water flow. Some other water indicators should be put in the next five year SP.

Increasing the participation and ownership of the line agencies can be done by increasing the knowledge and skills, therefore long term training and human resources development planning should be addressed to the need of the country.

Conclusion

Strategic Plan is well conceptualized and being a significant reference document for the programmes development throughout 2006-2010. The detailed work programmes 2006, 2007, 2008 and 2009 are able to interpret into detailed targets, activity and tasks. Many programmes have made progressively in terms of implementation as well as integration. This should be maintained the good effort in the remaining time as well as the next SP. However, the allocation time frame should be drawn out in the SP document. Although the priority of the outputs was written in the SP, the timeframe will help not only donors but also NMC and MRC to get an overview of the SP more broadly in terms of setting up priority which objectives are needed to be addressed.

The four goals of the SP align with the content of article 1 and 2 of the 1995 Mekong Agreement and other Regional Initiatives. However, the sharing information and knowledge should be continued with a great effort and increasing the possibility to improve the sharing approach with GMS and ASEAN initiatives should be made in the next Strategic Plan.

For the remaining years of the current SP, LNMC would like to maintain the contribution toward the implementation in order to achieve overall of the SP's goals and objectives in 2010 with the monitoring and evaluation mechanism. Moreover, some other priority can be targeted in the in the next five year SP. This is required more support fund from MRC to allocate for various research study for the wider river basin as well as human resource development in the long term. Therefore, the mid-term review of implementation of SP 2006-2010 is necessary that could be recommended for the further JC and Council consideration and endorse of some re-priority of outputs and activities from this review. The review report, view of LNMC, would like to support for an effective role of MRC for the remaining Strategic Plan in 2009 -2010 and further next following Strategic Plan 2011-2015.

Appendices

Annex 1: References

Annex 2: List of people met

Annex 3: First Consultation Workshop List of people met

Annex 4: Final Consultation Workshop

Annex 5: Internal Consultation meeting

Annex 6: Assessment of Implementation MRC Strategic Outputs 2006-2010

Annex 1: References

Agreement on the Cooperation for the Sustainable Development of the Mekong river basin, 5 April 1995

MRC Strategic Plans 1999-2003, 2000-2005, 2006-2010

MRC Work Plan 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009 (Draft)

Report of the Independent Organizational, Financial and Institutional Review of the MRC Secretariat and the NMCs, January 2007

Strategy and Action Plan for Riparianization of the MRC Secretariat, April 2007

Minutes of 28th Meetings of the MRC Joint Committee

Documents of BDP 2, EP, WUP, IKMP, ICBP, FMMP, AIFP, NAP, FP

Annex 2: People met during the interview with Line Agencies for Mid-term review
of the Implementation of the MRC Strategic Plan 2006-2010

Date : 22-30 September 2008

No.	Name	Position	Ministry
1	Mr Somnuk CHANTHASETH	Director of Planning and Cooperation Division	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
2	Mr Bouthom MANIBOD	Director of IGOs Division	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Loa PDR
3	Mr Pheng PIENGPANYA	Director General (DMH)	Water Resource and Environment Administration
4	Mr Sinthavong VIRAVONG	Deputy Director	Living Aquatic Resources Research, MAF
5	Mr Bounthong SAPHAKDY	Head of Fisheries Division	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
6	Mr Chansaveng BOUNGNONG	Chief of Power Sector Planning Division	Ministry of Energy and Mines
7	Mr Hounglar SENGMAUNG	Director of Waterway Department	Ministry of Public work and Transportation
8	Mr. Phoumgenh KHOUNTHIKOUMMANE	Chief of Division , Dept of Waterway	Ministry of Public work and Transportation
9	Mrs. Keobang A KEOLA	Head of national Secretariat of the GMS	Water Resource and Environment Administration

**Annex 3: First Consultation Workshop for Mid-term review
of the Implementation of the MRC Strategic Plan 2006-2010**

Date : 26 September 2008

Venue: LNMCS

No.	Name	Postion
1	Mr. Chanthavong SAIGNASITH	DG
2	Mr. Vongdara KEOMUONGCHANH	DDG
3	Mr. Sourasay PHOUMAVONG	DDG
4	Mr. Khamphay SOSENGPHET	ICBP coordinator
5	Mr. Khamsouk KEOMIXAY	AFD
6	Mrs. Bouakhay NOUANSENGSY	Officer
7	Mrs. Phouvanh SIPHOMTHAVIBOUN	Officer
8	Mr. Phouthasone SENGPHILOM	officer
9	Ms. Hongkham VONGSAY	IKMP officer
10	Ms. Pany BOUNTOM	officer
11	Ms. Sirikhanh DOUANGCHAK	officer
12	Mr. khamkeung SAYSONGKHAM	officer
13	Mr. Aloun SAYAVONG	BDP coordinator
14	Mr. Khamson PHILAVONG	BDP coordinator Asst
15	Mrs. Channaly CHANDALASANE	BDP officer
16	Mr. Oh SINGHALATH	BDP officer
17	Mr. Lonkham ATSANAVONG	EP coordinator
18	Mr. Thongthip CHANDALASANE	HP coordinator
19	Mrs. Oraphan YANONG	EP officer
20	Ms. Malayvieng Mongkhonvilay	FMMP Officer
21	Ms. Bounsanong APHAY	FMMP officer
22	Mr. Kongngeun CHOUNLAMOUNTRY	WUP coordinator
23	Mr. Keomany LUANGLITH	NVP coordinator
24	Mr. SangkhaneTHIANGTHAMMAVONG	IKMP Coordinator
25	Mr. Oudomsack PHILAVONG	Modelling Head
26	Mr. Somoula YAPHICHIT	IT Officer
27	Mr. Bounpakone PHONGPHICHIT	ADB 3S Project Coordinator
28	Mr. Oulaphone ONGKEO	GIS officer

**Annex 4: Second Consultation Workshop for Mid-term review
of the Implementation of the MRC Strategic Plan 2006-2010**

Date : 1 October 2008

Venue: LNMCS

No.	Name	Postion
1	Mr. Vongdara KEOMUONGCHANH	DDG
2	Mr. Sourasay PHOUMAVONG	DDG
3	Mr. Khamphay SOSENGPHET	ICBP coordinator
4	Mr. Khamsouk KEOMIXAY	AFD
5	Mrs. Bouakhay NOUANSENGSY	Officer
6	Mrs. Phouvanh SIPHOMTHAVIBOUN	Officer
7	Mr. Phouthasone SENGPHILOM	officer
8	Ms. Hongkham VONGSAY	IKMP officer
9	Ms. Pany BOUNTOM	officer
10	Ms. Sirikhanh DOUANGCHAK	officer
11	Mr. khamkeung SAYSONGKHAM	officer
12	Mr. Aloun SAYAVONG	BDP coordinator
13	Mr. Khamstone PHILAVONG	BDP coordinator Asst
14	Mrs. Channaly CHANDALASANE	BDP officer
15	Mr. Oh SINGHALATH	BDP officer
16	Mr. Chanthachit AMPHAYCHIT	FMMP coordinator
17	Mr. Phonpaseuth PHOULIPHANH	AIFP coordinator
18	Mr. Lonkham ATSANAVONG	EP coordinator
19	Mr. Thongthip CHANDALASANE	HP coordinator
20	Mrs. Oraphan YANONG	EP officer
21	Ms. Malayvieng Mongkhonvilay	FMMP Officer
22	Ms. Bounsanonng APHAY	FMMP officer
23	Mr. Kongngeun CHOUNLAMOUNTRY	WUP coordinator
24	Mr. Keomany LUANGLITH	NVP coordinator
25	Mrs. Sonephet PHOSALATH	Officer
26	Mr. SangkhaneTHIANGTHAMMAVONG	IKMP Coordinator
27	Mr. Oudomsack PHILAVONG	Modelling Head
28	Mr. Somoula YAPHICHIT	IT Officer
29	Mr. Virana SONNASINH	FMMP
30	Mr. Bounpakone PHONGPHICHIT	ADB 3S Project Coordinator
31	Mr. Oulaphone ONGKEO	GIS officer
32	Mr. Phoumgenh KHOUNTHIKOUMMANE	Chief of Division , Dept of Waterway
33	Mr. Chanthanaphone Vongsay	Dept of Planning
34	Mr. Khammai Vongsathien	Chief of Division , Dept of Irrigation
35	Mr. Phonechaleun	Dept of Water Resources
36	Mr. Ekvinay Sayalath	Dept of Electricity
37	Mr. Somxay Sipaseth	Department of Environment
38	Mr. Somphanh Chanpengxay	Dept of Livestock and Fisheries
39	Mr. Khanmany Khounphonh	Chief of Division , DMH
40	Mr. Vongpaphanh Chanthaboun	NAFRI

41 Mr. Alounlangsay Rajvong

Dept of International Organization

42 Mr. Bountien

Chief of Division, National Land management Authority

Annex 5: Internal Consultation Meeting for Mid-term review
of the Implementation of the MRC Strategic Plan 2006-2010

Date : 2 October 2008

Venue: LNMCS

No.	Name	Position
1	Mr. Vongdara KEOMUONGCHANH	DDG
2	Mr. Sourasay PHOUMAVONG	DDG
3	Mr. Khamphay SOSENGPHET	AFD
4	Ms. Hongkham VONGSAY	AFD
5	Mr. Aloun SAYAVONG	BDP Coordinator
6	Mr. Khamson PHILAVONG	Assistant BDP
7	Mrs. Channaly CHANDALASANE	BDP Officer
8	Mr. Chanthachit AMPHAYCHIT	FMMP Coordinator
9	Mr. Phonpaseuth PHOULIPHANH	AIFP coordinator
10	Mr. Lonkham ATSANAVONG	EP coordinator
11	Mr. Thongthip CHANDALASANE	HP coordinator
12	Mrs. Oraphan YANONG	Assisrant EP
13	Ms. Malayvieng Mongkhonvilay	Assistant FMMP
14	Ms. Bounsanong APHAY	FMMP officer
15	Mr. Kongngeun CHOUNLAMOUNTRY	WUP coordinator
16	Mr. Keomany LUANGLITH	NVP coordinator
17	Mr. SangkhaneTHIANGTHAMMAVONG	IKMP coordinator
18	Mr. Oudomsack PHILAVONG	Head of Modelling Team
19	Mr. Somoula YAPHICHIT	IT officer
20	Mr. Virana SONNASINH	FMMP
21	Mr. Bounpakone PHONGPHICHIT	ADB 3S coordinator
22	Mr. Oulaphone ONGKEO	GIS officer

Annex 6: Assessment of implementation MRC Strategic Outputs 2006 – 2010

Note: Additional last column is general assessment based on the LNMC overview so far

Goals / objectives <i>What is our purpose?</i> <i>What do we want to achieve?</i>	MRC Key actions / outputs <i>What are the goods and services to be delivered?</i>	Lead Programme/ Section*	Priorities (High, medium, low)	Funding status (Funded, partial, none)	Assessment
GOAL 1: To promote and support coordinated, sustainable, and pro-poor development					
1.1 To establish a system for analysing water demand, water supply and water use in the basin to support the basin development planning process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upgraded modelling toolkit and decision support framework (DSF) Water supply and demand maps Basin-wide water resources development scenarios and options A series of water accounts and verifiable water use indicators to guide decision-making and development strategy formulation 	WUP	High	Partial	Done
		WUP	High/Medium	None	Will be finish soon
		BDP	High	None	On-going
		BDP	Medium	None	On going
1.2 To establish processes and mechanisms enabling the balancing of trade-offs between economic and political net benefits of different sectors, areas, and regions; and benefits from environmental and social protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Baseline thematic maps of water and related resource and beneficiaries Consolidated trade-off analysis of development scenarios based on assessed and quantified net impacts on economic, ecological and social values Process of discussions on trade-offs and mutual benefits in basin development, including forum/ policy dialogue meeting. 	BDP	Medium	None	On going
		BDP	High	None	Not yet
		BDP	High	None	Not yet
1.3 To produce a regularly updated rolling plan applying the planning process for identification, categorization and prioritization of projects and programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An IWRM rolling plan Collaborative basin development planning processes for project identification and prioritization in water related sectors Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) Strategy supported by assessed development scenarios and options MRC projects and programmes database Cumulative impact assessment studies of development scenarios 	BDP	High	None	Will be done
		BDP	High	None	On-going
		BDP	High	None	On-going
		BDP	High	None	On-going
		BDP	High	None	On-going
1.4 To screen, formulate and promote wise development options at the transboundary and basin levels for preparation and implementation by other appropriate development agencies ⁴¹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support to identification and preparation of balanced sustainable development options in partnership with donors, development partners and investment banks. Support to Line Agencies with knowledge and expertise in preparation of project proposals, focusing on joint and basin-wide projects and national projects with significant basin impacts Project promotion and fund-raising services for joint and basin-wide projects 	BDP	High	None	On-going
		BDP	Medium	None	On-going
		BDP	Medium	None	Not yet
1.4.1 To support sustainable land and water development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Watershed management policy guidelines and proceedings 	AIFP	Medium	Partial	Done

* It is not always possible to determine a single lead programme as often several programmes will cooperate and contribute to a key action/output.

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Supported by sector specific objectives: 1.3.1 through 1.3.7.

Goals / objectives <i>What is our purpose?</i> <i>What do we want to achieve?</i>	MRC Key actions / outputs <i>What are the goods and services to be delivered?</i>	Lead Programme/ Section*	Priorities (High, medium, low)	Funding status (Funded, partial, none)	Assessment
through more effective and integrated utilization of agricultural, irrigation, drought, and watershed management systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Best practices on watershed management and technologies Support to line agencies on identification and preparation of BDP watershed management projects Basin-wide irrigation efficiency improvement strategy Institutional and managerial guidelines to improve irrigation efficiency Assessment of irrigation efficiency in the basin Assessment of groundwater potential for irrigation Support to line agencies in identification and preparation of BDP priority irrigation development and rehabilitation projects 	AIFP AIFP AIFP AIFP AIFP AIFP AIFP	Medium Medium Medium Medium High Low Medium	Partial Partial None Funded Partial None None	Done On-going On-going On-going To be done Not yet To be done
1.4.2 To assist in the development of the basin's hydropower potential to ensure safeguarding of the environment and social interests while meeting the Basin's increasing need for energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and update assessment of hydropower potential in the Mekong Basin Update basin-wide hydropower development strategy Update hydropower database of planned and existing dams Impact assessments of hydropower projects Best practices to mitigate negative impacts of hydropower focussing on environmental and social impacts 	Operation Division Operations Division Operations Division Operations Division Operations Division	Medium Medium High High High	None None Partial None None	On-going On-going On-going On-going On-going
1.4.3 To achieve more active and efficient river transportation through increased freedom of navigation to increase social development, international trade and tourism opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional master plan for navigation Legal Framework for Cross-border Navigation Aids to Navigation Systems Traffic safety management system Improved risk and emergency management capacity as related to navigation Navigation emergency management plan Navigation pollution control system and environmental management tools and best practices for navigation and river works Mekong River Navigation Information Systems Support to line agencies in identification and preparation of BDP priority navigation development projects 	NAP NAP NAP NAP NAP NAP NAP NAP	High High High High High High Medium Medium	Partial Partial Partial Partial None Partial Partial Partial	Done On-going On-going On-going On-going On-going To be done On-going To be done
1.4.4 To build regional flood and drought management capacity for prevention, minimization or mitigation of people's suffering and economic losses due to floods and droughts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flood probability maps Fully operational flood forecasting and warning system using a comprehensive data set Hydro-meteorological monitoring network (real-time) Hydro-meteorological data base Hydro-meteorological year book (bulletin, CD ROM) Annual hydro-climatic assessment report 	FMMP FMMP FMMP FMMP FMMP FMMP	High High High High High Medium	Partial Partial Partial Partial Partial Partial	On-going On-going On-going Done Done On-going

Goals / objectives <i>What is our purpose? What do we want to achieve?</i>	MRC Key actions / outputs <i>What are the goods and services to be delivered?</i>	Lead Programme/ Section*	Priorities (High, medium, low)	Funding status (Funded, partial, none)	Assessment
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guidelines for flood proofing and mitigation measures Transboundary flood mediation and coordination mechanisms Flood emergency management and preparedness system with full coverage Land use planning and management guidelines Support to line agencies in identification and preparation of BDP priority flood management projects identified through BDP Drought forecasting and early warning system based on detailed data Drought risk maps Drought mitigation and management policy guidelines 	FMMP FMMP FMMP FMMP FMMP DP DP DP	High High High High High High High High Medium	Funded Funded Partial Partial Funded None None None	On-going On-going On-going On-going On-going Not yet Not yet Not yet
1.4.5 To maintain productive Mekong fisheries and enhance aquaculture of indigenous species for increased food security and economic output	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report on commercial fish species and production Inland fisheries development strategy Increased capacity of local and national fisheries bodies Technologies for aquaculture of indigenous species adopted Coordination services in the field of sustainable fisheries development Support to line agencies in identification and preparation of BDP priority sustainable fisheries development projects 	FP FP FP FP FP	Medium High High Medium Medium Medium	Partial Partial Partial Partial Partial	To be done On-going On-going On-going To be done On-going
1.4.6 To develop the tourism potential of the Mekong benefiting local economies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tourism development strategy to benefit local people Development of tools and best practices to reduce negative impacts of tourism on environment and social conditions Support to line agencies in identification and preparation of BDP priority sustainable tourism development projects 	Operations Division Operations Division Operations Division	Medium Medium Medium	None Partial None	Not yet Not yet Not yet
1.4.7 To assess domestic water supply and sanitation options to ensure adequate protection and improvement of peoples' lives and the environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report on domestic water supply and sanitation needs in the basin Water supply and sanitation development strategy Support to identification of BDP priority water supply and sanitation projects 	Operations Division Operations Division Operations Division	Low Low Low	None None None	On-going Not yet On-going
GOAL 2. To enhance effective regional cooperation					
2.1 To increase MRC's function as a transparent and effective cooperation mechanism among Member States and to develop and demonstrate enhanced linkages, compatibility and complementarities of partnerships with other regional organizations and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased cooperation between MRC Member States Partnership agreements (MoUs) with developments partners, International River Basin Organisations, and research institutions 	ICCS ICCS	High High	Partial None	On-going On-going

