



# ***Mekong River Commission***

**SUMMARY  
REPORT  
OF  
THE MRC REGIONAL MEETING ON STAKEHOLDER  
ENGAGEMENT**

**Lao Plaza**

**25 November 2008**

**Vientiane, Lao PDR**

Prepared by  
The Mekong River Commission Secretariat



## **INTRODUCTION**

The Mekong River Commission (MRC) convened a Regional Meeting on Stakeholder Engagement in Vientiane on 25 November 2008. The meeting was opened by Ms. Pakawan Chufamane, Director of Mekong Affairs Branch, Department of Water Resources of Thailand on the behalf of the Joint Committee Chairman and chaired by H.E Mr. Pich Dun, Secretary General of the Cambodian National Mekong Committee. Participants represented a wide range of stakeholder groups from state and non-state agencies in the four Lower Mekong Basin countries, civil society organisations, private sector, academia, partner organisations and concerned individuals. The Agenda is provided as Annex 1. The purpose of this meeting was:

- To exchange information between the Mekong River Commission and Mekong River Basin stakeholders to increase understanding of possible approaches and tools for meaningful stakeholder engagement in the MRC;
- To share results from initial scoping on possible MRC-wide principles and policy implementation elements to guide stakeholder participation within the MRC Joint Committee and Council for feedback and comment;
- To introduce and receive feedback from regional stakeholders on the draft of the BDP2's Stakeholder Participation and Communication Plan.

## **BACKGROUND**

MRC is committed to improving the way in which it engages with its many stakeholders at all levels of the organisation including through:

- its programmes,
- the Basin Development Planning Process,
- and the Joint Committee (JC) and Council.

The MRC has adopted Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) as the conceptual basis for supporting the joint sustainable development and management of water and related resources in the Lower Mekong Basin. Stakeholder participation is an integral part of IWRM principles and has been adopted by the MRC in its Strategic Plan 2006-2010. However at present, MRC has limited overall strategic direction for public participation although recent efforts have been made by MRC programmes to address this gap but on an ad-hoc basis.

A recent Organisational Review team recommended the MRC improve upon its current stakeholder engagement and in particular to formalise a consultative process at the MRC JC and Council, the highest levels of decision-making within the organization. The MRC JC, at its Special Session on 27 June 2007 agreed on recommendation 37 to "Formalise a stakeholder (NGO and civil society) consultative process as part of MRC annual meetings."

The MRCS is now developing standard principles for the organization along with a policy focused on increasing the meaningful participation of stakeholders within the Joint Committee and Council. The stakeholder engagement policy will also include a process for its implementation.

Furthermore, the MRC's Basin Development Programme Phase 2 (BDP2), the umbrella programme charged with joint basin development planning has already made significant efforts to develop stakeholder participation strategies and approaches. The BDP2 held a first regional consultation in March 2008 with a diverse set of stakeholders and has developed a draft Stakeholder Participation and Communication Plan (SPCP) through a national consultative process. The SPCP provides principles, guidance and an action plan for stakeholder participation and communication in the BDP process.

The MRC held this regional meeting to start a process which will ensure that MRC stakeholders' participation will be carried out in a meaningful way and mainstreamed in all aspects of MRC work.

This summary report reflects the proceedings of the meeting. The outcome of the meeting will be used in further developing in the two following substantive documents:

- The Stakeholder Participation and Communication Plan (SPCP) of the Basin Development Programme; and
- The Policy on Stakeholder Engagement within MRC Governance Bodies.

## **1. SESSION 1: STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT WITHIN THE MRC JOINT COMMITTEE AND COUNCIL**

This session focused on gaining input for the scoping and development of MRC principles for stakeholder engagement that would guide all aspects of the organization in its efforts to improve stakeholder engagement as well as ideas for a new policy and implementation mechanism. Two presentations on mechanisms to involve stakeholder in regional organizations were provided by Mr. Bart Edes, Head, NGOs and Civil Society Center of Asian Development Bank (ADB) and by Mr. Kim Tae-Hyung, Economic Affairs Officer, Water Security Section of Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN-ESCAP). Ms. Kate Lazarus, consultant for MRC, presented an overview of initial results from scoping study on principles for stakeholder involvement and policy components. These presentations provided MRC background and useful information feeding discussions.

To facilitate discussions on the issue, a discussion paper on 'Stakeholder Engagement in MRC Governance Bodies: Challenges, Opportunities and Potential Mechanisms' was distributed to participants and round tables discussions were organized. The purpose was to a) gain feedback from stakeholders on issues concerning engagement with the MRC and b) identify mechanisms for improved stakeholder engagement.

Comments and inputs provided have been synthesized in following tables:

### **1.1 Four main issues identified during the session 1 :**

Role of MRC	MRC needs to clarify its role, its mandate, how use its influence and better communicate on them to the public.
Commitment from MRC countries	Confirm the willingness and interest from MRC member countries to implement the next stakeholder engagement action plan.  Deal with different level of stakeholder engagement in the four Member Countries.  Clarify the MRCS and NMCs role in stakeholder involvement

Information accessibility, transparency	<p>Improve the transparency and the process of sharing information.</p> <p>Improve the communication (avoid technical terminology, translate documents into riparian languages)</p>
Relevant mechanism of stakeholder engagement	<p>Need continuous dialogue</p> <p>Need a platform of exchange including a preparatory process Options could be (i) a stakeholder forum , (ii) a consultative group, (iii) the same process developed with development partners</p> <p>Stakeholders need to be involved at two entry point levels: MRCS and NMC</p>

### 1.2 Recommendations for next steps:

Principles	Explanations
Relevance	<p>Stakeholder Engagement will benefit to both Stakeholders and MRC</p> <p>Stakeholder Engagement will have to focus its consultation with civil society on real Water Resource Development issues</p>
Effective and Meaningful	<p>Defining who MRC Stakeholder are? Who will attend MRC meetings? Which criteria need to be adopted? Which link, impact at grass root and community level?</p> <p>Built the Stakeholder Engagement process on mutual accountability of MRC and stakeholders</p>
Practicality	<p>Build on established processes. Work with regional networks</p> <p>Communicate better on MRCS and NMCs roles</p>
Realistic	<p>Build a mechanism taking account financial and human resource limitations</p> <p>Take into account MRC background and other regional mechanisms of stakeholder engagement</p>

## 2. SESSION 2: THE BASIN DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME'S STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION AND COMMUNICATION PLAN (SPCP)

This session focused on gaining input for the scoping and development of MRC principles for stakeholder engagement that would guide all aspects of the organization in its efforts to improve stakeholder engagement as well as ideas for a new policy and implementation mechanism. Two presentations on mechanisms to involve stakeholder in regional organizations were provided by Mr. Bart Edes, Head, NGOs and Civil Society Center of Asian Development Bank (ADB) and by Mr. Kim Tae-Hyung, Economic Affairs Officer, Water Security Section of Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN-ESCAP). Ms. Kate Lazarus, consultant for MRC, presented an overview of initial results from scoping study on principles for stakeholder involvement and policy components. These presentations provided MRC background and useful information feeding discussions.

