



# Proceedings

## Policy Dialogue on Watershed Management in the Lower Mekong Basin

28 - 30 September 2004  
Vientiane, Lao PDR



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# **Proceedings**

**Policy Dialogue  
on Watershed Management  
in the Lower Mekong Basin**

28 - 30 September 2004  
Vientiane, Lao PDR

**Editors:**

Iris Richter

Timo Menniken

Jeremy Broadhead

**Photos:** Jim Holmes and WSMC

**Design and Layout:** Sabai-dee.com

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# Introduction to the Policy Dialogue







## Introduction to the Policy Dialogue

Herewith you find the documentation of the 1<sup>st</sup> "Policy Dialogue on Watershed Management in the Lower Mekong Basin", held on September 28-30 2004. Two days of dialogue in the conference room of the MRC Secretariat in Vientiane, Laos were followed by a further day of dialogue during the workshop field trip.

The design of the Policy Dialogue was based on the principle of short presentations and ample time for discussion. The aim of the Dialogue was not to make decisions but to collect and discuss ideas, views and experiences. We tried to increase mutual understanding of the actual situation of watersheds and watershed management in the Lower Mekong region as well as identify potential options for further development. As hoped and expected, the event was characterized by open sharing of views, experiences, thoughts and options for future development.

The discussions took place in a stimulating and productive atmosphere and were based on mutual respect and understanding. As the evaluation showed, the majority of the participants appreciated and enjoyed the opportunity to work in small groups, which contrasted with "usual" conference designs, where plenary discussion forms the main forum of exchange.

What had been worked out theoretically in the first two days, was unambiguously proven by reality on the field trip: the sound and responsible implementation of watershed management is not lacking in terms of technique, but institutional framework and resources. The field trip was widely appreciated for delivering impressively clear and astonishingly easy examples of how to preserve watershed functions.

From our point of view, formulation of objectives, collection and exchange of ideas, views and experiences and broadening of mutual understanding have been achieved. We hope that you profited equally from your participation and enjoyed the three days in Vientiane. Please take this documentation as a reminder of the bygone workshop, and, perhaps, as preparation for a second Policy Dialogue.

I thank everybody who assisted in making the Policy Dialogue on Watershed Management a success.

Cornelis van Tuyll

Vientiane, October 2004



# Programme





## Programme

Policy Dialogue on Watershed Management in the Lower Mekong Basin  
Vientiane, Lao PDR, 28 to 30 September 2004

### Day 1 - 28 September

- 09.00 - 09.30 **Opening Ceremony**  
Speeches:
- Dr Vitoon Viriyasakultorn (MRCS)
  - Dr Dao Trong Tu (MRCS)
  - Mr Anonth Khamhung (Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Lao PDR)
- 09.30 - 10.00 **Keynote Address by Dr Olivier Cogels, CEO of MRCS**  
Watershed Management in the Lower Mekong Basin
- 10.00 - 10.30 **Coffee Break**
- 10.30 - 11.00 **Introduction to Dialogue Design and Programme**
- 11.00 - 12.00 **Dialogue Circle 1: On Keynote Address**
- 12.00 - 13.30 **Lunch**
- 13.30 - 14.00 **Introduction to Country Status Reports - Part 1**  
Planning Processes, Implementation Experiences,  
Impact Monitoring
- 14.00 - 15.00 **Dialogue Circle 2A: On Country Status Reports**
- 15.00 - 15.30 **Coffee Break**
- 15.30 - 15.45 **Introduction to Country Status Reports - Part 2**  
Enabling Regulations, Institutional Framework, Capacity Building,  
Financial Mechanisms
- 15.45 - 16.45 **Dialogue Circle 2B: On Country Status Reports**
- 16.45 - 17.30 **Plenary Session**  
Wrap up of Day 1
- 18.30 - 21.00 **Reception Dinner**  
Venue: Lobby of MRCS Building