Goals / objectives <i>What is our purpose? What do we want to achieve?</i>	MRC Key actions / outputs <i>What are the goods and services to be delivered?</i>	Lead Programme/ Section*	Priorities (High, medium, low)	Funding status (Funded, partial, none)	Assessment
initiatives such as GMS, the World Bank's MWRAP, ACMECS, ASEAN, etc., including sub-basin organizations					
2.2 To complete, adopt and make applicable mechanisms, procedures and guidelines as required under the 1995 Mekong Agreement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical guidelines for implementing the procedure for maintenance of flows on the mainstream • Guidelines for transboundary environmental impact assessment • Procedures/Guidelines for water quality • Technical Guidelines for implementing the procedures for water quality • Adopted procedures are implemented 	WUP WUP WUP WUP WUP	High High High High High	Partial Partial Partial Partial Partial	On-going On-going On-going On-going Initial
2.3 To identify potential transboundary issues for negotiation, mediation and conflict prevention; and develop mediation and conflict management capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased capacity for managing transboundary issues • Development of awareness of tools and approaches to mediation and conflict management in natural resources issues • Inventory of issues and areas with potential for conflicts in use and impacts related to water • Development of mechanisms to address environmental issues 	WUP WUP WUP WUP	High High High High	Partial Partial Partial Partial	On-going On-going On-going On-going
2.4 To promote and improve dialogue and collaboration with China and Myanmar.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased cooperation with upstream riparian countries through joint studies and projects 	OCEO	High	Partial	On-going
GOAL 3. To strengthen basin-wide environmental monitoring and impact assessment					
3.1 To improve monitoring of the environmental condition of the Mekong River basin, focusing on water quantity and quality, ecological health and social impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental water quality monitoring system • Social impact monitoring system • Mekong River ecological health monitoring system • Model of the Mekong Basin's aquatic ecosystems 	EP EP EP EP	Medium High High Medium	Partial Partial Partial Partial	On-going On-going On-going On-going
3.2 To regularly report on the environmental condition of the Mekong River basin and disseminate this information widely	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updated environmental status report • Updated State of the Basin Report • Updated Basin Report Cards on environmental and social conditions • Guidelines on best environmental management practices 	EP EP EP EP	High High High Medium	Partial Partial Partial Partial	On-going On-going On-going On-going
3.3 To raise awareness of MRC, NMCs, and line agencies on transboundary and basin-wide environmental issues and to increase the capacity to address them	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training modules on the use of EIA, SEA, and other tools • Environmental educational kits • Environmental awareness on transboundary issues 	EP EP EP	Medium Medium High	Partial Partial Partial	On-going On-going On-going
3.4 To ensure that development initiatives are planned and implemented with a view to minimize negative environmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To support line agencies in identification and preparation of BDP priority environmental management projects and protection 	EP	High	None	On-going

Goals / objectives <i>What is our purpose? What do we want to achieve?</i>	MRC Key actions / outputs <i>What are the goods and services to be delivered?</i>	Lead Programme/ Section*	Priorities (High, medium, low)	Funding status (Funded, partial, none)	Assessment
impacts;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upon request of Member States, screening of projects for environmental impacts (technical support to project level SEA, independent review of EIA) Promote and support the implementation of transboundary EIA 	EP EP	High High	None None	Not yet On-going
3.5 To ensure that social, economic and environmental concerns are incorporated into basin-wide water resources development strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic environmental impact assessment (SEA) Environmental impact assessment (EIA) Promote stakeholder discussions to identify valuable assets in water resources which are to be protected Providing information and knowledge to decision makers through the IBFM process on economic benefits and environmental and social impacts of development as related to changes in the flow regime. A set of spatial tools to enable planners to take into consideration environmental and social aspects of development plans and projects. Initially covering, wetlands, protected areas, vulnerability and dependence on aquatic resources. 	EP EP EP EP EP	Medium Medium High High High	Partial Partial Partial Partial Partial	On-going On-going On-going On-going On-going
GOAL 4. To strengthen the Integrated Water Resources Management capacity and knowledge base of the MRC bodies, NMCs and line agencies and other stakeholders					
4.1 To improve management systems to allow MRC to operate as a highly effective, transparent and innovative International River Basin Organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Management policies, systems and manuals 	OCEO	Medium	None	On-going
4.2 To establish a technical coordination capacity for preparing and coordinating the implementation of MRC's Work Programme applying IWRM principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technical coordination advisor and efficient programme coordination mechanisms in place Annual work programmes Harmonized project progress reports 	OCEO OCEO OCEO	High High Medium	Partial Funded Partial	On-going Done by yearly On-going
4.3 To enhance and maintain a common GIS-based information and knowledge management and dissemination system to support all MRC activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operational information system and information management and dissemination tools (GIS, remote sensing, portal) supporting all MRC programmes Information and datasets provided to outside users 	IKMP IKMP	High High	Partial Partial	Done On-going
4.4 To maintain partnerships with leading organizations, universities and civil society stakeholders for programme-focussed collaboration of common interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Network of partners (universities, research institutes, civil society and other interested and relevant organizations) established Assessment of research priorities to support MRC's mission 	ICCS OCEO	High Medium	None Partial	Initial Not yet
4.5 To strengthen the human resources capacities of the MRC, NMCs and the line agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capacity needs assessment reports Training modules and toolkits Training sessions and study tours for JC, NMCs, MRCS staff and line agencies 	ICBP ICBP ICBP	High High High	None None None	To be done On-going On-going

Goals / objectives <i>What is our purpose?</i> <i>What do we want to achieve?</i>	MRC Key actions / outputs <i>What are the goods and services to be delivered?</i>	Lead Programme/ Section*	Priorities (High, medium, low)	Funding status (Funded, partial, none)	Assessment
4.6 To develop and update as new knowledge becomes available regional assessment tools (EIA, SEA, DSF, TB-EIA, RAM, SIA etc.) for all development projects to be implemented in the lower Mekong River basin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional assessment tools available and promoted for use by NMCS and Line Agencies • Training/orientation sessions in the use of assessment tools for NMCs and line agencies 	ICCS	High	Partial	To be done
		ICCS	High	Partial	To be done

Mid-term Review of the MRC Strategic Plan 2006 - 2010

Appendix I

Mid-term Review, Country Paper Thailand; letter of TNMC dated 17 October 2008; and Suggested Steps for MRC Engagement with ASEAN

APPENDIX I

Perspectives and Inputs from Thailand for the Mid-Term Review of the MRC Strategic Plan 2006 - 2010

1. Introduction

The MRC Strategic Plan 2006-2010 (SP) contained a specific stipulation suggesting the advisability of conducting an independent mid-term review (MTR) of the SP to ensure that the SP and the related MRC functions stay up to date and to facilitate the development of the next plan. Subsequently, the 27th Meeting of the MRC Joint Committee agreed that such an MTR of the SP should be carried out. The MTR is intended to take stock and provide a snapshot of the progress achieved by the MRC in the implementation of the SP and other pertinent activities and to make recommendations for any adjustments that are required as a result. In accordance with the Terms of Reference (TOR) for this assignment provided by the MRC, the consolidation of inputs for the MTR is to be carried out by 4 riparian consultants plus an international consultant who is responsible for synthesizing all the 4 reports together with those from the MRCS itself and other partners/stakeholders. Each riparian country is requested to submit its views on the SP and MRC-related matters based on a proposed outline that was agreed upon in principle by the 5-member consultant team and the MRCS at a meeting held in Vientiane on 1 September 2008. The riparian consultants would then assist in soliciting and consolidating the individual country perspectives. A regional consultation meeting among all the concerned parties/stakeholders is scheduled to be held in Vientiane on 21 October 2008 whereby all the inputs received regarding the MTR of the SP would be deliberated upon. Comments expressed at this meeting would then be incorporated accordingly and the revised consolidated report of the MTR of the SP would subsequently be forwarded to the MRC Joint Committee and the Council for their further consideration.

2. Process for the In-country Review

The Thai riparian consultant had an initial meeting with members of the Thai National Mekong Committee (TNMC) on 8 September 2008 to lay out the plan and process for the country-level review and to make arrangements accordingly. A list of the participants at the meeting appears as Annex 1. Subsequently, the consultant had individual consultations with several of these members to obtain a better appreciation of the range of programme activities implemented under the MRC auspices and learn about the progress made as well as any problems encountered. The TNMC then held a broader consultation meeting on the MTR of the SP on 19 September 2008 whereby approximately 30 representatives primarily from key government agencies concerned with the MRC were present and offered their views on the SP and MRC-related matters. The list of participants at this consultative meeting is shown in Annex 2. The consultant also had separate discussions with several former MRCS riparian staff from Thailand, some TNMC advisory members as well as relevant individuals from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to assess their perspectives on the matters pertaining to the MRC. These individuals are listed under Annex 3. It should be noted that the views presented in this paper represent a collection of key thoughts and ideas expressed at the above-mentioned

meetings/discussions. The TNMC, however, may still wish to submit additional comments and inputs in this regard at a later stage.

3. Assessment of the Implementation of the MRC Strategic Plan

The MRC Strategic Plan, 2006-2010 (SP), and its implementation had several *major* shortcomings as follows:-

1. There were no clear benchmarks or indicators set out at the beginning to measure success or failure for each of the goals, objectives and outputs/actions.
2. No clear-cut timelines or milestones were provided whereby each of the outputs/actions is to be achieved. i.e. no specific deadlines were given.
3. To date, a Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) system which was supposed to be established right after the adoption of the SP in 2005/6 as a matter of priority (see page 45 of the printed version of SP) has not yet been set up. Current indications are that such an M&E system is expected to be operational only in 2009 or perhaps even 2010, which is already towards the end of the current SP period.
4. No update of Annex 1 of the SP (matrix of Strategic Outputs) was undertaken since the SP was approved. It can therefore be inferred that not much attention has been given to it by the concerned implementing parties.
5. There is thus *collective neglect or oversight* on the part of all concerned parties of not taking this SP and its implementation seriously enough.

This has *severe and adverse* implications on achieving the Vision and Mission of the MRC. Can the MRC be considered “world class” and “financially secure” and to be able to carry out effectively and in a timely manner what it is mandated to do when its current SP or “master plan” is not readily monitorable with any objectively verifiable indicators?

Notwithstanding the above, the MRC did follow through with a mid-term review of the SP, which is now being carried out, in conformance with what is stated at the end of page 45 of the published version of the SP, under “Implementation arrangements”. Since the necessary supporting evidence or systems are not readily available or in place to do a proper evaluation, as explained above, only a crude assessment is possible to provide a rough picture or snapshot of what has transpired over the past few years of the SP implementation period. An attempt has been made to do this by adding two additional columns to the existing matrix which appears in Annex 1 of the SP, namely, “Achievement status” and “Major gaps or problems and proposed recommendations (if any)”. The updated matrix incorporating the Thai inputs is shown as Annex 4. An overall examination of the responses given indicate there is still much that needs to be done as many stated activities have yet to start and for those that are on-going, many are often delayed while still others have encountered problems of one kind or another. As indicated above, in the absence of objectively verifiable indicators built into the SP, the assessment can only be qualitative in nature and subject to variability of interpretation.

With regard to Goal 1 of the SP, it is felt that the MRC has yet to reach the intended targets and beneficiaries whether in addressing poverty-related problems in a tangible and sustainable manner, or being helpful in the decision-making processes of hydropower schemes, many of which are now private-sector led or in the case of the recent flooding situation along the Mekong river in terms of provision of timely and public-friendly information. However, one exception is the BDP Phase 1, which had compiled a list of useful projects whereby each country could then select for implementation in due course.

In connection with Goal 2, there is still a lack of regional cooperation in the true sense as there remains a certain degree of mistrusts and suspicions as evidenced in the WUP which is focused disproportionately on legal at the expense of other forms of cooperation which may yield more productive results. As the MRC catch phrase captures it, the challenge is to find a reasonable way of “meeting the needs and keeping the balance”.

As to Goal 3, instruments such as the basin-wide environmental impact assessment should be introduced only after careful consideration since the riparian countries concerned have different levels of development and various standards of EIA. Thus it is suggested that they be considered as just guidelines and implemented first on a trial or voluntary basis in order to build up trust and confidence through a lessons learning process.

With respect to Goal 4, MRC needs to further develop concrete activities pertaining to the application of IWRM principles and processes and the TNMC would also require capacity building assistance to strengthen its efforts in this regard.

4. The Alignment of the MRC Programme Portfolio

There is general alignment of the present MRC programme portfolio with the 1995 Mekong Agreement. In terms of how well the MRC programme portfolio contributed to the implementation of the SP, this has already been reflected in Annex 4. As to programme coordination arrangements, there is still much room for improvement. The degree of coordination within the MRCS itself among the various programmes or between MRCS and the NMCs and other parties is still relatively weak. Coordination in practice became perceived as more of an impediment resulting in slowed progress and lack of expected achievements in many programmatic areas. As such only minimal institutionalization has taken place in this regard, whether within the MRCS or with the NMCs.

It is now more than a dozen years since the promulgation of the 1995 Agreement, and the Mekong region had undergone tremendous changes and developments during these intervening years and is also likely to face other challenges in the foreseeable future. For instance, the degree of interconnectivity that has multiplied within the region over the past decade or so whether in terms of improved transport facilities and economic corridors, increased trade and investment opportunities, movement of goods and people,

interconnected energy systems and power grid as well as enhanced telecommunications facilities have all produced positive as well as negative impacts in the Mekong area. Development initiatives, which used to be mostly government-led has of late shifted to increasingly privately sector-driven investment including hydropower and other infrastructure-related schemes. The prospect of the region seriously affected by climate change variability due to global warming and other natural as well as man-made hazards poses a real concern and even looming threat that also deserves more serious attention and action today than when the Agreement came into force. Most importantly, the MRC (or for that matter its predecessor Mekong Committee), had so far not succeeded, despite its best efforts, in bringing the two upper riparian countries into the organization by signing up to the Agreement and the outlook is not that bright of seeing this happening anytime soon, under the present construct and circumstances. The composition of its membership thus remains the same today as five decades ago. Therefore, the comprehensive and complete implementation of the principles and objectives as espoused in the Agreement had not been possible by the mere fact of the absence of China and Myanmar participating fully as active members in “the cooperation for the sustainable development of the Mekong River Basin”. In light of the above-stated developments, perhaps it is timely now to conduct a critical examination of the MRC and perhaps the Agreement itself to see how it should be better aligned and more responsive to meet the current and evolving challenges facing the Mekong region. One simple yardstick to look at in this regard is the Mekong Institute (MI), which was first established as a project in 1996, about the same time as when the MRC was created, but which has since become an inter-governmental organization like the MRC and to then ask why MI is able to include all six “riparian” parties in its governing structure while MRC and its predecessor Mekong Committee could not.

In connection with the multiplicity of development initiatives that are currently populating the Mekong region, it becomes inevitable and even imperative for the MRC to quickly identify its niche and comparative or perhaps even competitive advantage since the various schemes are all competing for attention and resources which are often limited. Unless MRC does so and rapidly readjust to the new realities, it faces the danger of soon being relegated to the sidelines and becoming irrelevant, if not already, and may run the risk of eventually going out of business in the foreseeable future. There is thus an utmost need for reducing overlaps and duplication between the work of the MRC and other development schemes or entities active in the same thematic areas or with similar geographical footprints. On the other hand, it is equally essential to build synergies and complementary partnerships and forge strategic alliances to leverage or ride on each other’s strengths if MRC is to survive in the years to come. Although attempts have already been made by MRC for establishing links with other organizations or initiatives active in the Mekong region, it is far too superficial and not pro-active and timely enough to make any significant difference. For example, the ADB-led Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS) initiative of facilitating sustainable economic growth and improving the standard of living of the peoples in the sub-region, which started in 1992 just three years before the MRC Agreement took effect, has gained so much prominence within the last 15 years that it had effectively overshadowed or outshined the MRC, so to speak. ADB’s strength is its well-financed base and so it is able to translate many concepts and ideas

into tangible outcomes and are seen by the participating countries as desirable and this reinforces national ownership and buy-in. As of the end of 2007, its portfolio of project activities reached a combined total of USD 10 billion. It has succeeded in holding three summits so far with the full participation of all the six Mekong riparian country leaders whose countries comprised the GMS. Many of its priority sectoral areas overlap with those of the MRC such as transport, energy, agriculture, environment, tourism, and human resources development.