The objectives of this session were (i) to elaborate how stakeholder engagement can be carried out in the Basin development planning process, following the overall principles for MRC stakeholder engagement. This is reflected through the draft “Stakeholder Participation and Communication Plan for Basin Development Planning in the Lower Mekong Basin” (SPCP), prepared by the BDP programme phase 2, and (ii) to obtain inputs for the finalization of the SPCP.

The session started with a presentation of Ms. Pakawan Chufamane, Head of the Thailand BDP Unit, on the sharing of experience in stakeholder engagement in BDP phase 1 in Thailand. The experience demonstrates that stakeholder engagement through BDP Sub-area working groups could be integrated into the national institutional structure for water resources management including the River Basin Committees (RBC). Community engagement was possible through village leaders and the composition of RBC.

To facilitate discussion on the SPCP, the draft was posted in MRC website in advance of the regional meeting. A presentation was made by Mr. Suparerk Janprasart, BDP sociologist/socio-economist, Dr. Thanapon Piman, BDP modeling specialist and Dr. Richard Friend, stakeholder participation specialist to:

- Provide an overview of the BDP programme phase 2, its objectives, structure and the essence of Basin Development Planning in the Mekong Basin context in March 2008,
- Introduce the SPCP and its key elements 1) principles for stakeholder engagement in BDP, 2)the mechanisms for stakeholder engagement and 3)the approach to more in-depth stakeholder analysis that will strengthen the implementation of the stakeholder engagement mechanisms,
- A demonstration of how different mechanisms would work in basin-wide scenario analysis – one of the most important stages in BDP planning.

The roundtable discussions were mainly focused on the mechanisms proposed in the draft SPCP with the following focus: 1) whether the proposed mechanisms make sense to stakeholders and are realistic; 2) what are other opportunities for stakeholder engagement in BDP?

### 2.1 Two groups of comments identified during the meeting:

Category of comment	Comments
At the conceptual level	<p>How much participation the MRC/BDP needs and how to make it realistic?</p> <p>While the SPCP emphasizes that participation is not only about meetings, the proposed mechanisms still seems to be built around meetings. This would need to be streamlined</p> <p>There is the need to clearly define the incentives for stakeholders to participate, which includes how the MRC/BDP activities benefit their daily work and life, especially for local stakeholders</p> <p>There is the need to ensure that participation takes place before decision making and does actually influence decision making.</p> <p>It is of importance to pay attention to participation of local communities and to ensure that the voice of the voiceless in particular poor women and children are heard.</p> <p>Building capacity to ensure meaningful engagement is a requirement.</p> <p>MRC should consider a facilitator role in organizing stakeholder consultation of projects that have potential transboundary impacts in water resources development in the LMB.</p>

Requests for clarification	<p>The SPCP should clarify the objectives, role and involvement of each mechanism, the difference as well as linkage between proposed mechanisms. For example, what is the difference between peer review and independent expert panel review; in which one stakeholders should participate and how?</p> <p>The SPCP should clarify which mechanism is intended to be used in which planning stage</p> <p>How are the BDP Sub-areas defined in BDP2. Is there any difference with sub-area definition in BDP2. How will BDP2 prioritize Sub-area forums and how can other agencies help replicating the forums in other areas</p>
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## 2.2 Recommendations for next steps

The roundtable discussions formulated the following recommendations:

- The process for scenario analysis should be better elaborated; in particular better how negotiations on trade-offs will take place and how stakeholders can participate in these negotiations in addition to MRC Member Countries,
- The SPCP should ensure consultations/dialogues at different scales to increase efficiency,
- BDP should ensure sufficient information sharing to enable stakeholders to prepare themselves before consultations and dialogues,
- The issues brought up for consultation/dialogue should be of concern to stakeholders, not only to MRC. Results and benefits should be apparent to raise the incentives for participation,
- There should be more frequent communications, especially with private sector stakeholders. MRC should explore other communication channels, different techniques for communication and should ensure a step-by-step approach for full engagement,
- BDP should build on or use existing networks, processes and research institutions in the region and/or let these networks organize the dialogues. Thematic working groups with participation of agencies with relevant expertise and/or working in the same areas would be a good way to engage them,
- MRC should consider to develop a glossary of MRC/BDP terms to facilitate a good understanding of issues and effective engagement.

## 3. SESSION 3: CONCLUSION AND WRAP-UP

### 3.1 Tentative time-schedule for next steps

As the governance level and basin planning level are closely interlinked, both of these stakeholder participation processes are being considered further in a joint initiative. From December 2008 to March 2009, they will engage a series of national and subarea consultations scoping both BDP scenarios and the engagement of stakeholder at the MRC governance bodies.

The timing for these processes is also planned as follows:

Next Steps for the MRC Stakeholder Engagement at the governance level

- Preparation of the MRC Stakeholder Engagement Principles,
- Preparation of MRC draft policy for Stakeholder Engagement at the Governance Level,
- Submission of first outcomes and desk studies reports to the MRC Task Force on the implementation of organizational review recommendations (January 2009),
- Submission of the draft policy and principles to the Twenty-ninth session of the Joint Committee (March 2009).

Next Steps for the BDP Stakeholder Engagement

- Finalize the SPCP document by January 2009,
- Stakeholder analysis and national workshops from January to March 2009,
- Implementation of the SPCP – an on-going process.

### **3.2 Demonstrate impact and relevance**

MRC acknowledges with appreciation the constructive comments and suggestions provided by the participants.

There are clear expectations for MRC to follow-up on concrete actions to continue this useful process. MRC will proactively work on maturing a mechanism involving a broad range of stakeholders and ensuring a continuous dialogue in a reiterative process generating interest and impact.

MRC will work on this mechanism based on its experience, on regional examples and on existing networks. The format of this engagement with stakeholders will be one of the issues of the mechanism set-up.

Following the participants' recommendations, MRC will define a clear and consistent stakeholder engagement mechanism through both its programmes and governance bodies. MRC will work on the harmonization of the MRC processes and will present a package where involvement at programmes level, Basin Development level and governance level will come together.

### **3.3 Closing remarks**

Ms. Pakawan Chufamane, on the behalf of the Joint Committee Chairman for 2008/2009 congratulated the meeting for its spirited and constructive discussion and in closing it, thanking presenters, facilitators and resource persons from partner organizations: ADB, UN-ESCAP AIT, AusAID, CENTOR, SEI, TEI, ECO ASIA, all participants and MRC Secretariat.

She reiterated the MRC commitment to facilitate a transparent Stakeholder Involvement process and informed that the output from this meeting will inform discussions in the Twenty-ninth session of the Joint Committee meeting.



