

## Report of the International Working Group

MRC SEAS REGIONAL AVOIDANCE  
ENHANCEMENT & MITIGATION  
HO CHI MINH CITY, 28-29 JUNE 2010

Mekong River Commission – SEA of hydropower on the mainstream Mekong River

## Group composition

- MRCS
- Donors and World Bank
- NGOs
- Consultants

## Introduction

- **Many cross cutting between options have been identified**
- Option 1
  - Discussed at a general level
  - Concluded that insufficient information available at present to make this recommendation
- Option 2+3
  - Considered as closely interlinked
  - Main focus of discussion
  - Option 3 is a consecutive step of option 2
  - Option 3 is based on prioritization of projects according to minimization of impacts
  - Therefore, it follows a considered process of option 2 in a strategic follow-up process
- Option 4 was considered a sub-component of option 3 in an extreme case

## 1. Decide not to proceed with the mainstream projects

Avoid all mainstream dam development, but can pursue alternatives for power supply and export earnings for the country.

### Overarching

- Clear justification explaining the reasons not to proceed with mainstream dams
  - Implications for deferments (national and regional)
  - Brief prepared by MRC on alternative scenarios for basin development
- Further studies and reports would be needed on:
  - Alternative energy sources (DSM, EE, RE, Decent Power)
  - Recognizing the implications of climate change/ GHG emissions / carbon balance study
  - National revenue alternatives
  - Understanding of implications of tributary development
  - Food security benefits
  - SIMVA (Social Impact Monitoring and Vulnerability Assessment)
  - Integrated Basin Flow Management report published

## 2. Defer a decision on whether or not to proceed

## National

- **Explain the need for deferment**
  - **Fill knowledge gaps (incl. SEA identified gaps) regarding the impacts of mainstream dams**
  - **Evaluate alternatives to mainstream dams**
- All countries should define/update basic principles on key issues (national and regional scale) for dam development
  - sediment,
  - fisheries,
  - benefit sharing country level to local level, and between countries leading to equalization, EIA, SIA...

## 2. Defer a decision on whether or not to proceed

## National

- Specific studies needed on unaddressed issues, for example carbon balances and thermal offsets
- Cumulative impact study of Lancang dams, tributary projects and mainstream dams
- Investigation to acknowledge the extinction of species and its implications
- Countries to agree on institutional mechanisms towards enforcement of agreed principles and monitor the process (national and regional levels)
- Assessment of capacity of national institutions to undertake EIA, SIA

## 2. Defer a decision on whether or not to proceed

## Regional

- Use the deferment time to set up coordinated institutional mechanisms to enforce principles agreed upon
- Further innovation of guidelines for design of dams, including navigation locks, fish migration aids, EIAs and SIAs addressing trans-boundary impacts... and public consultations
- Studies determining magnitude of irreversible biodiversity loss, and feasibility studies to minimize losses through ensuring river and habitat continuity
- Prepare feasibility studies for environmental mitigation measures following up EIA recommendations
- Ensure environmental standards

## 2. Defer a decision on whether or not to proceed

## Regional

- Develop multipurpose operational arrangements and clear operation plans, benefit and ensure compliance
- Link mainstream considerations to significant tributary considerations
- Link BDP to national and regional Power Development Planning
- Release of complete and improved data of mainstream and tributary dams to MRC and other stakeholders, requested through the NMCs, including EIAs, SIAs, Feasibility Studies...
- Discussion defining the PNPCA, establish and details the process, with full agreement from Mekong countries

## 2. Defer a decision on whether or not to proceed

### Regional

- Reinforce safety of dams safeguards
- Prepare clear plans for disaster management
- Coordination with upper riparian countries
  - Jointly carry out studies of Lancang dams (sediment, fisheries...)
  - Reach an operating agreement with China on procedures and management of Lancang dams
  - Coordinate with China on disaster management in the LMB

## 3. Proceed with caution with mainstream development on a gradual phased basis

### National and regional process

- Strategic option 3 follows and merges into option 2
- Start with projects that will incur the least impacts (prioritization approach for mitigation measures to minimize impacts, monitoring impacts, gaining experience)
- Formulation of a process that prioritizes projects according to impacts

## 3. Proceed with caution with mainstream development on a gradual phased basis

### Regional

- Integrate the SEA recommendations into the BDP/regional and national power development plans
- Give emphasis to compliance of safeguards, including trans-boundary impacts
- Special attention to daily water level fluctuations
- Monitoring, data sharing and evaluation as a basic principle
- Ensure compliance with design guidelines

## Group general recommendations

- Use all existing knowledge within the MRC framework and identify issues that need funding
- Recommendations how to address and deal with uncertainties/knowledge gaps
- Elaborate a clear picture on current impacts and those to occur in the near future as a result of projects now under development
  - Combine current and future impacts into basinwide frame
- Studies should be integrated with MRC Strategic Plan 2011-2015
- Full integration of national institutions into conducting studies, and capacity building

## Group general recommendations

- Identifying financiers of these studies
- Consider establishment Mekong Fund, funding: trans-boundary mitigation and benefit sharing for equalization between states; operating arrangements; and possibly the MRC
  - This fund may cover mainstream and significant rivers
  - Establish criteria to manage and disburse the fund
  - Funding sources could include: revenue contributions; country contributions; donor contributions; potentially from carbon financing

## Group recommendations on final SEA

- Clarification from the MRC on the timeframe for release of the final SEA report
- Translation of the final SEA main report into the four regional languages
- Summary publication of the SEA report for the general public in four regional languages and English
  - Dissemination of report to NMCs and donors for discussion and comment
  - Communication of key findings of the SEA to high-level decision makers
  - Consultation and engagement with communities that would be affected
  - Secure sources of funding for these consultations
- Organize public consultations in each country to disseminate findings of SEA

## Group recommendations on final SEA

- Cautionary use of ranking with clear explanation of background, and based on verified data
- Integration of SEA findings into the BDP process for continuity and the MRC programs
  - MRC to ensure a public consultation process, building on the experience and process of the SEA
- SEA information to be used in the PNPCA process

**THANK YOU FOR LISTENING!**