Similar to the MRC, ASEAN is another inter-governmental organization within the Southeast Asia region which came into being in 1967 with five original members and has now expanded to cover all 10 countries that normally constitute Southeast Asia proper. It has also increased in prominence over the years with its wide array of cooperation among its members as well as with a host of some dozen or more official Dialogue Partners (or the equivalent of Development Partners in the MRC context) plus a series of other development-oriented parties or entities. It is interesting to note that ASEAN also has its own ASEAN-Mekong Development Cooperation (AMBDC) forum represented at both ministerial and senior officials' levels. The AMBDC framework shares similar objectives as MRC in terms of promoting economic and sustainable development of the Mekong region with the aim of helping to narrow the development gap that has existed and still exists between its old and new members, the latter of which are all from the Mekong area. It is noteworthy that AMBDC comprises of all 10 ASEAN member states plus China, making it an 11-member forum which includes all the Mekong riparian countries. ASEAN also has a Dialogue Partner relationship with China since 1991 and the areas of cooperation has mushroomed over the years as now reflected under the umbrella joint Plan of Action that is currently in effect from 2005 to 2010. Interestingly, the said Plan of Action has a section entitled "Mekong Basin Development Cooperation" and covers areas that are of interest to MRC like implementing measures to improve the navigation safety in the Mekong River in a sustainable manner through consultation among all riparian countries while undertaking to preserve the environment and unique way of life of the people who live along the river, expansion of the EIA of the navigation channel improvement on the upper Mekong River and sharing the information with the lower riparian countries, promoting trans-border power networking that are environmentally and socially friendly, enhancing (re)forestation in the river basin to control soil erosion, managing and monitoring of river water quality, protecting the environment and promoting the sustainable use including equal access and benefit sharing of the shared natural resources and their biodiversity and finally promoting the exchange of information and strengthening cooperation regarding the use of water in the river basin with the aim of achieving sustainable development of all riparian countries. It therefore appears that provisions have already been included under the ASEAN-China Plan of Action to address some of the critical issues that are of concern to the MRC and from a more integrated and inclusive perspective. One of the strengths of ASEAN is the fact that it is a well-recognized forum for discussions on matters of importance within the Southeast Asia region and is notable for its diplomatic expertise, in addition to having China in its cooperative frameworks which involves the Mekong region. ASEAN also holds summit meetings with China every year.

In short, MRC is a relatively smaller player sandwiched between larger ones in the business of promoting sustainable economic growth and development in the Mekong region. If MRC could form a strategic “troika” partnership by leveraging or riding on ADB’s financial capacity and ASEAN’s negotiation ability, it could then perhaps stand a good chance of making itself more relevant and useful to the people and countries that it is supposed to serve. For this to happen would require a major “paradigm shift” in MRC’s *modus operandi* and the way it conducts business to be upfront and on par with the other players in the region and most importantly being catalytic in building up and offering its wealth of database and information as well as expertise in selected technical fields as its marketing tool.

5. MRC’s Orientation towards UN Millennium Development Goals

The MRC Agreement, its Strategic Plan and the programme portfolio were not designed or developed specifically with MDGs in mind and vice versa. Thus to assess how they relate to each other may be problematic and it would be rather difficult to attribute in a meaningful, fair and objective manner as to the extent that MRC activities actually contributed to the achievement of the MDGs at each country level. Perhaps a better way to assess MRC’s orientation towards the MDGs is to measure progress and achievements towards a Mekong region-wide mutually agreed set of MDGs rather than benchmarking against individual country sets of MDGs which would have wide variability due to different socio-economic development factors, not to mention the difficulty of establishing correlations in the first place as indicated earlier. In this regard it is recommended that the production of a Mekong MDGs report, just like a Mekong or GMS State of Environment report or perhaps even a Mekong Human Development report would be more useful.

6. Prioritisation of the Remaining Period of the Strategic Plan

As stated earlier, the implementation of this SP suffered from the lack of proper attention that should have been duly paid from all concerned parties as a result of collective oversight or neglect. There is thus a lack of sense of ownership in the SP among the rank and file of the organization. Therefore it is not surprising that the necessary follow up steps did not occur. MRC therefore faces a crucial choice. Does it want to still pursue a SP which contains many flaws as pointed out earlier? If so, then appropriate corrective actions has to be taken immediately as there is effectively only two years left in the current SP implementation period and taking into consideration that a functioning M&E system is not likely to be put in place until at least a year or two from now. The other alternative is to abandon this SP altogether and start afresh on a more proper footing. In any case, the much touted M&E system (which has been referred to in the SP itself as well as successive MRC work programmes) should be put in place as a matter of *urgency* with adequate funding support. Without it, there is no objectively verifiable means to measure any progress or the lack of in the SP implementation. One can infer that an M&E mindset probably doesn’t exist at MRC at the moment or if it does, it is relatively weak and not really functional. A technically sound M&E system or for that matter any operational system will not be of much value if the people and the institution(s) involved

do not adopt and use it in a timely and effective manner. Changing mindsets through well-grounded capacity building exercises in promoting an “M&E”-oriented working culture where results are clearly monitorable and can be properly evaluated thus becomes a matter of top priority as well if the M&E system is to achieve what it is supposed to do. To ensure more direct accountability and ownership and therefore hopefully more effective implementation of the SP, one possibility that could be considered is to align the SP timeframe with the term of the CEO or alternatively to adjust the tenure of the CEO so that it is synchronized with that of the SP period.

As indicated earlier, the rapid changes that the Mekong region had undergone since the 1995 Agreement was signed and the emerging challenges that the region faces in the years ahead poses serious questions to the viability and *raison d’être* of the MRC and what sort of role or niche it should have. As such, the MRC should be reviewed in this evolving context of growing private-led investment in major infrastructure activities within the Mekong river basin, the increasing number of dams being constructed or planned in the mainstream, not to mention the tributaries, of the river, the presence now of multiple players in the Mekong “playing field” which was relatively absent some 15 or so years ago, the likelihood of the region being seriously affected by climate variability and other natural or man-made risks/disasters in the foreseeable future and the fact that two upper riparian countries remain pretty much out of the orbit of the provisions of the Agreement, thus hampering its full implementation.

As of late, and partly a result of the factors mentioned in the preceding paragraph, the MRC’s existence and relevance is being increasingly called into question in many quarters whether in terms of the availability and timeliness of its response to various developments that are of concern occurring within the river basin, and also for calls that it take more pro-active stances and decisive actions. As part of the need to improve its image, raise the profile and create a sense of transparency/accountability in the eyes of an increasingly probing and critical public, the MRC needs to urgently implement an effective communications and public relations/affairs strategy with commensurate funding support. This was also specifically mentioned in the SP as a priority item for action. Achieving what MRC has stated it intends to do is essential to gain credibility and acceptance but equally important is the need to communicate what it does to the concerned parties and the public at large in an effective and timely fashion. The message that it brings out into the public domain and the way it markets itself is crucial to the formation of a correct public perception of its rightful role, usefulness and relevance among various sectors of society that the MRC should supposedly be reaching out to as its serving clientele. In this connection, participatory processes like the stakeholder consultations conducted by MRC this year for the BDP and Hydropower programme could help bridge the gaps in understanding and perceptions and assist in putting things in their proper perspectives among all the concerned parties.

The MRC and the Mekong Committee has accumulated a wealth of data and analytical information collected by innumerable studies and compiled in reports over so many years of its operations. Much of this has however remained in-house and very little of it has found its way into the public domain. This is an awful waste of time, effort and resources,

not to mention tax payer's money when most of the information gathered only remain on the shelves and are seldom used or accessible by the public at large or even by interested parties or concerned agencies in implementing their policies, strategies and plans which are pertinent to the sustainable development of the Mekong River Basin. This became rather ironic and even tragic during the recent flooding events along the river when the flood warning alerts issued by MRC were not able to reach the intended target areas or groups for various reasons. MRC needs to quickly institutionalize a public disclosure policy including declassifying some of its documentary materials for public dissemination and in making the information available in a form that is useful to and accessible by the people at large. A marketing strategy for its information products and services should also be quickly launched. To be a "secretive and black box" type of organization is no longer tenable in this day and age whereas to be more open and transparent is the order of the day. Again a change in mindsets is necessary so that the organization and its staff adopt a more open-door, transparent and accountable policy rather than that of a keeper of "secrets". Perhaps the name "*Secretariat*" should be dropped in favor of something like "Coordination Office", just to start off on the right frame of mind.

The MRC and its predecessor Mekong Committee, despite its five decades of existence, remains essentially a foreign donor dependent or in some point of view an international consultant driven organization. Even though the four riparian countries have participated in its activities over these years, the fact still remains that the MRC is not a fully home-grown entity nor well-rooted or integrated with the national development processes. In effect, very little of its directives have been mainstreamed into the policies, plans and activities of the countries concerned. The riparianisation initiative that is currently underway within the MRCS, though a bit late in coming is nevertheless a step in the right direction and is to be welcomed. However, the process needs to be carefully orchestrated and executed to ensure a smooth transition and avoid causing institutional hiccups along the way. Again, a change of mindsets is crucial for this exercise to be effectively undertaken. The thinking, which still exists today in some circles, that foreign expertise is *always* superior to whatever expertise is available in the riparian countries, has to be steadily weaned off by providing ample opportunities for promising riparian individuals with good qualifications, skills and potential to be trained and thereby well-capacitated to take up positions of increasing responsibilities within the organization. The riparian country nationals must rightfully take their place in the driver seat of the institution if it is to make the claim that the MRC is riparian owned. This is not to say that foreign advisors or expertise are not needed but they should be selectively made and the qualifications and skills properly scrutinized to truly match what is required. At the same time, the riparian countries should also increasingly shoulder more of the expenses of the operations of the MRCS as a demonstration of genuine ownership. Development partners and supporters of MRC should be made to understand that it is all part of the process of becoming a more riparian-owned institution, run and led by riparians with the objective primarily for the riparian peoples' benefit and their roles are to support such an endeavour where there is mutual interest. As part of improving the caliber of its staff, riparian or otherwise, an open recruitment selection process based solely on merit should be fully institutionalized and consistently implemented. Concomitant measures for retention of capable staff

members should be instituted by offering attractive enough remuneration packages comparable with other similar international organizations. Likewise, effective staff rules and appraisal systems should also be in place to promote deserving people and discipline those that are underperforming. As another avenue to facilitate the process of riparianisation, it is proposed that the MRCS quickly develop and implement a tracer program of all the riparian staff, current and past, who has worked at the Secretariat as well as the NMCs. This is a wealth of expertise that is knowledgeable about the Mekong-related issues and serves as a valuable asset that should be tapped, where appropriate, to assist in the advancement of the organization at this critical juncture in its history

In summary, it is recommended that the following measures/steps to be taken as a matter of priority, preferably within the next 6 to 12 months:-

1. MRC should decide whether to still stick with the current SP or formulate a completely new one. One suggestion is to align the timeframe of the SP with the term of the CEO for more effective implementation.
2. MRC should undertake a critical review of itself in order to re-align better with the present-day realities and emerging challenges.
3. The M&E system development for the MRC should be expedited and put in place at the earliest opportunity along with appropriate capacity building exercises and sufficient funding.
4. MRC should quickly step up its communications and public relations efforts so that its profile and image could be elevated and better projected. Public participatory processes should be further encouraged in this regard.
5. MRC should also adopt a more open disclosure and access to information policy with regard to its database, reports and other information resources along with a marketing strategy for making its products and services useful to the public at large and available in a timely and effective manner.
6. The programme coordination functions of MRCS need to be beefed up to meet the increasing challenges and needs of cross-sectoral interaction and cooperation.
7. The riparianisation process should be accompanied by executing fully and consistently a recruitment process based solely on merit together with an appropriate reward and punishment scheme, specifically-targeted capacity building exercises and the implementation of the staff tracer program with concomitant increase in resources provided by riparian countries to the operations of the Secretariat.
8. MRC should develop more substantive links and forge strategic alliances with ADB-GMS and ASEAN frameworks to leverage the strengths found in each entity for achieving synergistic and complementary ends.
9. MRC should consider preparing a Mekong MDGs report to reflect its commitment to the MDGs.

7. Preparation of the Next Strategic Plan

The expected steps to be taken for the preparation of the next SP depends very much on to what extent the MRC wishes to consider and take up the proposed recommendations made in the previous sections.

8. Conclusions

The views presented in the earlier paragraphs re. the MRC and the implementation of the SP, should provide adequate food for thought in terms of the challenges that the MRC currently faces and is likely to face in the near future. There are tough decisions that need to be made but the MRC has little choice and time to spare as the Mekong regional developments are moving ahead at a relatively fast pace and especially now with numerous competing players on the block so to speak. It is hoped that some of the measures/steps proposed would be taken up by MRC as a matter of priority in order to re-align and re-direct if not re-invent itself into a more relevant and effective organization that will be more responsive to the needs of the riparian countries and peoples and therefore be more in line with its aspirations as stated in its Vision and Mission statements.

ANNEX 1

List of Participants at the Initial Meeting with the Thai National Mekong Committee Secretariat members on Monday 8 September 2008 at the Department of Water Resources (DWR) of Thailand (*all members of DWR except the Riparian Consultant*)

1. Mr. Thanade Dawasuwan, Deputy Director General
2. Mr. Thanphong Bunyaratapan, Director, Bureau of International Cooperation
3. Ms. Pakawan Chufamane, Director, Mekong Affairs Branch
4. Mr. Nirat Phuriphaphinyo, Water Utilization Programme & Hydropower Programme Coordinator
5. Ms. Nuanlaor Wongpinitwarodom, Navigation Programme Coordinator
6. Mr. Burachat Buasuwan, Flood Management & Mitigation Programme Coordinator
7. Mr. Suchart Sirijungsakul, Information & Knowledge Management Program Coordinator
8. Ms. Ruamporn Ngamboriluk, Assistant Environmental Programme Coordinator
9. Ms. Kareema Wongsin, Assistant Basin Development Programme Coordinator
10. Mr. Buree Suwanarat, Natural Resources Planning National Specialist, Basin Development Programme
11. Mr. Apichai Sunchindah, Riparian Consultant

ANNEX 2

List of Participants at the Consultation Meeting convened by the Thai National Mekong Committee on Friday 19 September 2008 at the Department of Water Resources (DWR) of Thailand

1. Dr. Siripong Hungspreug, Director General, DWR
2. Mr. Thanphong Bunyaratapan, Director, Bureau of International Cooperation, DWR
3. Ms. Pakawan Chufamane, Director, Mekong Affairs Branch, DWR
4. Mr. Nirat Phuriphaphinyo, Water Utilization Programme & Hydropower Programme Coordinator, DWR
5. Ms. Nuanlaor Wongpinitwarodom, Navigation Program Coordinator, DWR
6. Mr. Trirong Santimetvirul, Planning & Policy Analyst, DWR
7. Mr. Satit Sueprasertsuk, Agriculture, Irrigation & Forestry Programme Coordinator, DWR
8. Ms. Kobkul Rungsijaroj, GMP Coordinator, DWR
9. Ms. Kareema Wongsin, Assistant Basin Development Programme Coordinator, DWR
10. Mr. Buree Suwanarat, Natural Resources Planning National Specialist, Basin Development Programme, DWR
11. Ms. Wandee Patanasatheinpong, Scientist, Office of Research & Development & Hydrology, DWR
12. Ms. Nat-ek Dusadeeprasert, Plan & Policy Analyst, National Economic & Social Development Board, Prime Minister's Office
13. Mr. Unnop Buranseth, Director of Treaties Division, Dept. of Treaties & Legal Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA)
14. Mr. Surasak Suparat, Director of Development Affairs Division, Dept. of International Organizations, MOFA
15. Mr. Vosita Vorasaph, Legal Specialist, Dept. of International Economic Affairs, MOFA
16. Mr. Suwit Thanophanuwat, Professional Engineering for Planning, Royal Irrigation Dept., Ministry of Agriculture & Cooperatives
17. Mr. Nawarat Kraipanon, Chief of Coordination Group 4, Office of Environmental Policy & Planning, Ministry of Natural Resources & Environment
18. Mr. Thanatheep Chanpakdee, River navigation officer, International Affairs Division, Dept. of River Transport and Shipping, Ministry of Communications
19. Mr. Natapong Saivichitr, Harbour inspection officer, Office of River Transport Safety & Environment, Dept. of River Transport and Shipping, Ministry of Communications
20. Mr. Paitoon Kadeethum, Director, Office of Land Management and Development, Dept. of Land Development, Ministry of Agriculture & Cooperatives (MOAC)
21. Ms. Kaset Champa, Soil survey officer, Dept. of Land Development, MOAC
22. Ms. Ubolrattana Soontornrattana, Dept. of Fisheries, MOAC
23. Mr. Somkiat Pasukwong, Director of Mekong River Basin Coordination and Management, Area 1, DWR

24. Mr. Peerapong Sriprasert, Director of Mekong River Basin Coordination and Management , Area 2, DWR
25. Ms. Lalita Boonpriwan, Secretary of National BDP, DWR
26. Ms. Benya Surathasanakorn, Assistant to BDP Coordinator, DWR
27. Dr. Apichart Anukularmphai, Water expert and member of TNMC
28. Dr. Chaiyuth Sukhsri, Head of Water Resources Engineering Dept., Chulalongkorn University and member of TNMC
29. Mr. Apichai Sunchindah, Riparian Consultant

ANNEX 3

List of relevant individuals from Thailand whose views were solicited separately

1. Dr. Chayanis Krittasudthacheewa, Deputy Director, Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI) – Asia, Bangkok, and former riparian staff of MRCS
2. Dr. Muanpong Juntopas, Research Fellow, SEI – Asia, Bangkok, and former riparian staff of MRCS
3. Dr. Vitoon Viriyasakultorn, Senior Environmental Governance Specialist, USAID/ECO-Asia, currently Vientiane-based, and former riparian staff of MRCS
4. Mr. Surasak Suparat, Director, Development Affairs Division, Dept. of International Organizations, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
5. Ms. Nitvadee Manitkul, Director, Division of Economic Relations & Cooperation, Dept. of International Economic Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
6. Ms. Achara Chaiyasarn, Division of Economic Relations & Cooperation, Dept. of International Economic Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
7. Ms. Manasvi Mansakul, Division II, Dept. of ASEAN Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
8. Dr. Apichart Anukularmphai, Water Resources expert and TNMC advisory member
9. Dr. Chaiyuth Sukhsri, Head of Water Resources Engineering Dept., Chulalongkorn University and advisory member of TNMC