## MRC REGIONAL MEETING ON STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AGENDA

Session	Description	Lead
<b>Opening Session</b>		
08:00-08:30	Registration	ICCS/BDP
08:30-08:35	Opening and Welcome Remarks	Ms. Pakawan Chufamane, Representative of the Joint Committee Chairman
08:35-08:40	Opening Remarks	H.E Mr. Pich Dun, Secretary General CNMC
08:40-08:45	Introduction: MRC and Stakeholders	Jeremy Bird, CEO, MRCS
08:45-08:55	Objectives and Expected Outcomes of the Regional Meeting Process Description	Tien-Ake Tiyapongpattana, Facilitator

### Session 1: Stakeholder Engagement within the MRC Joint Committee and Council

Chairman of the session: H.E Mr. Pich Dun

08:55-09:10	ADB's approach to consultation and participation, including NGO/civil society engagement	Bart Edes, Director ADB NGO Centre
09:10-09:25	Major Group Participation in the Asian and Pacific preparatory process for the sixteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development- UNSECAP	Kim Tae-Hyung, Economic Affairs Officer Water Security Section – UNESCAP
09:25-09:55	Overview of initial results from scoping study on principles for stakeholder involvement and policy components including ideas for implementation	Kate Lazarus, Consultant
09:55-10:10	Coffee Break	
10:10-11:10	Roundtable Discussions	Facilitated/Documented Roundtable Discussions
11:10-12:15	Feedback and Discussion in Plenary	Short presentations back to Plenary from Tables / Panel Discussion
12:15-12:20	Summary remarks of session 1	H.E Mr. Pich Dun, Secretary General CNMC
12:20-13:30	Lunch	

### Session 2: The Basin Development Programme's Stakeholder Participation and Communication Plan (SPCP)

Chairman of the session: H.E Mr. Pich Dun

13:30-13:35	Objectives and Expected Outcomes of Session 2	Facilitator
13:35-14:00	Sharing lessons learned on BDP participatory approaches in Thailand - perspectives from a Thailand River Basin Committee <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Establishment of BDP Sub-area working in Thailand</li> <li>◦ For whom/ sectors did they represent?</li> <li>◦ Where is this mechanism represented in the IWRM process in Thailand?</li> <li>◦ Is it recognized by the national planning and stakeholders in general?</li> <li>◦ What were the results and outcome?</li> <li>◦ What are the lessons learnt and what BDP2 should build on?</li> </ul>	Ms. Pakawan Chufamane, Head of Thailand BDP Unit

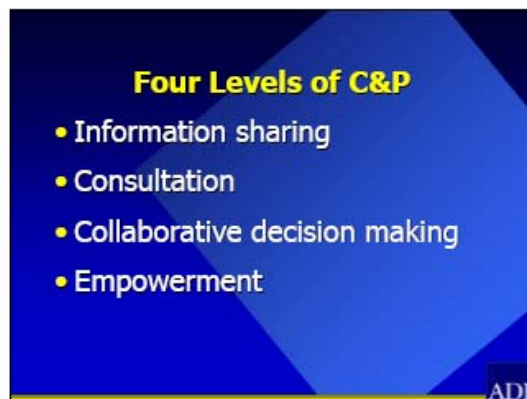
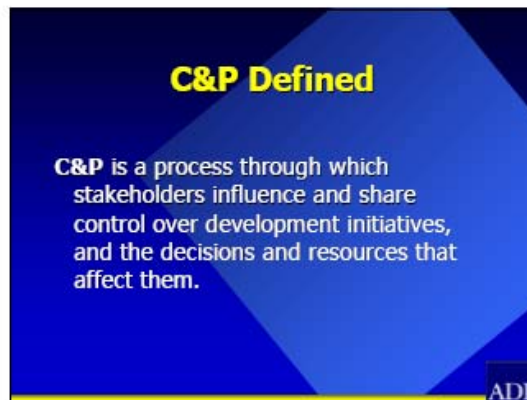
includes  
Q & A

<b>Session</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Lead</b>
14:00-15:00  includes Q & A	The Stakeholder Participation and Communication Plan for Basin Development Planning process (SPCP) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Principles and Approaches</li> <li>◦ Content of the SPCP</li> <li>◦ Workplan and approaches</li> <li>◦ Consolidated feedback from national consultations on draft SPCP</li> </ul>	Suparerk Janprasart, BDP Sociologist
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Participation approach in scenario</li> <li>◦ BDP stakeholder analysis – How can stakeholder analysis strengthen the implementation of the SPCP?</li> </ul>	Dr. Thanapon, BDP Modeling Specialist Dr. Richard Friend, Stakeholder Analysis Consultant
15:00-15:15	Coffee Break	
15:15-16:15	Roundtable Discussions (gaining feedback on the SPCP)	Facilitated/Documented Roundtable Discussions
16:15-17:10	Feedback and Discussions in Plenary	
<b>Session 3: Conclusions and Wrap-Up</b>		
17:10-17:25	Synthesis of session 1 and 2 and Next Steps	Wolfgang Schiefer, ICCS, MRCS Hang Pham Thi Thanh, BDP, MRCS
17:25-17:30	Closing Remarks	Ms. Pakawan Chufamane, Representative of the Joint Committee Chairman

## Power Point Presentations

## Session 1: Stakeholder Engagement within the MRC Joint Committee and Council

## 1 – Presentation ‘ADB’s approach to consultation and participation, including NGO/civil society engagement’ by Mr. Bart Edes, Head, NGO and Civil Society Center, ADB



## Why ADB Applies C&P

- ✓ Increases level of stakeholder support
- ✓ Improves effectiveness, relevance, and sustainability of development activities
- ✓ Supports good governance and empowerment
- ✓ Represents critical set of quality criteria that ADB can control
- ✓ Supports donor coordination and harmonization
- ✓ Builds partnerships to advance national development priorities

ADB



ADB

## ADB and C&P

- C&P is supported by thematic and sector policies and strategies
- Required for preparation of projects and programming
- Social development/safeguard staff support application of C&P in ADB operations
- Resources provided through technical assistance
- NGOC provides resources, tools and training

ADB

## Tips for Successful Consultations

- ✓ Clarify scope/objectives at the outset
- ✓ Prepare to listen and be influenced
- ✓ Aim for ownership of all key stakeholders
- ✓ Don't oversell consultations
- ✓ Provide feedback

ADB



ADB

## NGO & Civil Society Center

- Situated at ADB Headquarters
- Is focal point on C&P issues at ADB
- Serves as window for ADB-CSO cooperation
- Coordinates CSO Network across the Bank
- Provides advice, information, and staff training
- Implements ADB's Policy on NGO Cooperation

ADB





**2 – Presentation ‘Major group participation in the Asian and Pacific preparatory process for the sixteenth session of the Commission on sustainable development –UN-ESCAP’ by Mr. Kim Tae-Hyung, Economic Affairs Officer, Water Security Officer, UN-ESCAP**

**Recent Experiences of Major Group Participation in the Asian and Pacific Preparatory Process for CSD Session**

By KIM Tae-Hyung  
Economic Affairs Officer  
Environment and Development Division  
UN-ESCAP

Stakeholder Engagement in the MRC Governance Bodies  
24 November 2008, Vientiane, Lao PDR

United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

**Outline of Presentation**

1. Brief Introduction of CSD and RIM
2. Participation in CSD and RIMs
3. Major Groups’ Organizing Partners in CSD 16
4. Key Messages
5. References

**1. Introduction**

- Brief Introduction to ESCAP
- Brief Introduction of CSD and RIM for AP

**CSD and RIM**

- CSD: Established by UN GA in 1992 to ensure effective follow-up of UNCED to review progress on implementation of Agenda 21 and JPoI
- The two-year work cycle introduced in 2003
  - ✓ Review Year: First year to focus on a review of progress in the implementation of commitments, targets and goals related to sustainable development;
  - ✓ Policy Year: Second year to focus on decisions on how to overcome constraints

