

MEKONG RIVER COMMISSION PROGRAMMES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



Lesson Learning Goals

At the end of this lesson you should be able to:

- Summarize the role, purpose, vision, and mission of the Mekong River Commission
- Describe, with examples, how MRC programmes enhance sustainable development in the Mekong River Basin
- Discuss how achievement of objectives for the MRC Environment Programme will assist attainment of sustainable development in the MRB

MRC Raison D'Être

The Mekong River Basin and the related natural resources and environment are natural assets of immense value to all the riparian countries for the economic and social well-being and living standards of their peoples

From 1995 Cooperation Agreement on Sustainable Development of the MRB

MRC's Intended Role

Reaffirming the determination to continue to cooperate and promote in a constructive and mutually beneficial manner the sustainable development, utilization, management, and conservation of the water and related resources for navigational and non-navigational purposes, recreation, and tourism, and for the social and economic development and well-being of all riparian states, consistent with the need to protect, preserve, enhance, and manage the environment and aquatic conditions, and maintenance of the ecological balance exceptional to this river basin

Mekong River Basin Vision

AN ECONOMICALLY PROSPEROUS,
SOCIALY JUST, AND
ENVIRONMENTALLY SOUND
MEKONG RIVER BASIN

MRC Mission Statement

To promote and coordinate sustainable management and development of water and related resources for the countries' mutual benefit and the peoples' well-being by implementing strategic programmes and activities and providing scientific information and policy advice

MRC Programmes for Sustainable Development

→ CORE PROGRAMMES

- » Basin Development Plan
- » Water Utilization Programme
- » Environment Programme

→ SECTOR PROGRAMMES

- » Fisheries
- » Agriculture, Irrigation, and Forestry
- » Water Resources and Hydrology
- » Navigation
- » Tourism
- » Human Resources Development

Basin Development Plan

- Institutionalise planning for responsible management and sustainable development of MRB resources
- Balance socio-economic development and environmental concerns
- Create development framework based on technical knowledge and input from 'concerned parties'
- Foster cooperation between stakeholders

Water Utilization Programme

- Support sustainable management of water resources in lower MRB
- Ensure mutually beneficial water utilization
- Maintain ecological balance
- Develop integrated knowledge base and hydrological modelling
- Create rules governing water use in MRB
- Enhance institutional capacity of MRC and National Mekong Committees (NMC)

Environment Programme

- Focus on people in the MRB
- Balance economic development with environmental conservation for the benefit of MRB inhabitants
- Establish systems to:
 - » monitor environmental health of MRB
 - » improve policy and legislation
 - » improve riparian country cooperation
 - » increase public environmental awareness

MRC Environmental Policy

To promote cooperation and collaboration among the riparian member states in the utilization, conservation, management, and maintenance of the Mekong River Basin's environmental assets and ecological balance

MRC Environment Programme Development Objective 2001-2005

An environmentally sound,
economically prosperous,
and socially just
Mekong River Basin

MRC Environment Programme Immediate Objective

Riparian governments have the capacity to secure a balance between economic development and protection of the environment to ensure a healthy Mekong River Basin capable of supporting natural resources diversity and productivity, which are central to the peoples' livelihoods

Environment Programme

Detailed Objectives

OBJECTIVE 1: Improve capacity for monitoring and assessing the environmental state of the MRB

- » Develop better policies and management practices for sustainable development

OBJECTIVE 2: Increase knowledge base of environmental issues in the MRB

- » Assist government policy formulation. Focus on links between people, development and the environment

Environment Programme

Detailed Objectives (Cont'd)

OBJECTIVE 3: Improve systems for environmental information exchange and communication

- » Share information regionally for optimal results

OBJECTIVE 4: Improve environmental policies and legislation related to management of water and related resources, taking gender, ethnic, and socio-economic aspects into consideration

- » Facilitate formulation of policies, regulations, and guidelines, while ensuring compatibility with national priorities
- » Establish SEA and Regional EIA processes

Environment Programme

Detailed Objectives (Cont'd)

OBJECTIVE 5: Improve awareness and capacity to address environmental issues

- » Enhance staff understanding of basin-wide issues, and capacity to implement necessary actions

OBJECTIVE 6: Improve coordination of development in the MRB

- » MRC will provide an information gateway and forum for dialogue among funding agencies and implementers to improve coordination of developments that have potential environmental impacts

Fisheries Programme Objectives

- Achieve full economic and nutritional potential of fisheries in MRB
- Promote responsible management of aquatic ecosystems
- Establish sustainable management of capture fisheries
- Diversify and maximise fish production through aquaculture techniques and reservoir fisheries

Agriculture, Irrigation, and Forestry Programme Objectives

- Promote sustainable management of water and land resources, including sustainable forestry
- Maximise economic potential of resources
- Modernize irrigation systems
- Promote effective and efficient water use
- Plan agriculture and forestry activities in cross-border areas and fragile watersheds

Water Resources and Hydrology Programme Objectives

- Sustainable use of water resources
- Address hydropower and flood control management and mitigation

Tourism Programme Objectives

- Develop tourism while protecting the environment

Navigation Programme Objectives

- Create opportunities for employment and income by development of international trade through navigation
- Assist alleviation of poverty through improved access to remote areas
- Promote freedom of navigation
- Establish framework for safe, coordinated, and effective waterborne transport
- Undertake river works to remove physical barriers to navigation

Human Resources Development Programme Objectives

- Develop appropriate skills and competencies to implement Strategic Plan
- Focus on basin-wide water resources management
- Strengthen administration, leadership, teamwork, and organizational culture at all levels in MRC, NMC, and associated government agencies in riparian countries
- Incorporate gender-related concerns

Concluding Thoughts

Important points to remember are:

- The MRC has defined its role in promoting sustainable development in the MRB through core and sector programme objectives
- Programmes emphasise people-focussed development through cooperative planning of river basin activities, environmental awareness, and recognition of the interdependence of all sectors in the MRB
- Goals are to balance socio-economic and environmental concerns, and achieve mutually sustainable benefits for riparian countries