Annex 4

MRC Strategic Outputs 2006 – 2010 (updated in September 2008 with inputs from relevant Thai agencies/parties)

Goals / objectives <i>What is our purpose? What do we want to achieve?</i>	MRC Key actions / outputs <i>What are the goods and services to be delivered?</i>	Lead Program /Section	Priorities (High, medium, low)	Funding status (Funded, partial, none)	Achievement status	Major gaps or problems and proposed recommendations (if any)
GOAL 1: To promote and support coordinated, sustainable, and pro-poor development						
1.1 To establish a system for analysing water demand, water supply and water use in the basin to support the basin development planning process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upgraded modelling toolkit and decision support framework (DSF) Water supply and demand maps Basin-wide water resources development scenarios and options A series of water accounts and verifiable water use indicators to guide decision-making and development strategy formulation 	WUP WUP BDP BDP	High High/Medium High Medium	Partial None None None	Completed (RID) Not yet completed (CSS) Completed (RID) Not yet completed (CSS) Not started (RID) Not yet completed/delayed (CSS) Not started (RID) Not yet completed/delayed (CSS)	Not sustainable (RID) Still need more works on the “Impact assessment tools” and “trade-off” mechanism (CSS) Sum data in Thai (RID) Need more works on “Demand maps”(CSS) Need more work on impact assessment and trade-off mechanism(CSS) Need more works on indicators(CSS)
1.2 To establish processes and mechanisms enabling the balancing of trade-offs between economic and political net benefits of different sectors, areas, and regions; and benefits from environmental and social protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Baseline thematic maps of water and related resource and beneficiaries Consolidated trade-off analysis of development scenarios based on assessed and quantified net impacts on economic, ecological and social values Process of discussions on trade-offs and mutual benefits in basin development, including forum/policy dialogue meeting. 	BDP BDP BDP	Medium High High	None None None	Not started (RID) Not yet completed/delayed(CSS) Not started (RID) Not yet completed/delayed(CSS) Not started (RID) Not yet completed/delayed (CSS)	
1.3 To produce a regularly updated rolling plan applying the planning process for identification, categorization and prioritization of projects and programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An IWRM rolling plan Collaborative basin development planning processes for project identification and prioritization in water related sectors Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) Strategy supported by assessed development scenarios and options 	BDP BDP BDP	High High High	None None None	Not started (RID) Not yet completed/delayed (CSS) Not started (RID) In progress (OEPP) Not yet completed/delayed (CSS) Not started (RID) Not yet completed/delayed(CSS)	

Goals / objectives <i>What is our purpose? What do we want to achieve?</i>	MRC Key actions / outputs <i>What are the goods and services to be delivered?</i>	Lead Program /Section	Priorities (High, medium, low)	Funding status (Funded, partial, none)	Achievement status	Major gaps or problems and proposed recommendations (if any)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MRC projects and programmes database Cumulative impact assessment studies of development scenarios 	BDP BDP	High High	None None	Not started (RID) Not yet completed/delayed(CSS) Not started (RID) In progress (OEPP) Not yet completed/delayed (CSS)	
1.4 To screen, formulate and promote wise development options at the transboundary and basin levels for preparation and implementation by other appropriate development agencies ⁴²	1.4.8 Support to identification and preparation of balanced sustainable development options in partnership with donors, development partners and investment banks. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support to Line Agencies with knowledge and expertise in preparation of project proposals, focusing on joint and basin-wide projects and national projects with significant basin impacts Project promotion and fund-raising services for joint and basin-wide projects 	BDP BDP BDP	High Medium Medium	None None None	Not started (RID) Not yet completed/delayed (CSS) Not started (RID) Not yet completed/delayed (CSS) Not started (RID) Not yet completed (CSS)	
1.4.1 To support sustainable land and water development through more effective and integrated utilization of agricultural, irrigation, drought, and watershed management systems	1.4.9 Watershed management policy guidelines and proceedings 1.4.10 Best practices on watershed management and technologies 1.4.11 Support to line agencies on identification and preparation of BDP watershed management projects 1.4.12 Basin-wide irrigation efficiency improvement strategy 1.4.13 Institutional and managerial guidelines to improve irrigation efficiency 1.4.14 Assessment of irrigation efficiency in the basin 1.4.15 Assessment of groundwater potential for irrigation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support to line agencies in identification and preparation of BDP priority irrigation development and rehabilitation projects 	AIFP AIFP AIFP AIFP AIFP AIFP AIFP AIFP	Medium Medium Medium Medium High Low Medium	Partial Partial Partial None Funded Partial None None	Completed (OEPP) On going (CSS) On going (CSS) In progress (OEPP) On going (CSS) In progress (OEPP) On going/delayed (CSS) On going (CSS) On going/delayed (CSS) No concrete activity (CSS) No clear/concrete activity (CSS)	
1.4.2 To assist in the development of the basin's hydropower	1.4.16 Review and update assessment of hydropower potential in the Mekong Basin 1.4.17 Update basin-wide hydropower	Operation Division Operation s	Medium Medium	None None	On going but delayed with no concrete activity yet (CSS) Delayed (CSS)	

Goals / objectives <i>What is our purpose? What do we want to achieve?</i>	MRC Key actions / outputs <i>What are the goods and services to be delivered?</i>	Lead Program /Section	Priorities (High, medium, low)	Funding status (Funded, partial, none)	Achievement status	Major gaps or problems and proposed recommendations (if any)
potential to ensure safeguarding of the environment and social interests while meeting the Basin's increasing need for energy	development strategy 1.4.18 Update hydropower database of planned and existing dams 1.4.19 Impact assessments of hydropower projects 1.4.20 Best practices to mitigate negative impacts of hydropower focussing on environmental and social impacts	Division Operations Division Division Operations Division Division Operations Division	High High High	Partial None None	Delayed (CSS) Completed (OEPP) Delayed (CSS) Not started (OEPP)	
1.4.3 To achieve more active and efficient river transportation through increased freedom of navigation to increase social development, international trade and tourism opportunities	1.4.21 Regional master plan for navigation 1.4.22 Legal Framework for Cross-border Navigation 1.4.23 Aids to Navigation Systems 1.4.24 Traffic safety management system 1.4.25 Improved risk and emergency management capacity as related to navigation 1.4.26 Navigation emergency management plan 1.4.27 Navigation pollution control system and environmental management tools and best practices for navigation and river works 1.4.28 Mekong River Navigation Information Systems • Support to line agencies in identification and preparation of BDP priority navigation development projects	NAP NAP NAP NAP NAP NAP NAP NAP NAP NAP	High High High High High High High Medium Medium	Partial Partial Partial Partial None Partial Partial Partial Partial	Delayed (CSS) Will have a plan with China to set master plan for navigation and first seminar between China & MRC to be held on 14-16 Oct. 2008 & activities will be followed up (NW) On-going (CSS) Between Cambodia & Viet Nam completed (NW) On-going/but delayed (CSS) Between Houay Sai to Luang Prabang is ongoing, Phnom Penh to border of Viet Nam was completed (NW) Delayed (CSS) Delayed (CSS) Study is ongoing (NW) Delayed (CSS) Delayed (CSS) It appeared on the upper channel cooperation among China, Myanmar, Lao PDR & Thailand but in MRC not yet set up (NW) On-going/but delayed (CSS) Delayed/no clear activity (CSS)	
1.4.4 To build regional flood and drought	1.4.29 Flood probability maps	FMMP	High	Partial	On-going but delayed (CSS) In progress (RID)	

Goals / objectives <i>What is our purpose? What do we want to achieve?</i>	MRC Key actions / outputs <i>What are the goods and services to be delivered?</i>	Lead Program /Section	Priorities (High, medium, low)	Funding status (Funded, partial, none)	Achievement status	Major gaps or problems and proposed recommendations (if any)
management capacity for prevention, minimization or mitigation of people's suffering and economic losses due to floods and droughts	1.4.30 Fully operational flood forecasting and warning system using a comprehensive data set	FMMP	High	Partial	On-going but delayed (CSS) In progress (RID)	
	1.4.31 Hydro-meteorological monitoring network (real-time)	FMMP	High	Partial	On-going but delayed CSS) In progress (RID)	
	1.4.32 Hydro-meteorological data base	FMMP	High	Partial	On-going but delayed (CSS) In progress (RID)	
	1.4.33 Hydro-meteorological year book (bulletin, CD ROM)	FMMP	High	Partial	On-going but delayed (CSS) In progress (RID)	
	1.4.34 Annual hydro-climatic assessment report	FMMP	Medium	Partial	On-going but delayed on climatic assessment part (CSS) In progress (RID)	
	1.4.35 Guidelines for flood proofing and mitigation measures	FMMP	High	Funded	On-going but delayed (CSS) In progress (RID)	
	1.4.36 Transboundary flood mediation and coordination mechanisms	FMMP	High	Funded	On-going but delayed (CSS) In progress (RID)	
	1.4.37 Flood emergency management and preparedness system with full coverage	FMMP	High	Partial	On-going but delayed (CSS) In progress (RID)	
	1.4.38 Land use planning and management guidelines	FMMP	High	Partial	On-going but delayed (CSS) In progress (RID)	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support to line agencies in identification and preparation of BDP priority flood management projects identified through BDP • Drought forecasting and early warning system based on detailed data • Drought risk maps • Drought mitigation and management policy guidelines 	FMMP	High	Funded	On-going but delayed (CSS)	
	DP	High	None	Delayed/ no clear activity (CSS)		
	DP	High	None	Delayed/ no clear activity (CSS)		
	DP	Medium	None	Delayed/ no clear activity (CSS)		

Goals / objectives <i>What is our purpose? What do we want to achieve?</i>	MRC Key actions / outputs <i>What are the goods and services to be delivered?</i>	Lead Program /Section	Priorities (High, medium, low)	Funding status (Funded, partial, none)	Achievement status	Major gaps or problems and proposed recommendations (if any)
1.4.5 To maintain productive Mekong fisheries and enhance aquaculture of indigenous species for increased food security and economic output	1.4.39 Report on commercial fish species and production 1.4.40 Inland fisheries development strategy 1.4.41 Increased capacity of local and national fisheries bodies 1.4.42 Technologies for aquaculture of indigenous species adopted • Coordination services in the field of sustainable fisheries development • Support to line agencies in identification and preparation of BDP priority sustainable fisheries development projects	FP FP FP FP FP FP	Medium High High Medium Medium Medium	Partial Partial Partial Partial Partial Partial	No clear activity (CSS)	
1.4.6 To develop the tourism potential of the Mekong benefiting local economies	1.4.43 Tourism development strategy to benefit local people • Development of tools and best practices to reduce negative impacts of tourism on environment and social conditions • Support to line agencies in identification and preparation of BDP priority sustainable tourism development projects	Operations Division Operations Division Operations Division	Medium Medium Medium	None Partial None	Delayed/no clear policy and activity (CSS) In progress (OEPP) Delayed/no clear policy and activity (CSS) Delayed/no clear policy and activity (CSS)	
1.4.7 To assess domestic water supply and sanitation options to ensure adequate protection and improvement of peoples' lives and the environment	1.4.44 Report on domestic water supply and sanitation needs in the basin • Water supply and sanitation development strategy 1.4.45 Support to identification of BDP priority water supply and sanitation projects	Operations Division Operations Division Operations Division	Low Low Low	None None None	Delayed/no clear activity (CSS) Delayed/no clear strategy/policy and activity (CSS) Delayed/no clear strategy/policy and activity (CSS)	
GOAL 2. To enhance effective regional cooperation						
2.1 To increase MRC's function as a transparent and effective cooperation mechanism among Member States and to develop and demonstrate enhanced linkages,	1.4.46 Increased cooperation between MRC Member States 1.4.47 Partnership agreements (MoUs) with developments partners, International River Basin Organisations, and research institutions	ICCS ICCS	High High	Partial None	On-going but delayed (CSS) On-going but delayed and without clear strategy/policy (CSS)	

Goals / objectives <i>What is our purpose? What do we want to achieve?</i>	MRC Key actions / outputs <i>What are the goods and services to be delivered?</i>	Lead Program /Section	Priorities (High, medium, low)	Funding status (Funded, partial, none)	Achievement status	Major gaps or problems and proposed recommendations (if any)
compatibility and complementarities of partnerships with other regional organizations and initiatives such as GMS, the World Bank's MWRAP, ACMECS, ASEAN, etc., including sub-basin organizations						
2.2 To complete, adopt and make applicable mechanisms, procedures and guidelines as required under the 1995 Mekong Agreement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical guidelines for implementing the procedure for maintenance of flows on the mainstream • Guidelines for transboundary environmental impact assessment • Procedures/Guidelines for water quality • Technical Guidelines for implementing the procedures for water quality • Adopted procedures are implemented 	<p>WUP</p> <p>WUP</p> <p>WUP</p> <p>WUP</p> <p>WUP</p>	<p>High</p> <p>High</p> <p>High</p> <p>High</p> <p>High</p>	<p>Partial</p> <p>Partial</p> <p>Partial</p> <p>Partial</p> <p>Partial</p>	<p>Incomplete/lack of practical/implementable technical guidelines (CSS)</p> <p>Incomplete/lack of practical/implementable technical guidelines (CSS)</p> <p>Incomplete/lack of practical/implementable technical guidelines (CSS)</p> <p>Incomplete/lack of practical/implementable technical guidelines (CSS)</p> <p>Incomplete/lack of practical/implementable technical guidelines (CSS)</p>	<p>Under consideration (RID)</p> <p>Under Study(RID)</p> <p>Under Consideration (RID)</p> <p>Under Consideration (RID)</p> <p>Under Consideration (RID)</p>
2.3 To identify potential transboundary issues for negotiation, mediation and conflict prevention; and develop mediation and conflict management capacity	<p>1.4.48 Increased capacity for managing transboundary issues</p> <p>1.4.49 Development of awareness of tools and approaches to mediation and conflict management in natural resources issues</p> <p>1.4.50 Inventory of issues and areas with potential for conflicts in use and impacts related to water</p> <p>1.4.51 Development of mechanisms to address environmental issues</p>	<p>WUP</p> <p>WUP</p> <p>WUP</p> <p>WUP</p>	<p>High</p> <p>High</p> <p>High</p> <p>High</p>	<p>Partial</p> <p>Partial</p> <p>Partial</p> <p>Partial</p>	<p>Incomplete/lack of practical/implementable technical guidelines (CSS)</p> <p>Incomplete/lack of practical/implementable technical guidelines (CSS)</p> <p>On-going but incomplete/lack of practical/implementable technical guidelines (CSS)</p> <p>On-going but incomplete/lack of practical/implementable mechanisms (CSS)</p>	<p>Study in future (RID)</p> <p>Study in future (RID)</p> <p>Study in future (RID)</p> <p>Study in future (RID)</p>
2.4 To promote and improve dialogue and collaboration with China and Myanmar.	1.4.52 Increased cooperation with upstream riparian countries through joint studies and projects	OCEO	High	Partial	On-going but incomplete/lack of practical/implementable mechanisms/proper agenda (CSS)	

Goals / objectives <i>What is our purpose? What do we want to achieve?</i>	MRC Key actions / outputs <i>What are the goods and services to be delivered?</i>	Lead Program /Section	Priorities (High, medium, low)	Funding status (Funded, partial, none)	Achievement status	Major gaps or problems and proposed recommendations (if any)
GOAL 3. To strengthen basin-wide environmental monitoring and impact assessment						
3.1 To improve monitoring of the environmental condition of the Mekong River basin, focusing on water quantity and quality, ecological health and social impact	1.4.53 Environmental water quality monitoring system 1.4.54 Social impact monitoring system 1.4.55 Mekong River ecological health monitoring system 1.4.56 Model of the Mekong Basin's aquatic ecosystems	EP EP EP EP	Medium High High Medium	Partial Partial Partial Partial	On-going but incomplete/lack of practical/implementable mechanisms/proper agenda/technical guidelines (CSS) On-going but delayed (CSS) On-going but delayed (CSS) On-going but delayed and without clear model (CSS)	
3.2 To regularly report on the environmental condition of the Mekong River basin and disseminate this information widely	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updated environmental status report • Updated State of the Basin Report 1.4.57 Updated Basin Report Cards on environmental and social conditions 1.4.58 Guidelines on best environmental management practices 	EP EP EP EP	High High High Medium	Partial Partial Partial Partial	On-going but delayed (CSS) On-going but delayed (CSS) On-going but delayed (CSS) On-going but delayed (CSS)	
3.3 To raise awareness of MRC, NMCs, and line agencies on transboundary and basin-wide environmental issues and to increase the capacity to address them	1.4.59 Training modules on the use of EIA, SEA, and other tools 1.4.60 Environmental educational kits 1.4.61 Environmental awareness on transboundary issues	EP EP EP	Medium Medium High	Partial Partial Partial	On-going but delayed (CSS) On-going but delayed (CSS) On-going but delayed (CSS)	
3.4 To ensure that development initiatives are planned and implemented with a view to minimize negative environmental impacts;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To support line agencies in identification and preparation of BDP priority environmental management projects and protection • Upon request of Member States, screening of projects for environmental impacts (technical support to project level SEA, independent review of EIA) • Promote and support the implementation of transboundary EIA 	EP EP EP	High High High	None None None	On-going but delayed (CSS) On-going but delayed (CSS) On-going but delayed (CSS)	
3.5 To ensure that social, economic and environmental concerns	1.4.62 Strategic environmental impact assessment (SEA) 1.4.63 Environmental impact assessment	EP EP	Medium Medium	Partial Partial	On-going but delayed (CSS) On-going but delayed (CSS)	No clear definition on