- CSD sessions
  - ✓ Lively forum among government officials, major groups and international organizations, infusing new ideas
  - ✓ Major groups participate in multi-stakeholder dialogues, interactive discussions, roundtables and panels.
- CSD-16 in May 2008, CSD-17 in May 2009
  - ✓ Agriculture, Rural development, Land, Drought, Desertification, Africa; and Review of CSD-13 decisions on water and sanitation

**RIM for AP**

- RIM: regional implementation meetings for implementation of CSD commitment at regional level
- ESCAP serving as the RIM secretariat in AP

## Roles of RIM

- Focusing on a regional perspective in reviewing progress of implementation and identifying constraints and new challenges
- Providing regional inputs to the Secretary-General's state of implementation reports
- Providing opportunities for major groups' contributions and participation at the regional and sub-regional levels
- Coordination between relevant major groups organizations participating in the RIMs and the CSD-16 major groups' organizing partners

## 2. Participation in CSD and RIMs

- Three Major Parties for CSD and RIM
  - ✓ Regional Commission as Secretariat of RIM
  - ✓ Major Organizing Partners (FAO, the UN CCD and UNEP) in the region
  - ✓ Major Group's Organizing Partners Representing Civil Society

## Major Organizing Partners' Role

- Review draft lists to be invited to the RIM
- Provide suggestions to improve representation from all major groups
- Comment on the draft guideline for the present document
- Assist with identifying funding for major group representation
- Provide written inputs, if desired

## Major Group's Participation

- 1) Modality of Participation
  - Participation in RIM sessions
  - Submission of comments for reports
- 2) Methods of Participation in RIMs
  - ✓ (1) Formal statements in appropriate sessions as speakers; (2) Interactive discussion on panels; (3) Closing Plenary for overall comments; (4) Captured in the Chairman's summary

## Submission of Comments

- All major group organizations can submit written comments and commenting on thematic reports prepared for the meeting.
- Major Groups' Role
  - ✓ coordinated their positions,
  - ✓ launched several multi-stakeholder partnerships,
  - ✓ organized side events to share experiences,
  - ✓ successfully lobbied for particular initiatives, and
  - ✓ agreed on joint implementation initiatives

## Classification of Major Groups in Agenda 21

- Women
- Children and Youth
- Indigenous People
- NGOs
- Local Authorities
- Workers and Trade Unions
- Business and Industry
- Scientific and Technological Communities
- Farmers



### 3. Major Groups in RIM-AP of CSD - 16

- > Asian Farmers' Association for Sustainable Rural Development (AFA)
- > Associated Labor Unions-Trade Union Congress of the Philippines (ALU-TUCP)
- > Asian Non-Governmental Organizations Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ANGOC)
- > Asian Partnership for the Development of Human Resources in Rural Areas (AsiaDHRA)
- > Centre for Environment and Sustainable Development India (CESDI)
- > International Commission on Irrigation and Drainage (ICID)

- > International Council for Science (ICSU)
- > International Council of Women – Conseil International des Femmes (ICW-CIF)
- > International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP)
- > International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM)
- > Philippine Women's University
- > Society for Conservation and Protection of Environment (SCOPE)
- > Singapore International Youth Council (SIYINC)
- > Third World Network (TWN)
- > Women Organizing for Change in Agriculture and Natural Resource Management (WOCAN)

### Key Message

- > Partnerships for sustainable development are voluntary and combination of multi-stakeholders' initiatives from governments, intergovernmental organizations, major groups and other organizations and institutions.
- > While these initiatives vary significantly, there are certain factors that are common to all registered partnerships.
  - ✓ Through the pooling of knowledge, skills, experiences and resources, these collaborative initiatives are working to find innovative solutions to sustainable development challenges and to develop knowledge networks to contribute to an environment of informed decision-making
- > The experiences of UN-CSD may be relevant to the policy making of MRC

### The Way Forward

- > Commitment
- > Sharing
- > Partnership
- > Regional cooperation mechanism



### 4. References

- > Guidelines for Major Group Participation in the Asian and Pacific preparatory process for the sixteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD-16)
- > Partnerships for sustainable development - Report of the UN Secretary-General at CSD-16
- > Guidelines for Major Groups' Participation in CSD-17

### AP RIM secretariat contact information

Mr. Masakazu Ichimura (ichimura@un.org);  
 Ms. Hitomi Rankine (rankine.unescap@un.org);  
 Environment and Development Division  
 UNESCAP  
 Tel: +66 (0)2 288 1770,1429  
 Fax: +66 (0)2 288 1025  
<http://www.unescap.org/esd/rim/16th>  
[http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/mgroups/mg\\_op.htm](http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/mgroups/mg_op.htm)



**Thank You for Kind Attention**

**Contact Information**

**KIM Tae-Hyung (Mr)**

**Economic Affairs Officer  
Environment and Development Division  
United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and  
the Pacific (UNESCAP)**

**Tel: (66) 2-288-1533 / Fax: 288-1509  
Email: kimt@un.org**

**3- Presentation ‘Overview of initial results from scoping study on principles for stakeholder involvement and policy components’ by Ms. Kate Lazarus, consultant to the MRC**

**STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT IN MRC GOVERNANCE BODIES: JOINT COMMITTEE AND COUNCIL**

Challenges, Opportunities and Potential Mechanisms

Prepared by Kate Lazarus, Consultant to the MRC

Kate Lazarus 25 November 2008 Vientiane, Lao PDR

**Outline**

- Background of MRC Stakeholder Engagement
- Process / Methodology of MRC Stakeholder Engagement in Governance Bodies project
- Challenges
- Opportunities
- Potential options for stakeholder engagement mechanisms



**Background**

- 1999 MRC JC adopted stakeholder principles
- 2001 Regional organisations invited as observers
- 2002 Regional workshop on public participation
- 2003 MRC Public Participation Strategy
- 2004 Action Plan for Public Participation
- 2006-2010 MRC Strategic Plan adopts IWEM principles
- 2006 MRC Organisational Review, Recommendation 37

**Background Continued**

- “MRC should formalise a stakeholder consultative process as part of MRC annual meetings.”
- “Broader consultation would enhance ownership and regional coordination between stakeholders and MRC” and would “contribute to conflict prevention and sustainability in the context of water resources development”

**Goal**

- Develop MRC stakeholder engagement principles for the MRC
- Develop a policy on stakeholder involvement in MRC governance bodies: The Joint Committee and Council
- Including recommendations for implementation of the policy (e.g. stakeholder engagement mechanisms)
- Including defining MRC stakeholders and typologies of meetings

## Process / Methodology

- International Cooperation and Communication Section (ICCS) within MRCS leading the implementation of Rec. 37
- Desk study of internal MRC documents
- Desk study of relevant external reports
- Interviews of over 55 stakeholders to date (interviews will continue over the next month)
  - Including: MRC staff, NMCs, Donors, NGOs, Academics, Research Institutes, Private Sector
- Two notes prepared using SWOT analysis
- Discussion paper combining key issues