## Day 2 – 29 September

09.00 – 09.10 Introduction to Day 2

09.10 – 10.30 Presentation of Issue Papers

- Mr John Dore: Transboundary Issues
- Dr Vitoon Viriyasakultorn: Collaborative Approaches in NRM
- Dr Manfred Poppe: Integrated Planning

Each paper presentation followed by:  
**Dialogue Circle 3: On Issues Papers**

10.30 – 11.00 Coffee Break

11.00 – 11.30 Review and Summary of Dialogue Circles 1, 2, 3

11.30 – 12.30 Dialogue Circle 4: On National and Regional Priorities

12.30 – 14.00 Lunch

14.00 – 15.30 Presentation and Discussion of Main Findings on National and Regional Priorities

15.30 – 16.00 Coffee Break

16.00 – 17.00 Plenary Session

- Summary Findings
- Wrap Up + Closing
- Information on Field Trip

## Day 3 – 30 September

07.20 – 17.00 Field Trip to Nam Ton Watershed  
[Start from Novotel at 07.20]

17.00 – 19.30 Boat Cruise on Mekong River  
[Start from Kaolieu Port 8 km upstream of Vientiane]

# Speeches



## **Welcome Address**

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## **Welcome Address**

by Mr. Anonh Khamhung  
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## Welcome Address

At the Regional Policy Dialogue on  
Watershed Management in the Lower Mekong Basin  
By Dr. Dao Trong Tu  
Director of Operation Division, MRCS

Dr. Parisak, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry for Agriculture,  
Dr. Cogels, Chief Executive Officer of MRC,

Distinguished participants from the MRC member countries  
Representatives from various international and bilateral organizations

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is with great pleasure and my honor to welcome you on behalf of InWEnt, the MRC-GTZ Cooperation Programme and MRC to this first Policy Dialogue on Watershed Management in the Lower Mekong Basin. I am happy to see all those participants I know from previous occasions and I am happy to get to know new participants who I never met before. I welcome all of you to this for us important meeting.

We know that each of you has a very tight schedule and that your time is limited. We appreciate the efforts you have undertaken to make yourself available and to come to Vientiane, the beautiful capital of Lao P.D.R. I hope that at the end of the Dialogue you will be satisfied with the decision to participate.

Dear Dr. Parisak, we are very pleased that you could make yourself available during this opening session of the Dialogue. We know about your dedication to the issue of Watershed Management and your experience in this field. We look forward to your continuous support.

We are happy to see you all in this new MRC environment and hope that this new office of the MRC secretariat will facilitate this meeting with the right atmosphere. Just after the relocation from Phnom Penh to Vientiane we welcomed the new CEO of the MRC Secretariate Dr. Olivier Cogels. Dr. Cogels we thank you very much for your personal attendance and your preparedness to deliver the keynote address this morning.

In addition to the participation of representatives of the riparian countries it is a very positive signal that representatives of international and bilateral development organizations are with us. We realize that your input in our regional cooperation is extremely valuable. The issue of watershed management is very complex and challenging.

None of us will be able to solve all questions and issues alone. We need partnerships for a better understanding of the priority issues and for a more efficient and effective process of achieving our common goals. We look forward to the continuation of existing and the establishment of new partnerships.

MRC's 1995 agreement mentions under Chapter III "Objectives and Principles of Cooperation" in Article 1 as Areas of Cooperation: *To cooperate in all fields of sustainable development, utilization, management and conservation of the water and related resources of the Mekong River basin in a manner to optimize the multiple-use and mutual benefits of all riparians and to minimize harmful effects that might result from natural occurrences and man-made activities.*

Based on this understanding Watershed Management is part of the programme of MRC and with that part of the overall cooperation programme. This Dialogue is an expression of the willingness and preparedness for cooperation in this field.