Goals / objectives <i>What is our purpose? What do we want to achieve?</i>	MRC Key actions / outputs <i>What are the goods and services to be delivered?</i>	Lead Program /Section	Priorities (High, medium, low)	Funding status (Funded, partial, none)	Achievement status	Major gaps or problems and proposed recommendations (if any)
are incorporated into basin-wide water resources development strategies	(EIA) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote stakeholder discussions to identify valuable assets in water resources which are to be protected • Providing information and knowledge to decision makers through the IBFM process on economic benefits and environmental and social impacts of development as related to changes in the flow regime. • A set of spatial tools to enable planners to take into consideration environmental and social aspects of development plans and projects. Initially covering, wetlands, protected areas, vulnerability and dependence on aquatic resources. 	EP EP EP	High High High	Partial Partial Partial	On-going but delayed (CSS) On-going but delayed (CSS) On-going but delayed (CSS)	regional EIA(CSS) No clear assessment/acceptable indicators(CSS)
GOAL 4. To strengthen the Integrated Water Resources Management capacity and knowledge base of the MRC bodies, NMCs and line agencies and other stakeholders						
4.1 To improve management systems to allow MRC to operate as a highly effective, transparent and innovative International River Basin Organisation	1.4.64 Management policies, systems and manuals	OCEO	Medium	None	On-going but delayed (CSS)	
4.2 To establish a technical coordination capacity for preparing and coordinating the implementation of MRC's Work Programme applying IWRM principles	1.4.65 Technical coordination advisor and efficient programme coordination mechanisms in place 1.4.66 Annual work programmes 1.4.67 Harmonized project progress reports	OCEO OCEO OCEO	High High Medium	Partial Funded Partial	On-going but delayed (CSS) On-going but sometimes delayed (CSS) On-going but delayed (CSS)	No clear format yet (CSS)
4.3 To enhance and maintain a common GIS-based information and knowledge management and dissemination system to support all MRC activities	1.4.68 Operational information system and information management and dissemination tools (GIS, remote sensing, portal) supporting all MRC programmes 1.4.69 Information and datasets provided to outside users	IKMP IKMP	High High	Partial Partial	On-going but delayed (CSS) On-going but delayed (CSS)	No clear format yet (CSS)

Goals / objectives <i>What is our purpose? What do we want to achieve?</i>	MRC Key actions / outputs <i>What are the goods and services to be delivered?</i>	Lead Program /Section	Priorities (High, medium, low)	Funding status (Funded, partial, none)	Achievement status	Major gaps or problems and proposed recommendations (if any)
4.4 To maintain partnerships with leading organizations, universities and civil society stakeholders for programme-focussed collaboration of common interest	1.4.70 Network of partners (universities, research institutes, civil society and other interested and relevant organizations) established	ICCS	High	None	On-going (CSS)	But no clear format/focal point (CSS)
	1.4.71 Assessment of research priorities to support MRC's mission	OCEO	Medium	Partial	On-going but without clear format/focal point/responsible party (CSS)	
4.5 To strengthen the human resources capacities of the MRC, NMCs and the line agencies	1.4.72 Capacity needs assessment reports	ICBP	High	None	On-going but delayed (CSS)	Completed for only some topics/issues
	1.4.73 Training modules and toolkits	ICBP	High	None	In progress (OEPP)	
	1.4.74 Training sessions and study tours for JC, NMCs, MRCS staff and line agencies	ICBP	High	None	On-going but delayed (CSS) In progress (OEPP) On-going but without clear direction/scope(CSS) In progress (partial) (OEPP)	
4.6 To develop and update as new knowledge becomes available regional assessment tools (EIA, SEA, DSF, TB-EIA, RAM, SIA etc.) for all development projects to be implemented in the lower Mekong River basin	1.4.75 Regional assessment tools available and promoted for use by NMCS and Line Agencies	ICCS	High	Partial	On-going but delayed and no (or without) clear scope/coverage/practical tools(CSS)	
	1.4.76 Training/orientation sessions in the use of assessment tools for NMCs and line agencies	ICCS	High	Partial	On-going but delayed and no (or without) clear scope/coverage/practical tools(CSS)	

Explanatory Note:- CSS - Chaiyuth Sukhsri, TNMC Advisor, NW - Nuanlaor Wongpinitwarodom, TNMC Navigation Coordinator, OEPP - Office of Environmental Policy & Planning, RID - Royal Irrigation Department

URGENT

No. 0606/ A019



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Date of Issue	
Ref. Number	2309
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Section	TCA

17 October B.E.2551 (2008)

Dear Mr. Bird,

**Subject: TNMC Comments on Mid-Term Review of the MRC Strategic Plan
2006-2010 Implementation**

Reference is made to the Mid-Term Review of the MRC Strategic Plan 2006 – 2010 Implementation, TNMC has considered that the review process is very important to the organization achievement. Thus, TNMC has convened the National Consultation Meeting on 19 September 2008 and various comments were received based on 4 Goals which are principally the key milestones the MRC need to achieve. We realize that there is very limited time of the review process, then, TNMC has passed our comments via e-mail on 6 October 2008. Now, we would like to pass you our official comments, details are presented as follows:

1. Goal 1: TNMC has opinions that there are no work plans or activities to implement for eradicate the poor in the region, therefore, this Goal (pro-poor development) has not reached yet. Moreover, we see that, at present, the BDP implementation could not reach the target of taking the projects from short-list from Phase 1 to implement in a concrete manner. Consequently, the MRC implementation could not benefit directly to the people in the basin;

Mr. Jeremy Bird,
CEO, MRC Secretariat,
184 Fa Ngoum Road,
Unit 18, Ban Sithane Neua,
Sikhottabong District,
Vientiane, 01000, Lao PDR.

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2. Goal 2: There are many Rules/Regulations under MRC Programme, especially WUP. These regulations hinder cooperation as each NMC tries to protect its own interest. So, the way to enhance cooperation in the region is to promote joint projects aimed to raise the regional economy and well being of people;

3. Goal 3: For the sake of cooperation on water quality, Guidelines/instruments on Transboundary impact assessment should be a technical document to give suggestions on best practices to NMCs for implementation; and

4. Goal 4: TNMC suggests that in order to reach this Goal, MRC should build NMCs' capacity on IWRM by using the budget from MRC Trust Fund. Moreover, MRC should integrate work plans/projects among Work Programme within the MRC to promote the IWRM process especially in some demonstration basins. This implementation will work through selecting the pilot areas in each NMCs

Your further action with regard to above recommendations is highly appreciated.

Yours sincerely,



(Thanade Dawasuwan)
Deputy Director General
Acting Director General

Suggested Steps for the MRC in its Engagement with ASEAN

In line with the recommendation made in the Mid-Term Review Report submitted to the MRC in mid-October 2008, the MRC is supposed to start taking measures to further explore closer collaboration with ASEAN, as one of the regional groupings or initiatives, in areas of mutual interest. The following are some suggested steps in this regard.

1. The CEO of MRC should take the initiative to get in touch with the Secretary General of ASEAN by writing a letter explaining the rationale for establishing closer collaboration between the two organizations. This could then be followed up with a meeting between the heads of the two organizations.
2. The content of the letter could conceivably include mention of the fact that all four MRC riparian states are also members of ASEAN and that Mekong-related issues are being considered under various ASEAN frameworks such as the Initiative for ASEAN Integration (IAI), the ASEAN-Mekong Basin Development Cooperation (AMBDC) forum as well as under the ASEAN-China Dialogue discussions.
3. In particular, reference should be made to the specific provisions stipulated in the Plan of Action to Implement the Joint Declaration on ASEAN-China Strategic Partnership for Peace and Prosperity adopted at the 8th ASEAN-China Summit held in Vientiane on 29 November 2004. Section 2.9 of the Plan of Action which is entitled “Mekong River Basin Development Cooperation” is attached and the following sub-items are specially pertinent and of interest to the MRC:-

3.1.1	2.9.1.1.4 & 5
3.1.2	All of 2.9.1.5.
3.1.3	All of 2.9.1.6.
4. It is also worth noting that ASEAN has already established a Water Resources Management Working Group under the ASEAN Senior Officials on the Environment (ASOEN) auspices. The creation of a new working group on Climate Change, also under ASOEN, has been recently proposed and received endorsement by the ASEAN Environment Ministers. MRC could express its interest to interface closely with both these working groups as well as the other ASEAN frameworks mentioned above through invited participation in those fora. As part of mutual exchange, relevant ASEAN representatives should also be invited to attend relevant MRC events on a regular basis.
5. To foster closer interaction and collaboration in some of these areas of common interest, it is therefore proposed that MRC and ASEAN formalize such arrangements through a letter of exchange or an MOU between the two parties. This could perhaps come a bit later as a natural consequence after the initial exploratory phase has yielded some positive or favorable outcomes.

Plan of Action to Implement the Joint Declaration on ASEAN-China Strategic Partnership for Peace and Prosperity

Pursuant to the Joint Declaration of the Heads of State/Government of the Association of South East Asian Nations and the People's Republic of China on Strategic Partnership for Peace and Prosperity signed at the Seventh ASEAN-China Summit on 8 October 2003 in Bali, Indonesia, this Plan of Action is formulated to serve as the "master plan" to deepen and broaden ASEAN-China relations and cooperation in a comprehensive and mutually beneficial manner for the next five years (2005-2010) with the view to strengthening the strategic partnership for regional peace, development and prosperity and playing a proactive role to tap the opportunities and meet the challenges of the new millennium.

This Plan of Action will also support the implementation of the Declaration of ASEAN Concord II, signed in Bali on 7 October 2003, leading to an ASEAN Community.

In the light of the above, ASEAN and China will pursue the following joint actions and measures (*among others*⁴³):

- 2.9 Mekong River Basin Development Cooperation
 - 2.9.1 Strengthen cooperation under the framework of the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS) and ASEAN-Mekong Basin Development Cooperation (AMBDC); and
 - 2.9.2 Develop the Singapore-Kunming Rail Link.
 - 2.9.1.1 Transportation
 - 2.9.1.1.1 Build railways and roads from Kunming to Yangon and Myitkyina;
 - 2.9.1.1.2 Improve the roads from China's Yunnan province to Viet Nam and the railway links between China and Viet Nam;
 - 2.9.1.1.3 Carry out possibility study of building railway links from China to Laos and Myanmar;
 - 2.9.1.1.4 Consider implementing measures to improve navigational safety on the Lancang-Mekong River in a sustainable manner through consultations among the riparian countries, while undertaking to preserve the environment and unique way of life of the people who live along the river;
 - 2.9.1.1.5 Consider the further expansion of the Environmental Impact Assessment of the navigation channel improvement project on the upper Mekong River, and share information with the lower Basin countries;
 - 2.9.1.1.6 Consider the possibility to open more aviation routes in the sub-region at an appropriate time; and
 - 2.9.1.1.7 Carry out preliminary study on the missing rail link between Phnom Penh and Loc Ninh, the missing section in Cambodia which is part of the Singapore-Kunming Rail Link.
 - 2.9.1.2 ICT
 - 2.9.1.2.1 Promote international cooperation in terms of investment and human resources development on ICT; and
 - 2.9.1.2.2 Explore the possibility of establishing a GMS information highway.
 - 2.9.1.3 Trade
 - 2.9.1.3.1 Launch the experimental project of one stop inspection under the Agreement for Facilitation of Cross Border Movement of Goods and People between and among GMS Countries whose modalities are subject to consultation and consensus among countries concerned so as to facilitate trade; and

⁴³ Words in parentheses and italics (and in red font) added.

- 2.9.1.3.2 Explore the possibility study of setting up commodity markets in major border cities and other distribution centres in ASEAN and China.
- 2.9.1.4 Tourism
 - 2.9.1.4.1 Explore the possibility of establishing a regional tourism corridor with a view to making tourism a key industry in the region.
- 2.9.1.5 Electrification
 - 2.9.1.5.1 Implement the GMS Inter-Governmental Agreement on Regional Power Trade (IGA) and speed up the formulation of Sub-region Power Trade Operating Agreement (PTOA);
 - 2.9.1.5.2 Promote GMS transnational electric power networking conducive to environmental and social well-being; and
 - 2.9.1.5.3 Enhance cooperation on rural electrification.
- 2.9.1.6 Environmental Protection
 - 2.9.1.6.1 Enhance cooperation on the protection of bio-diversity in the sub-region and explore the possibility of establishing a bio-diversity corridor;
 - 2.9.1.6.2 Promote forestation in Lancang-Mekong River basin and Honghe River basin to bring soil erosion under control;
 - 2.9.1.6.3 Work towards managing and monitoring water quality of Mekong river;
 - 2.9.1.6.4 Establish nature reserves to protect rare species, among others, through the mechanism of the relevant environmental instruments, such as the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution and the ASEAN Declaration on Heritage Parks;
 - 2.9.1.6.5 Continue to protect the environment and promote sustainable use including the equitable access and benefit sharing of the sub-region's shared natural resources and their biodiversity;
 - 2.9.1.6.6 Promote exchange of information and strengthen cooperation concerning the use of water in the Lancang-Mekong River, with a view to achieve sustainable development of all riparian countries; and
 - 2.9.1.6.7 Promote cooperative activities to address global warming.
- 2.9.1.7 Public Health
 - 2.9.1.7.1 Establish an integrated prevention and control system for communicable and non-communicable diseases;
 - 2.9.1.7.2 Promote Alternative Development (AD) to check drug production and distribution; and
 - 2.9.1.7.3 Strengthen cooperation to prevent production and spread of counterfeit drugs.
- 2.9.2 Other Sub-regional Initiatives
 - 2.9.2.1 Support other sub-regional development initiatives and welcome Ayeyawady-Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy (ACMECS) as further means to narrow the development gap.

Mid-term Review of the MRC Strategic Plan 2006 - 2010

Appendix J

Mid-term Review, Country Paper Viet Nam

APPENDIX J

**VIETNAM COUNTRY PAPER
FOR THE MID-TERM REVIEW OF THE
MEKONG RIVER COMMISSION STRATEGIC PLAN 2006-
2010

1. INTRODUCTION/RATIONALE

Right after the signing of the Agreement on the Cooperation for the Sustainable Development of the Mekong River Basin, the four signatories of Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam signed the Protocol to the Agreement for the establishment and commencement of the Mekong River Commission (MRC).

In its first years of appearance, the MRC faced with number of difficulties in terms of internal affairs (CEO, location, capacity) as well as fund securing. To cope with the challenges and to affirm its determination in implementing the signed Agreement, the MRC had developed a five-year Strategic Plan 1999-2003; set up its vision i.e. “a world-class, financially secure, international river basin organization serving the Mekong countries to achieve the basin vision” that is “an economically prosperous, socially just and environmentally sound Mekong River Basin”. The Strategic Plan had been shared with and supported by donor community, development partners.

In the year 2000, with participation of relevant stakeholders, the MRC Strategic Plan 1999-2003 had been revised that resulted in a new Strategic Plan for period of 2001-2005 had been formulated. Changing from project approach to programme one, the Strategic Plan 2001-2005 set up five goals and ten programmes including key programmes (Water Utilization Programme, Basin Development Plan, Environment Programme), supporting programme (Capacity Building Programme) and five sectoral programmes (Fisheries, Navigation, Agriculture-Irrigation-Forestry, Hydrology-Hydropower, Tourism). Resulted from these programmes, especially key ones, many remarkable outputs have been produced in which a set of procedures under WUP, BDP I, water and environment monitoring network were worth to be mentioned.

In 2005, the MRC formulated the third Strategic Plan 2006-2010. There were three broad issues that had been identified as core for development of the Strategic Plan i.e.:

- Tangible results focused on poverty reduction through sustainable development,
- Creating ownership and value-added with a broadened interpretation to include better integration of the MRC and national development plan, and
- Adopting an integration water resources management approach which is necessary for the MRC to jointly promote development and conservation to ensure sustainable cooperation for the utilization of the Mekong’s common resources.

Basing on this, together with cooperation tendency prevailed in the region, the MRC approved the Strategic Plan 2006-2010 with four goals towards supporting the member states in more effectively using water and related resources in the basin that could combat with poverty and protect environment.

During the course of the Strategic Plan implementation, the MRC considers BDP as a regional IWRM support programme that includes seven sectoral programmes and four cross-cutting programmes. Regardless funds for some programmes are sought (Drought Management, Tourism, and Hydropower), other MRC programmes, fully or partly financially supported, have achieved the encouraged outcomes.

However, since end of 2006 and in 2007, there are several unilateral or bilateral projects, especially the feasibility studies of mainstream hydropower development and water diversion to that the MRC is not involved. In addition, in terms of institution and personnel, other issues such as “riparianization” of the Secretariat, permanent location of the Headquarters, completion of pending procedures under WUP... are challenges to the MRC. All of the above-mentioned factors, together with the shortage of food taken place in 2007, potential impacts caused by unpredictable meteorological conditions, climate change, sea level raising...call for due consideration and timely solution by the MRC.

Therefore at its 27th Session, the MRC Joint Committee (JC) agreed to review the Strategic Plan 2006-2010 for appropriate alignment, rearrangement of priority activities in the remaining period as well as preparation for the next strategic plan of 2011-2015.

2. PROCESS OF THE REVIEW

In line with the JC’s decision, the MRC Secretariat has proposed to recruit a consultant team including an international facilitator, one each resource person from four member countries) to facilitate the review process. After consultation with National Mekong Committees on the TOR and composition of the team, the team had been contracted since end of August 2008. The team then met in Vientiane on 1 September 2008 for discussion and agreement on the plan and outline of the papers to be prepared.