## Challenges: Information Disclosure

- Limited accessibility and transparency of information for effective participation by diverse stakeholders
- Lack of understanding of current information due to level of technicality and predominant focus on English language
- Current JC and Council meetings could be addressing the most critical development issues facing the region

## Challenges: Stakeholder Engagement processes

- Differing interpretations of stakeholder engagement with regards to national policy between member states
- Consultation is not a substitute for regular Dialogue on water-related developments in the Mekong River basin

## Challenges: MRC Commitment to Engage Stakeholders

- Extent of willingness and interest from MRC member countries to implement past stakeholder engagement strategies and action plans throughout the organisation, leading to mistrust among some regional stakeholders
- Lack of commitment seen among NMCs to engage stakeholders
  - Confusion among local/national organisations as to who they should engage with

## Challenges: MRC Commitment to Engage Stakeholders Continued

- MRC has been largely absent from critical transboundary conflicts raised by regional organisations
- Strong risk that impending policy and implementation will not be implemented due to lack of political will or financial/human resources

## Challenges: Role of the MRC

- Role of the MRC unclear to many stakeholders



## Opportunities: Information Disclosure

- New Communications Strategy and Policy on Disclosure of Data, Information and Knowledge are both timely and need to be implemented immediately

## Opportunities: Stakeholder Engagement Processes

- Shift in openness and willingness to engage and convene diverse stakeholders in the BDP and more recently the hydropower consultation, fisheries expert group, etc.
- MRC already developing a useful engagement process with development partners (donors) that can be built upon for other stakeholder groups

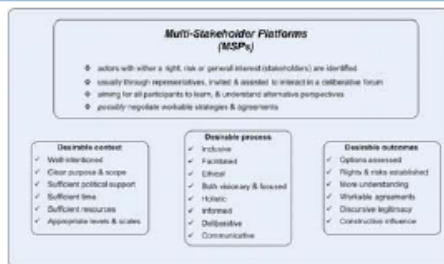
## Opportunities: Stakeholder Engagement Processes Continued

- Several regional organisations already play an observer role at Governance meetings, can be expanded
- Increasing engagement with the private sector needs to be fast-tracked at both the programme and governance level

## Possible Options for Stakeholder Engagement Mechanisms

- Creating space and building trust to jointly work with regional stakeholders on critical water-related issues in the Mekong River Basin
  - On-going roundtables and dialogues on specific thematic issues between MRC member countries, MRCS and stakeholders (e.g.. in the development of the next strategic plan)
  - Developing specific topical focus groups (or sub-committees) to address issues (e.g.. similar to the Joint Contact Group mechanism for transboundary EIA, PNPCA) by expanding to include CSOs

## Processes and Tools for more deliberative water politics



## Possible Options for Stakeholder Engagement Mechanisms Continued

- Reformulating the observer status at the Council and Joint Committee meetings to be more participatory
  - Increasing stakeholder engagement via the observer mechanism
    - E.g. developing specific criteria for participation (possibly by sectors)
    - E.g. providing draft agendas in advance
    - Making statements
    - Engage in specific agenda items to facilitate more discussion

## Possible Options for Stakeholder Engagement Mechanisms Continued

- Create a Civil Society Consultative Board to the MRC Joint Committee and Council
  - Facilitate information from the region to the Council
  - Raise critical concerns and provide good evidence on issues raised at all levels along with solutions
  - Represent at the JC and Council meetings
- Mid-year stakeholder Dialogue with MRC Joint Committee (similar to Informal Donors Meeting)
- Annual stakeholder forum each year to feed into Council meeting along with specific session embedded in Council meeting
- Preparation of Joint Statement by stakeholders in English and translated into four riparian languages

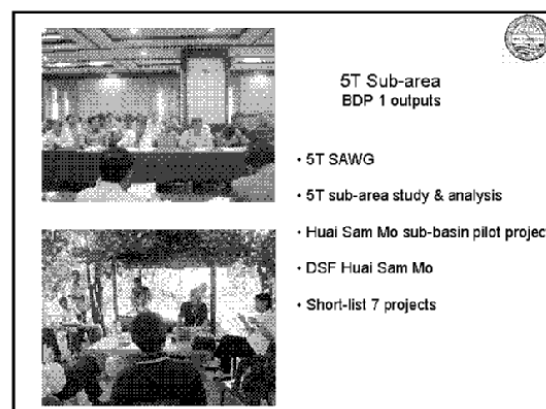
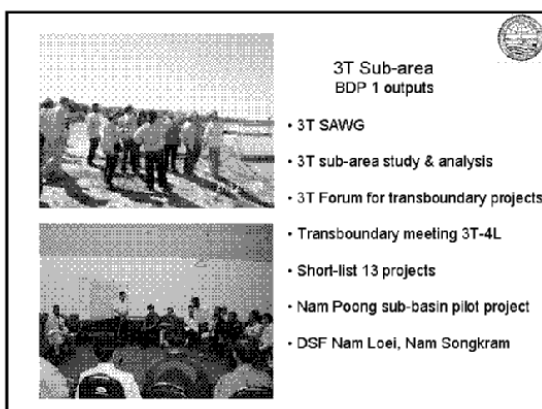
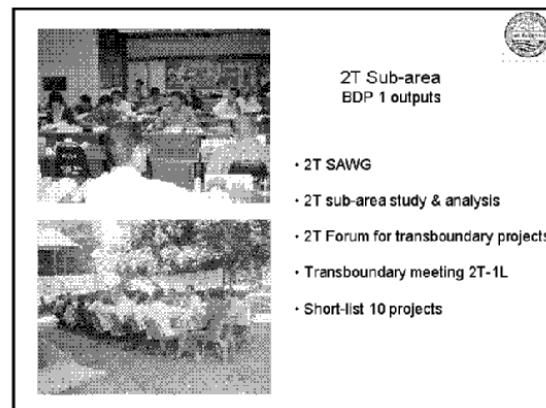
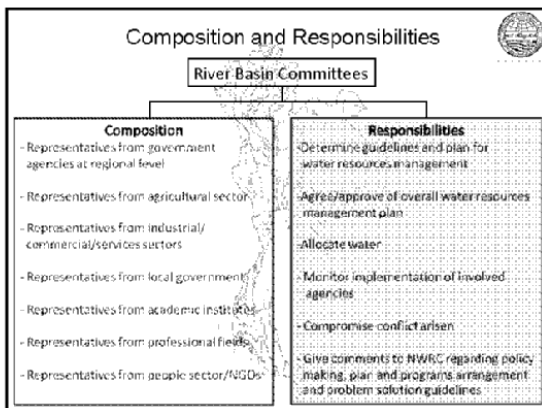
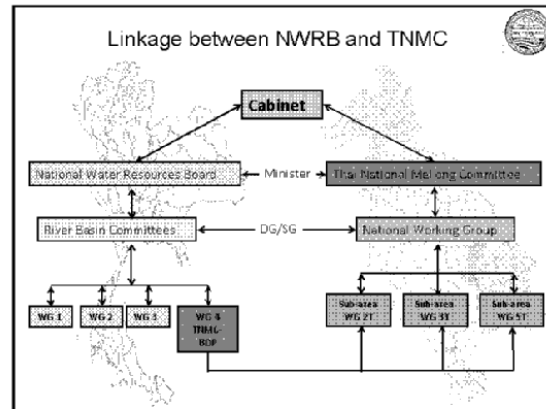
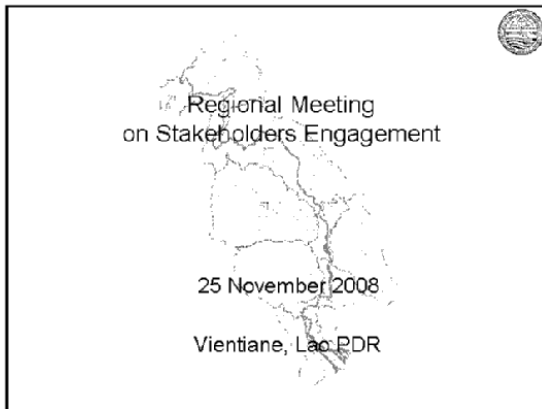
## Possible Options for Stakeholder Engagement Mechanisms Continued