The two days ahead give all of us an opportunity to share views on future developments in watershed management. We will discuss our existing experiences as well as the priority issues to be looked at in the near future. We do not aim for consensus or decisions. We aim for collecting ideas, sharing strategies and concepts and discussing options for immediate priorities. As mentioned before, the issue is complex and only if we share and cooperate we will make achievements. Let us take this opportunity to discuss in a relaxed atmosphere, to learn from each others experiences, to understand views of colleagues from a different professional and organizational background.

The initiative for this policy Dialogue is a joint effort of INnWEnt, the MRC-GTZ Cooperation Programme and MRC. In times where we often speak about partnerships, I am very happy that this Dialogue is an expression and an example of such a partnership. We look forward to a continuation of this partnership and welcome any other partners to join in.

Dear participants, dear friends,  
Once more, we warmly welcome you to this Policy Dialogue within the MRC premises. We hope that the three days will give us interesting discussions assist us in a better understanding of the issues and will lead to a clearer view on steps to be taken. I hope that during these days we will have enough opportunities to catch up with old friends and we will be able to establish new friendships. I wish that this dialogue will be a success and hopefully a starting point for a number of similar occasions over the coming years.

Thank you for your attention.

## Welcome Address

At the Regional Policy Dialogue on  
Watershed Management in the Lower Mekong Basin

By Mr. Anonh Khamhoung

Director General of the Department of Planning, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry

Mr. Chairperson,  
Honorable Delegates and Participants,  
Dear ladies and gentlemen,

First of all, allow me to thank MRC-GTZ and InWEnt to have been so kind in inviting our Lao delegation to attend this very important Policy Dialogue Meeting, under which experiences of watershed management in the four riparian countries and also in China and Myanmar will be shared among concerned stakeholders, encompassing not only policy-makers and technocrats but also representatives of well-known academic/technical and research institutions from within Lao PDR and the Region.

May I take this opportunity also, on behalf of the Lao Delegation, to convey our warmest greetings to all distinguished participants. Today's meeting is among the first important meetings we have had since the formal establishment of the MRC Headquarters in Vientiane. As the country host of this meeting, we feel grateful to see so many of you are attending this Policy Dialogue.

Dear ladies and gentlemen,

A common objective for programmes for sustainable use of natural resources is to seek long-term sustainability for the benefit of the society - usually with the stated aim to improve living conditions for the poorer segments of the society. A major problem that impedes the sustainable utilization of natural resources is the lack of ability, willingness, and/or a functioning institution to address and consider all the multifaceted and different factors that provide the limits and possibilities within which viable options for natural resources management have to be sought.

The issue of sustainable development and management of watersheds are thus very complex and there is no stereotype strategy and approach to address the very diverse development needs of the uplands. To-date, to address the great complexities of upland livelihood and socio-cultural systems, national governments have tried to devise a more holistic approach to sustainable watershed management in the uplands. By integrated approach, we understand an area-based livelihood systems-centered strategy to decentralized and participatory rural development.

Dear ladies and gentlemen,

Integrated watershed development and management in the Lao PDR has long been recognized as the spearhead to eradication of mass poverty and sustainable improvements of the socio-economic well-being of rural people, in the context of rational use of existing forest, land and water resources and is one among the eight national priority development programs of the Lao government. With about 83% of the population living in the rural areas and some 66% relying on subsistence agriculture and the use of non-forest products, the agriculture and forestry development sector remains the pivot of the rural livelihood system.. Moreover, the great diversity of rural livelihood systems implies also that development efforts need to be decentralized to provinces, districts and village communities so that development activities and the management of natural resources are taken up directly by these local institutions.

To align itself to the shift towards a more holistic approach to development, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry has initiated policy and structural adjustments within its entire line of authority, which includes also the process to devolve greater responsibilities for development works to district offices and also to village communities. We will present to you more in detail about the adjustments that took place to-date during the presentation and group discussions.