As mentioned in the timeframe of the review, during September 2008, six papers (including one national paper from each member countries, a paper for the MRC Secretariat and a paper for development partners) would be prepared with facilitation of riparian resource persons and international facilitator respectively. In order to ensure that the view reflected in a national paper is of the respective country, the MRC Secretariat has made available financial support to organize two national consultations on the national.

After all national papers are sent to the Secretariat by 3 October 2008, the international facilitator will synthesize in a draft review report that will be presented for discussion in a regional consultation scheduled for on 21 October 2008. The review report, incorporated with comments of various stakeholders will be finalized by the international facilitator then

submitted by the Secretariat for the Council's consideration at its Meeting to be held in early November 2008.

Regarding Vietnam part, the resource person met with VNMC officials on 28 August and 5 September 2008 for initial discussion on the list of issues and timeframe of consultation. This Vietnam Country Paper prepared by the resource person in accordance with the agreed outlines is resulted from two rounds of consultation with VNMC and line agencies held in Hanoi on 19 and 30 September 2008. It is however subject to final comments by VNMC at the regional consultation to be held on 21 October 2008.

3. ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MRC STRATEGIC PLAN 2006-2010

According to the TOR, in term of assessment, it is necessary to compare real achievements against four goals, 22 objectives and number of expected outputs/activities indicated in the Plan. It is noted that, in terms of their nature, these goals are long-term goal, also rolling ones. Their quantitative assessment is therefore rather difficult. While part 4 below will try to analyze in detail progress/achievements of all programmes so far in comparison with respective objectives, outputs; at the mid-term moment and since there is not milestone for activities indicated in the Plan, Part 3 will provide general remarks rather than quantitative evaluation.

3.1 Goal 1: *To promote and support the coordinated, sustainable, and pro-poor development*

There are four objectives under this goal and activities to achieve them belong to WUP (objective 1.1), BDP (1.2, 1.3, 1.4) and various sectoral programmes or divisions, sections such as AIFP (1.4.1), Operation Division (1.4.2 and 1.4.6, 1.4.7), navigation Programme (1.4.3), FMMP and DMP (1.4.4), Fisheries programme (1.4.5).

Until now, except WUP Start-up has been completed, almost other programmes are being implemented in accordance with the same timeframe from 2006-2010. Many high-prioritized activities have been accomplished such as upgrading DSF, formulating development scenarios, setting up projects/programmes portfolio database, formulating legal framework for navigation, designing system of aids to navigation etc. In terms of pro-poor development, though there are a few capital/investment projects that directly support the poor people (e.g. upgrading ferry facilities in Cambodia), many non-structural/non-physical activities have contributed to environmental protection that indirectly improve the living conditions of the poor people. In this regard, the MRC plays very well its function as knowledge-based organization or other speaking, "pro-poor" has been, in some extent, achieved.

However, there are also some planned activities that are not carried out yet or late in implementation. Among them are "a series of water accounts and verifiable water use indicators to guide decision-making and development strategy formulation" (objective 1.1),

“consolidated trade-off analysis of development scenarios based on assessed and quantified net impacts on economic, ecological and social values”, “process of discussions on trade-offs and mutual benefits in basin development, including forum/policy dialogue meeting” (1.2), “cumulative impact assessment studies of development scenarios” (1.3), “impact assessment of hydropower projects”, and activities relating to tourism (1.4),...

It can be noted that, though several activities have been finished, they have not practically value-added to the development in the basin. While some programmes are still not expedited (Hydropower and Drought Management programmes), the Tourism Programme is even not documented yet.

Regarding BDP Phase I, the portfolio of projects/programmes as main output of this phase was, in fact, not real project/programme proposal but idea, in some cases, titles only. Meanwhile the projects or programmes identified, categorized and prioritized as defined in BDP imply that they are either in-stream, on-stream or off-stream ones. It is therefore hoped that at the end of BDP II (by 2010), “an IWRM rolling plan” with real basin-wide or/and transboundary projects/programmes could be drawn up. By that way, the MRC could overcome the challenge and aim at arriving at “coordinated, sustainable, pro-poor development”.

3.2 Goal 2: *To enhance effective regional cooperation*

Under this goal, there are also four objectives. This goal could be considered as very important goal of the Strategic Plan 2006-2010. While objectives 2.1 (to increase MRC’s function as a transparent and effective cooperation mechanism among Member States and to develop and demonstrate enhance linkages, compatibility and complementarities of partnership with other regional organizations and initiatives) and 2.4 (to promote and improve dialogue and collaboration with China and Myanmar) have been achieved in some extent, objectives 2.2 (to complete, adopt, and make applicable mechanisms, procedures and guidelines as required under the 1995 Mekong Agreement) and 2.3 (to identify potential transboundary issues for negotiation, mediation and conflict prevention; and develop mediation and conflict management capacity) are the big challenges to the Mekong cooperation in general and to the MRC in particular.

During past years, cooperation among the Member States has been improved. Many MOU with development partners, international river basin organizations and research institutes had been signed. The cooperation with China and Myanmar are also progressed well step-by-step through dialogue mechanism and joint activities relating to hydrological data sharing (contract with China was renewed in last August) and navigation ... In summary, the external affairs of the MRC are considered good. However, scope of cooperation should be enlarged to study or data exchange in dry season, especially data on flows regulated from hydropower reservoirs in Lancang river. (China has repeatedly mentioned that, cascade of upstream dams in China will increase low-flows during dry season and that is good room for further cooperation).

Under the objective 2.2, among five rules (now renamed procedures) set up under WUP Start-up that shall be finished as agreed by the MRC Council in 1997, Procedures on Water Quality has not yet been adopted. Furthermore, due to different views of Member States, technical guidelines for implementation of the signed Procedures on Maintenance of Flows on the Mainstream and to-be-signed Procedures on Water Quality are also not agreed yet. The ultimate approval and implementation of entire set of procedures and their technical guidelines is critical challenge to the MRC that is also interested and concerned by the development partners and international community. As other international river basins, the harmonization of “upstream versus downstream”, “national interests versus regional benefits”, and “development and conservation” in the Mekong basin would only be well addressed if , in addition to the 1995 Mekong Agreement, supporting documents of necessary rules/procedures, guidelines would be enacted. Hence, the MRC would effectively and efficiently function its role.

It therefore calls for more elaboration of the so-called “to enhance effective regional cooperation” in the Strategic Plan. The MRC needs to actively gather information relating to development, utilization of water and related resources and environmental issues in the basin. The JC would exchange the views, discuss the issues for implementation of the 1995 Mekong Agreement and procedures/rules thereof and programmes/projects in a frank and open/transparent manner. The JC, especially its Chairman, needs to strengthen the role of supervision, control and monitoring to the MRC Secretariat and also to facilitate it in undertaking the assigned duties/activities. The Secretariat itself has to make every efforts to fulfill the tasks assigned in a neutral, professional manner and to be encourage in argue/convince its recommendations, advices to the JC. Capacity and understanding of those riparian officials who are assigned to negotiate legal or technical documents needs also to be strengthened, trained. This capacity building would facilitate the negotiation/deliberation process resulting in faster agreement on “win-win” solution to a given topic or in the Mekong case, a mainstream project or a basin-wide project with transboundary impacts.

Since there are a lot of other international or regional organizations, initiatives relating to Mekong cooperation such as GMS, ACMECS, ASEAN... to which the MRC member States are also members, the MRC should either directly or through its member states promotes the diversified cooperation with a view to avoid overlap/repeat or competition but supplement one another.

Regarding institutional and personnel aspects, the MRC has accepted almost 38 recommendations of the Report of Independent Organizational, Financial and Institutional Review of the MRC Secretariat and NMCs (January 2007) among them some are immediately implemented and some others are gradually carried out. To facilitate the implementation of these recommendations, JC has set up a Task Force that closely coordinates the work with the Joint Contact Group including “riparianization” and a Sub-Committee for Permanent Location. These two issues are very important that would take place in the same timeframe of the current Strategic Plan. The JC approved a roadmap for “riparianization” in which international Chief of FAS will be replaced, with possible one-year extension, by a riparian staff in 2008, international Chief of ICCS in 2009 and international CEO in 2010. However, as a matter of fact, while differences relating to

“permanent” or “shared”/“partly rotation” location took place during deliberation of the Sub-Committee for Permanent Location (now Task Force on Organization), it seems “national interest” some time mixes with “international cooperation”. Though being the technical and administrative arms of the MRC, “neutral” or “impartial” role of the Secretariat is very important. Therefore, positions of “top management” of the MRCS are crucial to help the JC in undertaking this task. JC needs to elaborate more detailed plan for conducting this task rather than only general roadmap. Furthermore, JC needs also strengthen its role in supervision and monitor the process. If so required, timely evaluation of riparianization will be conducted. Another aspect relates to role of the MRC Council in the regional cooperation. As highest and policy body of the MRC, the Council should also pay due attention to institutional issues for timely instructing and facilitating the work of the JC and the MRC Secretariat.

In summary, the MRC should comprehensively consider all important personnel and institutional issues in same time. The success of this goal is subject to appropriate and timely solutions of the MRC.

3.3 Goal 3: *To strengthen basin-wide environment monitoring and impact assessment*

There are five objectives under this goal and all activities to achieve the planned outputs belong to the Environment Programme. To date, environment water quality monitoring system is well done. State of the Basin Report and Basin Report Card had been issued and many training courses in environment had also been held. The awareness of the MRC levels as well as of riparian line agencies, local authorities is enhanced.

However, there are also several activities that are not implemented as scheduled or meeting with difficulties e.g. “social impact monitoring system”, “model of the Mekong basin’s aquatic ecosystem”, “promote and support the implementation of transboundary EIA”... are not set up or implemented yet. Many other activities such as SEA, “to support line agencies in identification and preparation of BDP priority environmental management projects and protection”... are under mid-way and their accomplishment is subject to close cooperation among parties concerned. Detailed analysis will be provided in part 4 below.

3.4 Goal 4: *To strengthen the Integrated Water Resources Management capacity and knowledge base of the MRC bodies, NMCs and line agencies and other stakeholders*

There are six objectives under this goal and activities to achieve them are under responsibility of OCEO, IKMP, ICBP and ICCS.

Up to now, main outputs have been achieved are: various management policies, systems and manuals issued (though some of them are still in working-document status); work programme produced annually; information and datasets to outsiders users provided, operational information system and information management and dissemination tools

established, network of partners established, training modules and toolkits produced, training session and study tours for JC, NMCs, MRCS staff and line agencies implemented,....

However, some other activities are still late or not implemented yet, among them some are under question in their effectiveness. They are: harmonized project progress reports, regional assessment tools available and promoted for use by NMCS and line agencies, efficient programme coordination mechanism.

Specifically and geographically, the IRWM in the Mekong basin mainly relates to the transboundary issues or up- and down-stream aspects through impacts or change of mainstream flows. The MRC capacity needed to deal with will be proved through the success of BDP, WUP and EP that are still ahead.

4. THE ALIGNMENT OF THE MRC PROGRAMME

Number of the MRC programmes varies in accordance with the time and each specific programme has its own timeframe. While almost programmes are “rolling”, some exist in a fix period. Regarding the current Strategic Plan 2006-2010, there are 12 programmes i.e. BDP, EP, IKMP, ICBP, WUP, FMMP, DMP, AIFP, NAP, HP, FP and TP. In mid 2007, WUP has been closed and remaining activities are moved to IKMP. While two programmes of DMP and TP are not funded yet, fund for the HP formulation has been secured and eight remaining programmes have been fully or partly funded by various donors.

Below is analysis and assessment the MRC programme implementation in line with the 1995 Mekong Agreement, Strategic Plan 2006-2010 and in connection with other regional initiatives.

4.1 Alignment with the 1995 Mekong Agreement

Article 1 of the 1995 Mekong Agreement stipulates areas of cooperation for sustainable development, utilization, management and conservation of water and related resources in the Mekong river basin. Based on that, the MRC has formulated many programmes to realize the provisions of the Agreement. The first MRC Strategic Plan 1999-2003 consisted of the four Key Result Areas of was updated and replaced by three Programme Clusters (Core, Sector and Support Programmes) in the Strategic Plan 2001-2005. Underlining the “cooperation” aspect, the Strategic Plan 2006-2010 has been further developed and reformulated with four goals and 12 programmes under which BDP is considered as comprehensive programme to support IWRM in the basin. In line with timeframe of the Strategic Plan 2006-2010, achievements under corresponding programmes are as follows:

4.1.1 Basin Development Plan (BDP):

This is a core programme of the Mekong cooperation. After completion of phase I (2001-mid 2006) and bridging period (last 6 months of 2006), BDP Phase II has been started

in 2007 and will complete at the end of 2010. BDP II is designed to formulate a basin development plan based on IWRM approach with three components (development scenarios, IWRM strategy, and development projects portfolio), development of knowledge base and assessment tools, and capacity in IWRM planning at regional, national and local levels.

Activities done in 2007 were: completion of inception report; identification of approach for scenarios and strategy building, setting up BDP team at the Secretariat and NMCs, updating procedures and guidelines for programme management and setting up reporting mechanism as well as providing sufficient information to Council and JC.

In first eight months of 2008, a stakeholders consultation on the programme and inception report had been held, the working group set up was put into operation, fast preparation of some scenarios to facilitate consultation on mainstream hydropower development, establishment of working group consisting of international experts and experts from line agencies of countries for studying hydropower and irrigation, finalization of guidelines on sub-areas and recruitment of local experts to work at NMCs, visited Columbia river basin, organized the BDP II review mission from donors, strengthened collaboration with line agencies of countries, other programmes of the MRC and other planning including some NGOs and provided sufficient information to Council and JC.

Except a little delay in 2007 due to prolonged preparation of inception report, activities of BDP II are progressed well as scheduled. The Team at the MRCS is requested to strengthen its technical capacity to facilitate the execution of the programme.

However, there is an emerging challenge to BDP II as well as to the MRC in general namely a series of feasibility studies of many hydropower projects on the mainstream of Mekong river are recently carried out. Though these projects were resulted from previous studies of the Mekong Committee or Interim Mekong Committee, the MRC is not officially informed or notified. The JC took action only after some NGOs and representatives of some donors voiced. Resulted from its close meetings, JC has agreed to strengthen the exchange initial information relating to these projects followed up by notification when more information, details is available (!). There is a paradox that the selected basin-wide or transboundary projects, in accordance with logical order of BDP, should have been drawn from the shortlisted portfolios of BDP. In the case a country would carry out implementation of this kind of basin-wide or transboundary projects by herself (or through other channel), as stipulated by Procedures for Notification, Prior Consultation and Agreement, these main projects are subject to prior consultation of the JC. Furthermore, simulation of flows changes (positive or negative) caused by the project or cascade of projects would indicate that the project would (or would not) does not contradict with the “threshold” regulated by the Procedure for Maintenance of Flows on the Mainstream. Observation of the signed procedures by the Member States through the MRC mechanism, the role of “environmental protector” of the MRC would be strengthened. BDP II is therefore called for taking into due account of this fact so that outputs would be realistic, applicable and not only a theoretical exercise done during phase I.

4.1.2 Environment Programme (EP):

As stipulated in articles 3, 7 and 8 of the 1995 Mekong Agreement, the Member States have committed to cooperate in protecting environment, natural resources, aquatic lives and ecological balance in the Mekong basin. The EP, consisting of five different components (environmental monitoring and assessment, supporting environment decision-making, man and aquatic ecosystem, environment knowledge, and management of environmental flows) follows that idea. As also a rolling programme that is formulated with every five-year time frame, many outputs have been achieved so far, especially in data observation, collection on water quality and ecological conditions, in activities of monitoring and assessment of environment and social impacts in the basin, as well as capacity building through various trainings.

However, some outputs are not achieved as planned. Among them are: incompleteness of a frame for guidelines of transboundary EIA and of Technical Guidelines for implementation of Procedure on Water Quality, issuance of Environment Status Report, The development process of Integrated Basin Flows Management is also undertaken with slow progress. Reasons for that, besides lack of funds, capacity of parties concerned and of the MRC Secretariat needs also to be strengthened.

The MRC Secretariat needs to further strengthen the monitoring activities in which more parameters e.g. sediment would be included in the monitoring list...

4.1.3 Water Utilization Programme (WUP):

WUP is one of key and most important programmes of the MRC. The programme was formulated based on articles 26, 5 and 6 of the 1995 Mekong Agreement. A set of five rules (now procedures) is important legal document to implement the relevant provisions of the Agreement. The MRC WUP was therefore emphasized as a goal in two previous strategic plans (1999-2003 and 2000-2005). WUP was a programme that produced tangible outputs and inspired the Mekong cooperation for nearly last decade. Recognizing the importance of procedures and guidelines resulted from WUP Start-up, under the current Strategic Plan (objectives 2.2, 2.3 under goal 2), due priorities are given to completion, adoption and making applicable mechanisms, procedures and guidelines as required by the 1995 Mekong Agreement as well as identification of potential transboundary issues for negotiation, mediation and conflict prevention...

However due to differences in national interests, especially in recognition of the subject matters, it takes more time for NMCs to get agreement on the technical guidelines and contents relating to so-called transboundary issues. The remaining activities, after completion of the WUP Start-up phase, such as signing of Procedures on Water Quality, approval of Technical Guidelines for implementation of Procedure on Maintenance of Flows on the Mainstream, and of Procedures on Water Quality have to be transferred to other relevant programmes (BDP 2, EP and IKMP) for that closer coordination and linkage are required.

4.1.4 Information and Knowledge Management Programme (IKMP):

This is a new and cross-cutting programme consisting of five components. Inherited a huge data sources surveyed and collected by its predecessors (the Mekong Committee and Interim Mekong Committee), the MRC, as knowledge-based organization has approved Procedure for Data and Information Exchange and Sharing, set up the MRC Information System. Components and activities included in the programme are fit with objectives set forth in the Strategic Plan.