- Improve information disclosure mechanisms to share information
  - Development of rules and procedures for comment periods on all MRC draft documents
    - Placing all draft documents on the web and via listservs for comment (e.g., strategic plan)
    - Procedure for who comments can be made, timeframe and how MRC will incorporate the comments along with next steps to keep stakeholders fully informed
  - Identification of point person/unit within the MRCS to respond to and address CSO concerns

Thank you !

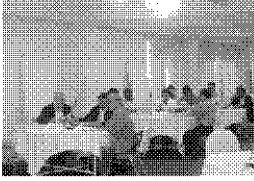
## Session 2: The Basin Development Programme's Stakeholder Participation and Communication Plan

### 1. Presentation 'Sharing lessons learned on BDP participatory approach in Thailand perspectives from a Thailand River Basin Committee' by Ms. Pakawan Chufamane, Head of Thailand BDP Unit





## BDP 2 Progress



### Activities

- Launching TNMC BDP 2 with stakeholder participation
- Sub-area consultation (3T, 5T)
- Reviewed existing information for sub-area study & analysis
- Established SAWGs



### Outputs

- Part of information for sub-area study & analysis
- 3T SAWG
- 5T SAWG comprises 2 parts
  - Chi – established
  - Mun – on process
- 2T SAWG on process

**2. Presentation 'The Stakeholder Participation and Communication Plan for Basin Development Plan Process' by Mr Suparek Janprasat, Dr. Thanapon, BDP team and Dr. Richard Friend, Stakeholder Analysis consultant**


Basin Development Plan Programme Phase 2



## Stakeholder Participation and Communication Plan for the Basin Development Planning in the Lower Mekong River Basin


MRC Regional meeting on Stakeholder engagement,  
November 25, 2008  
Lao Plaza Hotel, Vientiane, Lao PDR

### Outline of the Presentation




- I. Background to the BDP – By Suparek Janprasat
- II. Overview of Stakeholder participation and Communication Plan (SPCP) – By Suparek Janprasat
- III. Putting SPCP into practice – By Thanapon Piman
- IV. BDP Stakeholder analysis – By Richard Friend

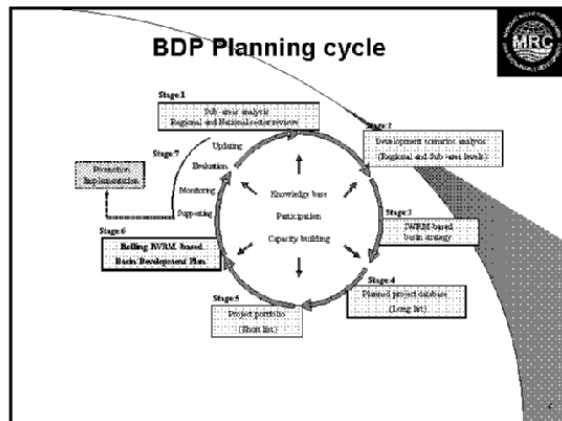
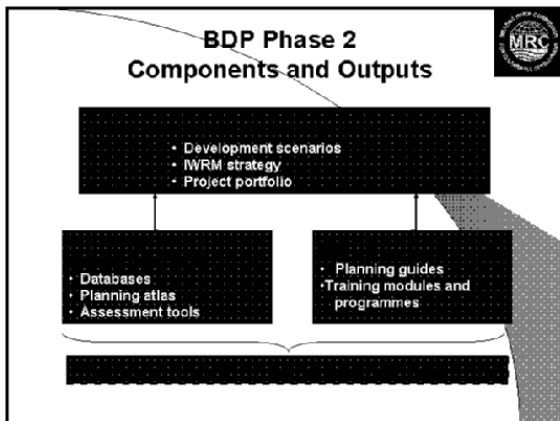
## I. Background of the BDP



### The MRC BDP programme



- **Development objective:**  
The water resources of the MRB managed and developed in an integrated, sustainable and equitable manner for the mutual benefit of the basin countries
- **Phase 1 (2001-2006):**  
Developed participatory basin development planning process, initial tools and capacity
- **Phase 2 (2007-2010):**  
To prepare the IWRM-based Basin Development Plan, building upon the BDP participatory planning process, upgraded tools and IWRM planning capacity





### The essence of BDP

- Brings national plans and proposals into an integrated basin assessment for a balance between resource development and protection and integration of different interests
- Brings basin perspectives to the national decision making
- Brings all relevant stakeholders into the planning process
- Produce the IWRM-based BDP that provides directions and planning framework for sustainable basin development

### BDP's integration with national processes

Participatory rolling planning process, with other stakeholders

**Basin-wide development scenarios**

**IWRM-based Basin Strategy**

**IWRM Strategies for Sub-areas**

**Project portfolio**

- Comprises of (i) national projects with transboundary impacts and (ii) projects implemented by more than one country
- For seeking assistance for, and
- For transboundary water governance through the strategic implementation of water utilization procedures

## II. Overview of the SPCP

### Background of the SPCP

- BDP1 initiated Public participation guide
- Stakeholder participation is an important cross-cutting requirement of BDP2
- Input gathered at the 1<sup>st</sup> BDP Stakeholder Consultation in March 2008
- First draft shared with countries and for peer review in June - July 2008
- National consultations on the first draft June to August 2008 – Cambodia, Laos and Viet Nam
- This Regional meeting finalize the SPCP as a living document

### Common understanding of "Stakeholder Participation"

- Participation may not bring about consensus but it is the beginning of trust and confidence
- Participation empowers and builds capacity of stakeholders
- Give it time while keeping priorities

### ...continued


- Participation does not only mean by inviting stakeholders to meetings
- High quality of facilitation and communication is highly needed
- Easy in principles but absolutely a challenge in implementation esp. at this scale

## We realize



- BDP2 needs to be relevant and added values to stakeholders
- Stakeholders need trust and confidence
- Participation is going on in different forms and with different experiences
- Competing with the fast development pace
- The "voiceless stakeholders" need more attention

## Objectives of the SPCP




Principles

Guidance

Plan of actions


Inclusive and transparent BDP process

## What do we want to achieve with the SPCP?




- Enhanced understanding of stakeholders
- Improved public access of information
- Meaningful mechanism for stakeholder participation established
- Increased sharing knowledge among MRC and stakeholders

## ...continued



- Validate and improved technical quality through peer review and participation
- Ownership and commitment of national government and stakeholders of the IWRM-based BDP
- Better informed decision making


## Who are BDP stakeholders



4 criteria for definition:


- Direct and indirect beneficiaries
- Planners and associates
- Groups of knowledge generator and experts
- Interested groups

## Key principles




- Promote meaningful participation of all relevant stakeholders
- Ensure openness and transparency
- Promote social equity and gender balance
- Accessibility of information and two-way communication between stakeholders
- Mainstreaming of stakeholder participation processes

## Comments from the National consultations




- Need to identify the country context, governance, local structure, roles of stakeholders, and decision making process
- Clearer participation mechanism and approaches
- Question on the extent of stakeholder participation in development projects in the sub-areas
- Clearer action plan for BDP to engage meaningfully with stakeholders in the sub-areas
- Ensure that stakeholders understand BDP before holding consultations
- Concrete action plan for BDP to share information and data with stakeholders

## Participation mechanisms across BDP planning cycle




1. Sub-area studies (10 sub-areas), in complimentary with Vulnerability Assessment Project
2. Sub-area working groups
3. Sub-area forums (at least 4 times from 2008-2010 in each sub-areas)

## ...continued




4. Transboundary meetings between Sub-areas (at least 3 times from 2008-2010)
5. National consultations and forums – (i.e. on results of basin-wide scenario analysis, IWRM Sub-area and Basin IWRM strategies...)
6. Regional BDP Stakeholder consultations and dialogues
7. National and Regional technical working groups

## ...continued




8. Working in partnership with agencies (i.e. on Sub-area analysis, scenarios and IWRM Strategy)
9. Peer review and independent panel review, shared with stakeholders

## BDP Communication plan



- MRC Quarterly newsletter – translation
- Brochures and publications
- Press release
- Website
- Email list server
- Interventions at local, national and international levels
- Routine interaction

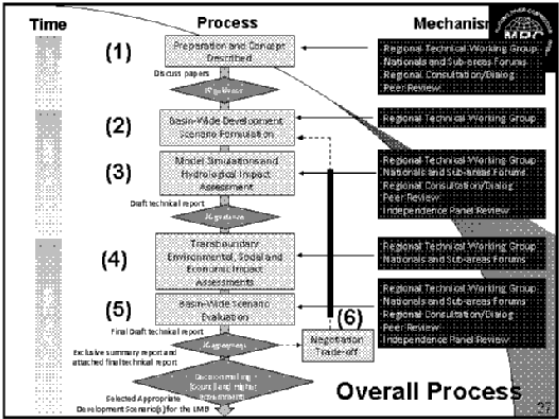
## Monitoring of SPCP implementation



- Monitoring at Sub-area, National and Regional level
- Peer review and feedbacks
- Periodic review of SPCP implementation
- Independent quality assurance

### III. Putting the SPCR into practice: Participation mechanisms in basin-wide scenario analysis

- ### Introduction
- Basin-wide scenario analysis is the most critical stage in BDP planning cycle
  - Concept to define approach and process to formulate and assess scenarios was prepared in Dec 07- Feb 08
  - The concept was shared at the 1<sup>st</sup> BDP Stakeholder Consultation in March 2008
  - Key comments were about **How stakeholders can participate in the process**
  - Comments incorporated the updated process



### Regional Technical Working Group (RTWG)

**Stakeholders:** 7 members from line agencies, NMCs and research institutions from each country and representatives from MRC

**Function:** 1) Represent the views and interests of their member countries

**Work throughout the process until decision making!**

- 4<sup>th</sup> RTWG meeting will discuss scoping of scenario assessment (hydrological, environmental, social and economic impacts)

1<sup>st</sup> RTWG meeting, Halong Bay, Viet Nam on 6 Mar 08

### National and Sub-Areas Forums


**Stakeholders:** Line agencies, NMCs, RBCs, Sub-areas working groups, civil society organizations, NGOs and local people

**Function:**

- 1) Consultation
- 2) Understanding stakeholders' interest and concerns
- 3) Provide platform for dialogues at national and sub-areas levels
- 4) Help building a common understanding and shared vision for water and related resources development in MRC

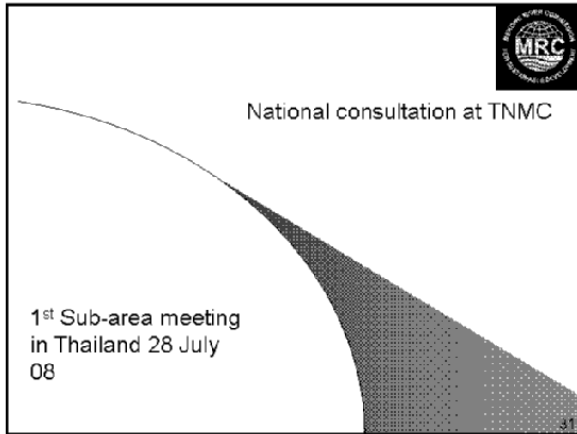

**Progress:**

- National discussions on concept (i.e. Thailand and Viet Nam)
- Start introduce concept and share results in Sub-areas (i.e. 2T, 3T and 5T Sub-areas in Thailand)
- Two Sub-are forums in Viet Nam; more are being organized



National consultation at TNMC

1<sup>st</sup> Sub-area meeting in Thailand 28 July 08

### Regional Consultation /Dialog

**Stakeholders:** National and Regional actors

**Function:** 1) Consultations  
2) Bring National and Regional actors together  
3) Provide a platform for dialogue to build shared

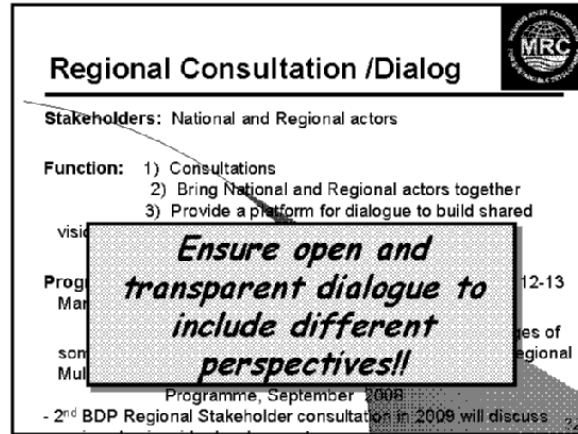

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**Ensure open and transparent dialogue to include different perspectives!!**

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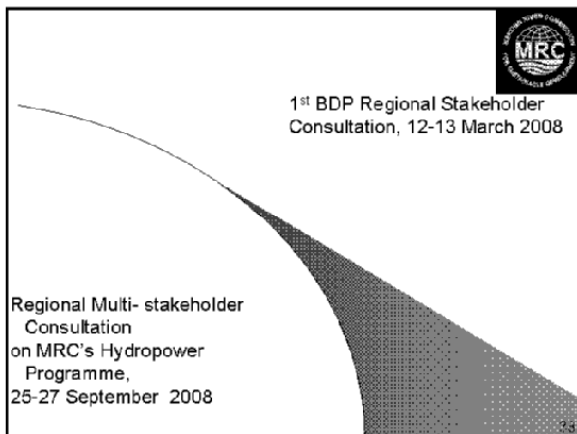
Programme, September 2008