During 2006, 2007 and first half of 2008, activities were mainly related to recruitment and institution arrangements such as setting up the team at the MRC Secretariat and NMCs. The tasks on data management including update and expansion of data set, maintenance of tools ... have not been undertaken appropriately. Due to various reasons, implementation progress of components 2 (hydro-meteorological data) and 4 (modeling) is slower than scheduled.

4.1.5 Integrated capacity Building Programme (ICBP):

This is also another cross-cutting programme that consists of diversified activities of training and capacity building. In 2007, due to limitation of funds, some activities in 2007 and early 2008 have been slow down. With funds secured from New Zealand for gender mainstreaming project, from Finland for Junior Riparian Professional project, phase 2 (2008-2011), from AusAID for formulation of the programme and implementation of a priority capacity building plan, and from OEB of the MRC itself, budget of the programme has been increased remarkable that facilitate the acceleration of the planned activities.

However, a funding gap still exists and the MRC needs to further mobilize. In addition, in term of cross-cutting programme, relevant integration of various components, existing and new ones should be undertaken. The MRC Secretariat should actively approach potential donors for fund raising.

4.1.6 Flood Mitigation and Management Programme (FMMP):

As multi-donor funded programme, FMMP has a lot of activities and achieve many outputs as planned for 2007 and 2008. The regional flood centre in Phnom Penh, component 1 of the programme had been established and put into operation since April 2008. Other components have also been implemented smoothly. FMMP is very programme that would, on the one hand, help Member States to cope with natural disaster caused by serious floods during the wet season and on the other hand, to enhance cooperation if multi-purpose projects that could significantly reduce flood magnitude be jointly implemented by two or more than two countries.

Through provision of forecasting and warning information, FMMP contributes significantly to poverty reduction and poor people living in the flood-prone areas are benefited. Even though the programme is expected to produce more products/outputs in

which longer-term and exact flood forecasting and timely warning is a wish of riparian countries. The programme should study practical forecasting and warning mechanism and procedures in riparian countries for application of appropriate tools that could effectively facilitate to avoid hazards caused by floods.

4.1.7 Agriculture, Irrigation and Forestry Programme (AIFP):

As earlier mentioned, areas of cooperation among four Member State stipulated in the 1995 Mekong Agreement include, but not limited to agriculture, irrigation, forestry, hydropower, fisheries, navigation, recreation, timber-floating etc.

This programme consists of two main components i.e. watershed/forestry management and agriculture and irrigation in which the former components has been supported by Germany and the latter is supported by Japan and some other organizations.

It is worthy to mention achievements under watershed management component that produced a lot of outputs. However, the role of the MRC in this component needs to be improved, especially the increased ownership in execution and implementation. In line with discussion of the JC at the Preparatory Meeting for its 28th Meeting (Vientiane, 26 August 2008), further elaboration in combination with location issues on the possible separation of watershed/forestry component to other programme and maintenance of only AIP is needed. It is noted that, in the past, there had been an independent AIP and the Council, at its 7th Meeting (Pakse, 24 October 2000) took into account suggestion of donor community at the Informal Donors Meeting (Phnom Penh, 1 June 2000) and decided to merge forestry component into AIP to create a new AIFP until now).

If separated, more emphasis to undertake several AIP activities (objective 1.4.1 of the Strategic Plan) is needed.

4.1.8 Navigation Programme (NAP):

In line with article 9 of the 1995 Mekong Agreement, this sectoral programme is formulated and funded partly by Belgium and recently by Australia. The programme fits with objective 1.4.3 of the Strategic Plan (to achieve more active and efficient river transportation through increased freedom of navigation to increase social development, international trade and tourism opportunities).

During the course of its implementation, a series of products have been achieved. Worth to be mentioned is a setting up legal framework for cross-border navigation, traffic safety and environment sustainability. Also under this programme, specific cooperation with China and Myanmar has been planned.

With cross-border nature, navigation would strengthen regional cooperation within lower part of the Mekong basin as well as whole basin (both upstream and downstream). The linkage between navigation programme with dams construction on the mainstream is an

issue that needs to be addressed, especially in study impacts of the damming and requirement for water release.

4.1.9 Fisheries Programme (FP):

As above-mentioned, aquatic resources are aimed to be developed and conserved by the 1995 Mekong Agreement. Being also a rolling programme, phase 2 of Fisheries Programme started since January 2006 and will end in 2010 with four components. The programme produced a lot of documents in abundant forms of reading, listening and video. Expected outputs under the programme are also achieved as planned.

However, with the future construction of several hydropower dams on the mainstream, fisheries production in the basin, especially migration and spawning of many species of fish will certainly be negatively impacted. The programme is preparing an analysis report on this including knowledge and understanding of aquatic ecosystem with reference of international practices for suggesting mitigation measures.

4.1.10 Other unfunded programmes

In addition to the nine above-mentioned programmes, there are three other programmes i.e. Drought Management Programme (DMP), Tourism Programme (TP) and Hydropower Programme (HP) that are not funded yet.

While the TP is only programme idea, the DMP document has been preliminarily prepared, and some funds have been secured from Finland for formulation of Hydropower Programme.

Apart from Tourism Programme, DMP and HP are very important. Regarding HP and the recent situation in the region, the formulation should be undertaken soonest and some concrete activities relating to mainstream development of some countries will be immediately implemented by the MRC. Resulted from the multi-stakeholders consultation on the MRC HP (Vientiane, 26-27 September 2008), the MRC Secretariat should finalize the program document and proceed with relevant activities (fast-track) that could keep the MRC abreast with the progress pace of hydropower development in the region. The role of the MRC as independent facilitator of dialogue at different levels on the key issues in the hydropower sector should be appreciated by riparian countries.

4.2 Alignment with the Strategic Plan

The 2006-2010 Strategic Plan confirms the role of MRC as a knowledge-based organization to support regional cooperation for sustainable development of water and related resources in the Mekong river basin.

To promote and support coordinated, sustainable and pro-poor development (goal No. 1), the Strategic Plan emphasizes on development promotion via the regional IWRM

support programme in which Basin Development Plan (BDP) is a general umbrella and other cross-cutting and sectoral programmes are underneath.

Considering components and activities of each programme, it is noted that, they are generally fit with corresponding objective under four goals of the Strategic Plan. This remark is supported by looking into the first two columns of each programme Gantt chart provided in the MRC Work Programme (WP) for 2008 and WP (draft) for 2009 where the code of objective/goal in the Strategic Plan and corresponding digit number of each component/activities of various programme are indicated.

Though all programmes have their own PIP (programme implementation plan) in which details of activities are elaborated. However, the priority activities as well as linkage between relevant programmes are not clearly indicated.

Regarding BDP 2, taking into account the latest information on the national plan for hydropower development in mainstream, it is suggested that, some adjustment on concretize large scale development options (BDP 2.1.2), rank joint projects and national projects (BDP 2.4.3) , and support promotion of portfolio (BDP 2.4.4) should be undertaken. In order to effectively carry out this task, close coordination between BDP Team and Post-WUP team (modeling team) is necessary. All projects proposed/planned and existed, included or not included in BDP 2 shall be considered by application of DSF.

Regarding goal No.2, though WUP was not named as one of goals in Strategic Plan as two previous Strategic Plans, activities and outputs under WUP are still very important. The view of line agencies in Vietnam is that, in addition to cooperation spirit on the one side, obligation as a signatory of the 1995 Mekong Agreement and member of the MRC is another side that is very important for successfully implementation of the Agreement. That's why the MRC needs to complete, as soon as possible, all legal documents including Procedures on Water Quality and its Technical Guidelines, and Technical Guidelines for Implementation of Procedures on Maintenance of Flows on the Mainstream. However, except EP will follow procedures on Water Quality and Technical Guidelines thereof, BDP2 will follow some parts of considering balanced sustainable development options; there seem no concrete activities under IKMP to follow up this, though modeling function had been transfer to IKMP.

On Goal No. 3, all activities are under Environment Programme and they are generally fit with objectives set forth in Strategic Plan. At recent meeting on building the guidelines on transboundary EIA (Chiang Rai, 22-23 September 2008), the continuation of frame/guideline for transboundary EIA was discussed and agreement on the plan as well as pilot case studies had been reached. Paralelly, EP should continue in monitoring activities and raising awareness of MRC, NMCs and line agencies on transboundary and basin –wide environmental issues.

Regarding goal 4, in terms of IWRM and knowledge base of MRC, NMCs, line agencies and stakeholders, many activities fall to IKMP and ICBP as well as OCEO and ICCS. There are some overlaps between ICCS and some programmes (e.g. with EP on training on Tb-EIA, SEA..., with IKMP on DSF training...).

One important remark should be mentioned is that, without active participation of NMCs and its line agencies, other relevant stakeholders, the MRC Strategic Plan could not be successfully implemented. While direction from the MRC to country is well elaborated, there is little description for the return way. Little information on the corresponding national strategic plan of each NMC is known. Besides, there is the fact that, the MRC is not informed timely and sufficiently of national projects or policies of riparian states relating to Mekong cooperation. In addition, coordination among NMC and its line agencies is different country by country. It seems that importance attached to the Mekong cooperation by different government is different. Regarding Vietnam, with due attention of the Government to the work of VNMC, VNMC is assigned to be coordinator or implementing agency of many important programmes such as WUP, BDP, FMMP, EP etc. Under coordination of VNMC, Mekong cooperation has been integrated in other relevant lateral or multilateral initiatives/cooperation. Some of recommendations have been included in agenda of high political meetings, conferences. Not only at central level, coordination role of VNMC also expands to provinces located in the Mekong delta and the Central Highlands. VNMC, in collaboration with line agencies, has made every efforts to ensure that the projects/activities put under the various MRC programmes are also priority ones of respective agencies. However, this should also be the same for other member states. Until same attention of member states attached to Mekong cooperation is ensured, the Mekong vision will be achieved.

Details of assessment are shown in Annex 3 (attention to the far right column).

4.3 Alignment with other regional initiatives

The MRC Strategic Plan pays due attention to the partnership collaboration, cooperation and coordination with relevant organizations and initiatives in the region.

In 2007, the MRC signed 15 agreements with various development partners that amount to over 20 million US\$ and approximately 12 million US\$ commitments/pledges from others for 2008 and longer.

Regarding GMS initiative, at the high-level international conference on the MRC (Hanoi, 24 April 2007), the MRC was expected to be more actively involved in GMS programmes in the Mekong basin with its mandate. ADB and WB will also deepen their engagement and operational cooperation with the MRC in identification and preparation of projects and implementation of activities.

The MRC also set up good relation with other institutions including training, research and river basin organizations and in various forms such as signing MOU, twinning, exchange visit etc.

In fact, knowledge and information retrieved from the MRC Information System are useful for use by other organizations and initiatives. In another words, the MRC has value-added to activities relating to development in the region.

However, a part from the MRC itself, other initiatives or organizations also needs to strengthen their cooperation with the MRC, especially in making use of expertise and knowledge/information of the MRC and let the MRC participate in relevant projects/activities.

5. MRC'S ORIENTATION TOWARDS THE UN MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

As mentioned in the TOR, out of eight UN millennium development goals, three goals Nos. 1 (eradicate extreme poverty and hunger), 7 (ensure environment sustainability), and 8 (develop a global partnership for development) have been brought into the goals of the MRC Strategic Plan in which, as indicated in the Strategic Plan, the most important objective of activities in almost the MRC programmes is to combat with poverty.

As a knowledge-based international river organization, the MRC undertakes a lot of activities in survey, study, forecast, environmental monitoring and assessment..., builds various databases and holds numerous meetings, workshops, seminars, conferences. Direct beneficiaries from these activities are mainly officials, staff of NMCs, line agencies, and local authorities in some times. Riparian people, almost poor people, instead of being direct beneficiary from these activities, they could be indirectly benefited through environmental protection aspect rather than so-called tangible development. So that, the goal 1 of the Strategic Plan ("to promote and support coordinated, sustainable and pro-poor development") is, in some extent, close to UN Millennium Development Goals in theory rather than in reality.

Regarding the partnership collaboration, besides rather close relationship with the development partners and upstream countries through dialogue mechanism, the MRC has signed several MOUs with other international organizations to conduct various cooperation activities such as research, training in specific topics, subjects that would support and supplement the role and function of the MRC as well as effective use of its knowledge and expertise.

6. PRIORITIZATION OF THE REMAINING PERIOD OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN

There is only over two more years, the Strategic Plan 2006-2010 will come to the end. Many MRC programmes have also same time frame. Taking into account the current and potential challenges in whole Mekong basin as well climate change in the future, in addition to implementation of programmes as committed with donors, following are suggested priority activities of the MRC:

- **BDP as an engine of the “Mekong car”:** Apart from studies, researches, assessment etc. (non-physical/structural activities) that indirectly support the poor people, additional real pro-poor development projects are needed. Within framework of BDP 2, the MRC would consider to prepare basin-wide or transboundary projects to be included in the “short-listed portfolios”. The MRC should approach donors/development partners for convincing them to support. Appropriate ways/forums e.g. formal or informal donors consultative meetings, Joint Contact Group meeting, visit of CEO or JC etc.) should be timely initiated by the MRC. BDP 2 should adjust its plan in due course to allocate more resources to basin-wide scenarios analysis, optimization study of regulation of cascade of dams based on IWRM principles and specially to formulate reasonable “trade-offs” options for “win-win” solution. Successful harmonization of both development and protection, the Mekong cooperation would proceed straight ahead.
- **Immediate action of the MRC** is to play an active role in regional planning support for mainstream hydropower development. This should be considered as highest priority agenda of the MRC in next two years, an “indicator” for evaluation of the MRC mandate. Instead of “catch-up” position, the MRC (either through BDP II or HP) should find out “short-cut” way to materialize the MRC projects/programmes in line with those national projects/programmes that are basin-wide or transboundary nature. As drafted in the MRC Hydropower Programme, with financial support secured so far, if the MRC can go along with the fast track to both formulate the programme and implement the urgent tasks, the role of the MRC would be strengthened, the Mekong cooperation is improved.
- From Member States point of view, to reaffirm their commitment in successful implement the 1995 Mekong Agreement, **timely and sufficiently notification or prior consultation if so required** on the projects, plans by the member state(s) concerned in a constructive manner is needed. Meanwhile, procedures and technical guideline thereof have to be finished soonest, and then efficiently implemented.
- It is necessary to **accomplish the MRC guidelines for EIA, especially Transboundary EIA and other publishing documents** containing open and transparent information on the environmental conditions in the basin.
- **Further attention to organizational structure and personnel** of the MRC Secretariat is needed. “Riparianization” should be implemented in a careful manner and step-wise approach so that mesh up of the Secretariat in the same time can be avoided.
- Regarding permanent location of the MRC headquarters, as political matter, **consultation at higher level of Member States** should be timely conducted for the sake of the MRC. In this context, the split of AIFP into AIP and FP needs to be carefully considered. (In the early years of its appearance, the MRC had decided, based on reasonable arguments with support from donors, to merge the then

“agriculture and irrigation” components and “forestry” component into AIFP. Basing on what argument does the very MRC now consider to again divide AIFP into two as in the past?).

- As recommended by the high-level conference on the MRC (Hanoi, April 2007), Member States need to consider to **initial a process for convening a MRC Summit** for promoting the cooperation (and resolving the pending issues).
- The MRC (JC and Council) needs to agree upon an **immediate action plan** for implementation of these activities in a priority hierarchy.

Apart from the above-mentioned priority, based on available resources, the MRC could consider to reallocate some activities to the next Strategic Plan.

7. PREPARATION OF THE NEXT STRATEGIC PLAN 2011-2015

End of the current Strategic Plan period is also end of various MRC programmes. Institutionally, at that time, the issues of MRC Headquarters and personnel will, hopefully be clear.

With experiences and lessons derived from the preparation and implementation of Strategic Plan 2006-2010, preparation of the next Strategic Plan should take into account the availability of water and related resources and challenges in the region and in the Mekong basin, naturally (including climate change) and artificially; base on IWRM principles, agreed goals and objectives to draw out main tasks and solutions to achieve objectives/goals. The Strategic Plan should also indicate implementation arrangement including milestones for each major outputs/activities, and specifically, a reasonable number of priority projects/programmes.

The programmes must to be fit with the Strategic Plan and interlinked one another as integrated ones. The MRC Work Programme at that time may be restructured taking into account the appearance of new rolling IWRM plan. It is suggested that, instead of the current annual work programme, the MRC should produce a three-year programme that is used for fund raising and may be updated yearly in another form of a leaf or brochure.

Regarding the formulation process, in addition to participation of the MRC bodies, timely and sufficient consultation with stakeholders, including line agencies, local authorities/people and civil society in Member States and development partners as well as other parties in a transparent and constructive manner is required. (As agreed by the MRC, by 2014, the Member States' contribution will cover all costs of OEB. Together with increased ownership, financial capacity of Member States may also be improved that would facilitate for conducting some development projects in the basin. However, support from development partners for implementation of programmes still exists that's why close cooperation with them is necessary).

Lastly, in terms of period, the MRC Strategic Plan or Development Strategy of the MRC may be formulated for a longer timeframe, say: 10 years (2011-2020).

In order to timely approve the next SP 2011-2020, the preparation should be started in a such manner so that draft SP should be ready for consideration by the JC at its plenary session of March 2010 and endorsement at its working session in July 2010; hence approval by the Council at the end 2010.

8. CONCLUSION

Strategic Plan 2006-2010 has been prepared with participation of relevant stakeholders. With cooperation of Member States and support from various development partners/donors, the implementation of Strategic Plan so far has achieved many encourage results.