- 2<sup>nd</sup> BDP Regional Stakeholder consultation in 2009 will discuss

1<sup>st</sup> BDP Regional Stakeholder Consultation, 12-13 March 2008

Regional Multi- stakeholder Consultation on MRC's Hydropower Programme, 25-27 September 2008




**All agencies with relevant experiences are welcome**


**Pe**

**Stakeholders:** Agencies with relevant experience

**Function:** 1) Exchange experiences and provide technical inputs  
2) Ensure the optimization of available knowledge in BDP  
3) Help improve the approach and technical products

**Progress:** - Expert meeting on the approach to scenario formulation and assessment in July 2008 with M-Power, IWMI, SEI, WWF, and WUP-FIN





### Independent Expert Panel Review

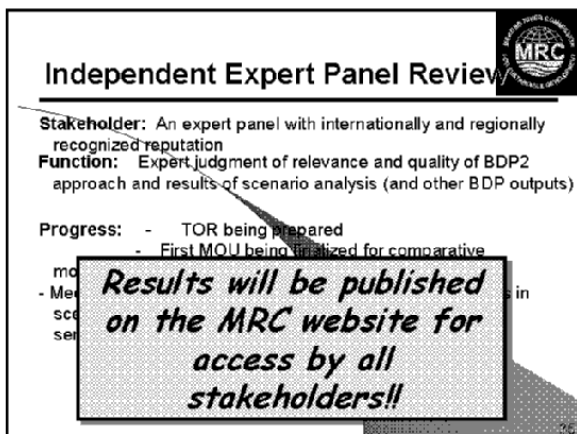

**Stakeholder:** An expert panel with internationally and regionally recognized reputation

**Function:** Expert judgment of relevance and quality of BDP2 approach and results of scenario analysis (and other BDP outputs)

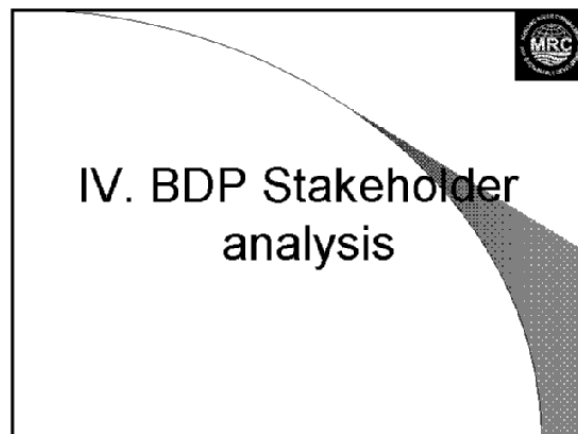
**Progress:** - TOR being prepared  
- First MOU being finalized for comparative

**Results will be published on the MRC website for access by all stakeholders!!**

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## IV. BDP Stakeholder analysis



## Not starting from scratch

- MRC has been working on participation for 10 years,
- Stakeholders have been 'engaging' since 1995 - so there is a history but it is mixed
- Questions about progress so far?
- MRC has recognised it needs to be improved

## Purpose of stakeholder analysis

- Need for "deeper analysis of institutional framework on participatory river basin planning in each of the Member Countries"
- "Inventory & institutional appraisal of influential key stakeholders from state & non-state entities, and in development sectors"
- "Better understand existing participation mechanisms and prioritize key stakeholders for BDP process"

## Raises a number of questions

- Participatory process - recognise the need to conduct the SHA along the principles of participation that BDP is already establishing
- Need for caution with use of the term 'key stakeholders' and notions of 'influence' - who decides?
- Stakeholders - for what purposes? For whose purposes? Whose processes?
- Needs to be a learning process for BDP, MRCs, NMCs and stakeholders
- Needs to be a reflective process - from all sides but especially BDP & NMC

## The steps to be taken (1)

- Desk reviews & interviews on the participatory river basin planning context in each of the 4 countries
- Reviewing MRC documentation on existing stakeholders, and developing an inventory for each country - to be supplemented with stakeholders who are not yet known to MRC
- Initial planning with the BDP, NMCs and some (known) stakeholders to clarify the process of SHA and expectations
- Round tables between BDP, NMCs and line agencies viz on inter-sectoral coordination and IWRM processes

## Steps to be taken (2)


- Interviews with stakeholders - identifying concerns, issues (pro forma)
- Facilitated national workshop/dialogue in each of the four countries between BDP, NMCs and stakeholders
- Preparation of final report to the BDP and NMCs
- Feedback sessions with BDP and NMCs
- BDP to share report with stakeholders

## What do we want to learn?

From MRC and stakeholder perspective:


- Perspectives, policy and practice on public participation and IWRM
- History, type and quality of engagement
- Understanding of each other
- Expectations of each other, and of what might come out of 'participation'
- Identify opportunities for participation
- Identify obstacles & ways round these

### Issues (1)




- IWRM policy and planning is different in each country - but each has a commitment to achieving IWRM
- National coordination and consultation differs
- Status and effectiveness of RBOs differs
- 'Participation' is different in each country - but each has some kind of space for stakeholder participation, but it works differently

### Issues (2)



- Trend towards some kind of 'decentralization' or bottom-up planning in each of the countries
- Trend towards area based and resource based planning in each of the countries
- A range of local institutions exist - eg resource users (water & irrigation, fisheries, watersheds)
- A range of local actions taking place

### Issues (3)




From civil society...

There is interest in some kind of regional governance mechanism such as MRC

But, there are questions about effectiveness of MRC and accountability

### Cross cutting issues




MRC has a commitment to Poverty and Gender

- By definition - poor people and women tend not to be well represented and excluded from decision making processes
- If MRC is serious on poverty and gender - focused efforts (and innovation) will be required - not the usual information, forum, workshops

**Example - Participatory Poverty Assessments (PPA) as part of formal PRSP process**


### Applying Principles




- Promote meaningful participation of all relevant stakeholders
- Ensure openness and transparency
- Promote social equity and gender balance
- Accessibility of information & two-way communication
- Mainstreaming stakeholder participation process

**Questions**  
**Are these principles appropriate?**  
**What does it mean in practice?**

### Dialogues, fora, meetings,




- Who will set the agendas?
- How will the format be set?
- Where will these be held?
- Can other stakeholders lead the dialogues for MRC to follow?



## Assessments (CIA, scenarios)


- Setting the agendas and scope of assessment
- Analysis and interpretation
- Whose knowledge?
- What options are there for participatory processes?
- How can existing assessments outside MRC be taken into account?



## BDP Working Groups


How can there be better stakeholder engagement in Working Groups?

- Membership of the Working Groups
- Technical groups - can they be open for non-technical participation & review?
- Peer review - how can this be conducted?
- What will happen with the findings?



## Other opportunities

- What do stakeholders expect of MRC and BDP?
- Stakeholder expectations might go beyond the spaces in the BDP (civil society watch dog)
- What additional opportunities are there?



## Thank you