However, with emerging challenges in the region and in the basin and concerns from several stakeholders, successful implementation of Strategic Plan in remaining period still depends on various factors, both objective and subjective ones.

The Mid-term review of Strategic Plan 2006-2010 is therefore necessary that could recommend for the Council and JC consideration and endorsement of some adjustments/re-priority of outputs and activities as above-mentioned. Among other things including internal affairs of the MRC (personnel, location), active role and involvement of the MRC in mainstream developments are critical. If the MRC functions well its mandate and plays well its role with the support from Member States, the Mekong cooperation will be certainly strengthened and developed. The MRC is worth to be named as a good example for international river basin organization.

Basing on the assessment and recommendations of Mid-term Review report, with comments from regional consultation and from all stakeholders, the MRC Council/JC should immediately request the MRC Secretariat to take relevant follow-up actions in both terms of rearranging the remaining activities of the current SP as well as preparing for the next SP.

Annex 1: Reference

Agreement on the Cooperation for the Sustainable Development of the Mekong river basin, 5 April 1995

MRC Strategic Plans 1999-2003, 2000-2005, 2006-2010

MRC Work Plan 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009 (Draft)

Report of the Independent Organizational, Financial and Institutional Review of the MRC Secretariat and the NMCs, January 2007

Report from the International Conference on the Mekong River Commission, Hanoi, April 2007

Strategy and Action Plan for Riparianization of the MRC Secretariat, April 2007

Minutes of the 7th, 9th, 13th, 27th, 28th Meetings of the MRC Joint Committee

Documents of Regional Multi-Stakeholders Consultation, Vientiane, 26-27 September 2008

Bi-annual Progress Reports of FMMP

Documents of BDP 2, EP, WUP, IKMP, ICBP, FMMP, AIFP, NAP, FP

*National Consultation on Preliminary Draft on
Vietnam National Paper on Mid-term Review
of the MRC Strategic Plan 2006-2010,
Hanoi, 19 September 2008*

Annex 2: List of participants

No.	Name	Title	Agency
1	Le Duc Trung	Acting Secretary General	VNMC
2	Tran Duc Cuong	Deputy Secretary General	VNMC
3	Nguyen Hong Toan	Former Secretary General	
4	Nguyen Ky Nam	EP Coordinator	VNMC office
5	Le Van Diem	Senior Programme Officer	VNMC office
6	Le Thi Huong	Programme Officer	VNMC office
7	Nguyen Thu Linh	IKMP Coordinator	VNMC office
8	Nguyen Nhan Tuan	Programme Officer	VNMC office
9	Nguyen Hong Phuong	FMMP Coordinator	VNMC office
10	Nguyen Xuan Hong	Programme Officer	VNMC office
11	Huynh Minh Ngoc	HP Coordinator	VNMC office
12	Vu Minh Tien	Programme Officer	VNMC office
13	Le Thanh Bac	NAP Coordinator	VNMC office
14	Nguyen Anh Duc	Programme Officer	VNMC office
15	Nguyen Dinh Hai	Senior Official	MOFA
16	Tran Thi Mai Phuong	Senior Official	MPI
17	Pham Van Tan	Deputy Director General	MONRE
18	Thai Van Tien	Chief Division, DWRM	MONRE
19	Tran Van Cuu	Deputy Director General	VIWA
20	Pham Anh Tuan	Deputy Director, DST	MARD
21	Vu Cong Lan	Chief Division, NIAPP	MARD
22	Ho Manh Tuong	Chief Division, FIPI	MARD
23	Thai Gia Khanh	Head, Technical Division	IWRP, MARD
24	Tran Tien Dung	Senior Expert	Dong Thap province
25	Nguyen Bich Van	Senior Expert	Dak Lak province
26	Pham Van Binh	Senior Expert	An Giang province
27	Nguyen Nhan Quang	Resource person	

Annex 3: MRC Strategic Outputs 2006 – 2010

Goals / objectives <i>What is our purpose? What do we want to achieve?</i>	MRC Key actions / outputs <i>What are the goods and services to be delivered?</i>	Lead Programme/ Section*	Priorities (High, medium, low)	Funding status (Funded, partial, none)	Assessment
GOAL 1: To promote and support coordinated, sustainable, and pro-poor development					
1.1 To establish a system for analysing water demand, water supply and water use in the basin to support the basin development planning process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upgraded modelling toolkit and decision support framework (DSF) Water supply and demand maps Basin-wide water resources development scenarios and options A series of water accounts and verifiable water use indicators to guide decision-making and development strategy formulation 	WUP	High	Partial	Yes
		WUP	High/Medium	None	Not yet
		BDP	High	None	Not yet
1.2 To establish processes and mechanisms enabling the balancing of trade-offs between economic and political net benefits of different sectors, areas, and regions; and benefits from environmental and social protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Baseline thematic maps of water and related resource and beneficiaries Consolidated trade-off analysis of development scenarios based on assessed and quantified net impacts on economic, ecological and social values Process of discussions on trade-offs and mutual benefits in basin development, including forum/ policy dialogue meeting. 	BDP	Medium	None	On going
		BDP	High	None	Not yet
		BDP	High	None	Not yet
1.3 To produce a regularly updated rolling plan applying the planning process for identification, categorization and prioritization of projects and programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An IWRM rolling plan Collaborative basin development planning processes for project identification and prioritization in water related sectors Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) Strategy supported by assessed development scenarios and options MRC projects and programmes database Cumulative impact assessment studies of development scenarios 	BDP	High	None	Not yet
		BDP	High	None	On going
		BDP	High	None	On going
		BDP	High	None	Yes, metadata
		BDP	High	None	Yes, initial
1.4 To screen, formulate and promote wise development options at the transboundary and basin levels for preparation and implementation by other appropriate development agencies ⁴⁴	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support to identification and preparation of balanced sustainable development options in partnership with donors, development partners and investment banks. Support to Line Agencies with knowledge and expertise in preparation of project proposals, focusing on joint and basin-wide projects and national projects with significant basin impacts Project promotion and fund-raising services for joint and basin-wide projects 	BDP	High	None	On going
		BDP	Medium	None	On going
		BDP	Medium	None	Not yet
1.4.1 To support sustainable land and water development through more effective and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Watershed management policy guidelines and proceedings Best practices on watershed 	AIFP	Medium	Partial	Yes
		AIFP	Medium	Partial	Yes

*

It is not always possible to determine a single lead programme as often several programmes will cooperate and contribute to a key action/output.

⁴⁴ Supported by sector specific objectives: 1.3.1 through 1.3.7.

Goals / objectives <i>What is our purpose? What do we want to achieve?</i>	MRC Key actions / outputs <i>What are the goods and services to be delivered?</i>	Lead Programme/ Section ¹	Priorities (High, medium, low)	Funding status (Funded, partial, none)	Assessment
integrated utilization of agricultural, irrigation, drought, and watershed management systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> management and technologies • Support to line agencies on identification and preparation of BDP watershed management projects • Basin-wide irrigation efficiency improvement strategy • Institutional and managerial guidelines to improve irrigation efficiency • Assessment of irrigation efficiency in the basin • Assessment of groundwater potential for irrigation • Support to line agencies in identification and preparation of BDP priority irrigation development and rehabilitation projects 	AIFP AIFP AIFP AIFP AIFP AIFP	Medium Medium Medium High Low Medium	Partial None Funded Partial None None	On going Not yet Not yet Not yet Not yet Not yet
1.4.2 To assist in the development of the basin's hydropower potential to ensure safeguarding of the environment and social interests while meeting the Basin's increasing need for energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and update assessment of hydropower potential in the Mekong Basin • Update basin-wide hydropower development strategy • Update hydropower database of planned and existing dams • Impact assessments of hydropower projects • Best practices to mitigate negative impacts of hydropower focussing on environmental and social impacts 	Operation Division Operations Division Operations Division Operations Division Operations Division	Medium Medium High High High	None None Partial None None	On going On going Yes Not yet Not yet
1.4.3 To achieve more active and efficient river transportation through increased freedom of navigation to increase social development, international trade and tourism opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional master plan for navigation • Legal Framework for Cross-border Navigation • Aids to Navigation Systems • Traffic safety management system • Improved risk and emergency management capacity as related to navigation • Navigation emergency management plan • Navigation pollution control system and environmental management tools and best practices for navigation and river works • Mekong River Navigation Information Systems • Support to line agencies in identification and preparation of BDP priority navigation development projects 	NAP NAP NAP NAP NAP NAP NAP NAP	High High High High High High High Medium Medium	Partial Partial Partial Partial None Partial Partial Partial Partial	Yes Yes On going On going Not yet On going Not yet On going Not yet
1.4.4 To build regional flood and drought management capacity for prevention, minimization or mitigation of people's suffering and economic losses due to floods and droughts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flood probability maps • Fully operational flood forecasting and warning system using a comprehensive data set • Hydro-meteorological monitoring network (real-time) • Hydro-meteorological data base • Hydro-meteorological year book (bulletin, CD ROM) • Annual hydro-climatic assessment report • Guidelines for flood proofing and 	FMMP FMMP FMMP FMMP FMMP FMMP FMMP	High High High High High Medium High	Partial Partial Partial Partial Partial Partial Funded	On going On going On going Yes Yes On going On going

Goals / objectives <i>What is our purpose? What do we want to achieve?</i>	MRC Key actions / outputs <i>What are the goods and services to be delivered?</i>	Lead Programme/ Section*	Priorities (High, medium, low)	Funding status (Funded, partial, none)	Assessment
	mitigation measures <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transboundary flood mediation and coordination mechanisms • Flood emergency management and preparedness system with full coverage • Land use planning and management guidelines • Support to line agencies in identification and preparation of BDP priority flood management projects identified through BDP • Drought forecasting and early warning system based on detailed data • Drought risk maps • Drought mitigation and management policy guidelines 	FMMP FMMP FMMP FMMP DP DP DP	High High High High High High Medium	Funded Partial Partial Funded None None None	On going On going Not yet Not yet Not yet Not yet Not yet
1.4.5 To maintain productive Mekong fisheries and enhance aquaculture of indigenous species for increased food security and economic output	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report on commercial fish species and production • Inland fisheries development strategy • Increased capacity of local and national fisheries bodies • Technologies for aquaculture of indigenous species adopted • Coordination services in the field of sustainable fisheries development • Support to line agencies in identification and preparation of BDP priority sustainable fisheries development projects 	FP FP FP FP FP	Medium High High Medium Medium Medium	Partial Partial Partial Partial Partial	Yes On going Yes On going Not yet On going
1.4.6 To develop the tourism potential of the Mekong benefiting local economies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourism development strategy to benefit local people • Development of tools and best practices to reduce negative impacts of tourism on environment and social conditions • Support to line agencies in identification and preparation of BDP priority sustainable tourism development projects 	Operations Division Operations Division Operations Division	Medium Medium Medium	None Partial None	Not yet On going Not yet
1.4.7 To assess domestic water supply and sanitation options to ensure adequate protection and improvement of peoples' lives and the environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report on domestic water supply and sanitation needs in the basin • Water supply and sanitation development strategy • Support to identification of BDP priority water supply and sanitation projects 	Operations Division Operations Division Operations Division	Low Low Low	None None None	Not yet Not yet On going
GOAL 2. To enhance effective regional cooperation					
2.1 To increase MRC's function as a transparent and effective cooperation mechanism among Member States and to develop and demonstrate enhanced linkages, compatibility and complementarities of partnerships with other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased cooperation between MRC Member States • Partnership agreements (MoUs) with developments partners, International River Basin Organisations, and research institutions 	ICCS ICCS	High High	Partial None	Yes Yes

Goals / objectives <i>What is our purpose? What do we want to achieve?</i>	MRC Key actions / outputs <i>What are the goods and services to be delivered?</i>	Lead Programme/ Section ¹	Priorities (High, medium, low)	Funding status (Funded, partial, none)	Assessment
regional organizations and initiatives such as GMS, the World Bank's MWRAP, ACMECS, ASEAN, etc., including sub-basin organizations					
2.2 To complete, adopt and make applicable mechanisms, procedures and guidelines as required under the 1995 Mekong Agreement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical guidelines for implementing the procedure for maintenance of flows on the mainstream • Guidelines for transboundary environmental impact assessment • Procedures/Guidelines for water quality • Technical Guidelines for implementing the procedures for water quality • Adopted procedures are implemented 	WUP WUP WUP WUP WUP	High High High High High	Partial Partial Partial Partial Partial	On going Failed Yes (draft) Not yet Not yet
2.3 To identify potential transboundary issues for negotiation, mediation and conflict prevention; and develop mediation and conflict management capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased capacity for managing transboundary issues • Development of awareness of tools and approaches to mediation and conflict management in natural resources issues • Inventory of issues and areas with potential for conflicts in use and impacts related to water • Development of mechanisms to address environmental issues 	WUP WUP WUP WUP	High High High High	Partial Partial Partial Partial	On going On going On going Not yet
2.4 To promote and improve dialogue and collaboration with China and Myanmar.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased cooperation with upstream riparian countries through joint studies and projects 	OCEO	High	Partial	Yes
GOAL 3. To strengthen basin-wide environmental monitoring and impact assessment					
3.1 To improve monitoring of the environmental condition of the Mekong River basin, focusing on water quantity and quality, ecological health and social impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental water quality monitoring system • Social impact monitoring system • Mekong River ecological health monitoring system • Model of the Mekong Basin's aquatic ecosystems 	EP EP EP EP	Medium High High Medium	Partial Partial Partial Partial	Yes Not yet On going Not yet
3.2 To regularly report on the environmental condition of the Mekong River basin and disseminate this information widely	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updated environmental status report • Updated State of the Basin Report • Updated Basin Report Cards on environmental and social conditions • Guidelines on best environmental management practices 	EP EP EP EP	High High High Medium	Partial Partial Partial Partial	On going On going On going Not yet
3.3 To raise awareness of MRC, NMCs, and line agencies on transboundary and basin-wide environmental issues and to increase the capacity to address them	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training modules on the use of EIA, SEA, and other tools • Environmental educational kits • Environmental awareness on transboundary issues 	EP EP EP	Medium Medium High	Partial Partial Partial	On going On going On going
3.4 To ensure that development initiatives are planned and implemented with a view to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To support line agencies in identification and preparation of BDP priority environmental management 	EP	High	None	Not yet

Goals / objectives <i>What is our purpose? What do we want to achieve?</i>	MRC Key actions / outputs <i>What are the goods and services to be delivered?</i>	Lead Programme/ Section*	Priorities (High, medium, low)	Funding status (Funded, partial, none)	Assessment
minimize negative environmental impacts;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> projects and protection • Upon request of Member States, screening of projects for environmental impacts (technical support to project level SEA, independent review of EIA) • Promote and support the implementation of transboundary EIA 	EP EP	High High	None None	Not yet Not yet
3.5 To ensure that social, economic and environmental concerns are incorporated into basin-wide water resources development strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic environmental impact assessment (SEA) • Environmental impact assessment (EIA) • Promote stakeholder discussions to identify valuable assets in water resources which are to be protected • Providing information and knowledge to decision makers through the IBFM process on economic benefits and environmental and social impacts of development as related to changes in the flow regime. • A set of spatial tools to enable planners to take into consideration environmental and social aspects of development plans and projects. Initially covering, wetlands, protected areas, vulnerability and dependence on aquatic resources. 	EP EP EP EP EP	Medium Medium High High High	Partial Partial Partial Partial Partial	On going On going On going Not yet On going
GOAL 4. To strengthen the Integrated Water Resources Management capacity and knowledge base of the MRC bodies, NMCs and line agencies and other stakeholders					
4.1 To improve management systems to allow MRC to operate as a highly effective, transparent and innovative International River Basin Organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management policies, systems and manuals 	OCEO	Medium	None	On going
4.2 To establish a technical coordination capacity for preparing and coordinating the implementation of MRC's Work Programme applying IWRM principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical coordination advisor and efficient programme coordination mechanisms in place • Annual work programmes • Harmonized project progress reports 	OCEO OCEO OCEO	High High Medium	Partial Funded Partial	Yes, half Yes Not yet
4.3 To enhance and maintain a common GIS-based information and knowledge management and dissemination system to support all MRC activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operational information system and information management and dissemination tools (GIS, remote sensing, portal) supporting all MRC programmes • Information and datasets provided to outside users 	IKMP IKMP	High High	Partial Partial	Yes On going
4.4 To maintain partnerships with leading organizations, universities and civil society stakeholders for programme-focussed collaboration of common interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Network of partners (universities, research institutes, civil society and other interested and relevant organizations) established • Assessment of research priorities to support MRC's mission 	ICCS OCEO	High Medium	None Partial	Yes Not yet
4.5 To strengthen the	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity needs assessment reports 	ICBP	High	None	Yes

Goals / objectives <i>What is our purpose?</i> <i>What do we want to achieve?</i>	MRC Key actions / outputs <i>What are the goods and services to be delivered?</i>	Lead Programme/ Section*	Priorities (High, medium, low)	Funding status (Funded, partial, none)	Assessment
human resources capacities of the MRC, NMCs and the line agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training modules and toolkits • Training sessions and study tours for JC, NMCs, MRCS staff and line agencies 	ICBP ICBP	High High	None None	Yes On going
4.6 To develop and update as new knowledge becomes available regional assessment tools (EIA, SEA, DSF, TB-EIA, RAM, SIA etc.) for all development projects to be implemented in the lower Mekong River basin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional assessment tools available and promoted for use by NMCS and Line Agencies • Training/orientation sessions in the use of assessment tools for NMCs and line agencies 	ICCS ICCS	High High	Partial Partial	Not yet Not yet