We are hopeful that the lessons and experiences shared among us during this Policy Dialogue will contribute further more to improve on our Watershed Management Work and Program and will help also to strengthen cooperation between countries in this region. With these final words, allow me to end my Short Introductory Note and wish to all of you a very fruitful meeting.

Thank you.

## Keynote Address

At the Regional Policy Dialogue on  
Watershed Management in the Lower Mekong Basin  
By Dr. Olivier Cogels  
Chief Executive Officer, MRCS

### 1. Introduction

The MRC Vision for the Mekong River Basin is:

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

Sustainable development in the Mekong Basin requires the implementation of **Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM)** at Basin Level:

- in order to make optimal use of the water resources for the benefit of the Mekong People, specially the poor;
- and to protect people and land from harmful effects.

Our understanding of the role of **watershed management** in the Lower Mekong Basin is based on this vision and approach. It is one of the key components of MRC's Agriculture, Irrigation, and Forestry Programme (AIFP) and contributes directly to planning and implementation of IRWM.

Having said this, I would like to begin with three hypotheses:

- a. If we do not improve the framework conditions for watershed management, environmental degradation, poverty and social injustice will increase;
- b. Stakeholders' participation on all levels (horizontally and vertically) is a precondition for successes in watershed management;
- c. Watershed development requires long-term investments and sustainable financial mechanisms; these in turn need favourable and stable political and economic conditions.

I hope that these hypotheses will be discussed during the dialogue circles the two following days.

This presentation covers the following fields of interest:

- Watershed functions, watershed management and sustainable development;
- Watershed management and its balancing role;

- Watershed management policy, planning, implementation and evaluation;
- Watershed management institutions;
- Watershed management data, information and knowledge;
- Watershed management investments.

## 2. Watershed functions, watershed management and sustainable development

We use the following working definition for the term watershed management:

Watershed management is the process of people guiding and organizing water, land and forest resource use in a watershed in order to provide desired goods and services without adversely affecting water, soil and vegetation resources.

Embedded in this concept is the recognition of the ecological interrelationships among land use, soil and water, and the ecological, social and economical linkage between uplands and downstream areas.

Watershed management supports the provision of goods and services and is people oriented. This sustainable provision of goods and services can be regarded as the function of watersheds.

The watershed function is the sustainable provision of goods and services and watershed management is the supporting process for achieving this. Originally the ecological functions of watersheds were looked at most dominantly. Because of the interdependency of the ecological functions with social and economic functions, the latter need equal attention.

Functions	Examples of functions
Ecological functions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision of sufficient water with a minimum required quality.</li> <li>• Provision of minimum water flow over time.</li> <li>• Provision of other goods and services from natural resources like erosion control, soil fertility, biodiversity, clean air, carbon sequestration.</li> </ul>
Economical functions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision of sufficient natural resource products (food, fuel wood, timber, water, fish, (hydraulic) energy required for basic needs of the local population.</li> <li>• Provision of income generating opportunities.</li> </ul>
Social and cultural functions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintenance of social structures.</li> <li>• Protection and development of knowledge and lifestyle arrangements.</li> <li>• Maintenance and revitalisation of cultural identity and values.</li> <li>• Recreational facilities.</li> </ul>

The objective of watershed management is to maintain the watershed functions and with that to contribute to sustainable development in the region. This mechanism presupposes a suitable and supporting policy and institutional framework.

The debate on sustainable development incorporates a number of interesting elements that can be used for a better understanding of watershed management processes. In fact watershed management is a typical and valuable example how to make sustainable development operational.

This vision of sustainable development aims at the future development of countries and the global economy and guarantees greater social justice and ecologically sound natural resources management.

The cross-border exchange of goods, financial capital and information is growing rapidly, moving beyond the reach of political control, and emerging as an entity in itself distinct from human society and the natural environment. This form of globalisation is causing more and more citizens and policymakers to feel uncomfortable. Numerous initiatives undertaken either jointly or separately by state, private sector or civil society actors aim **to place social and ecological checks on the economy that induce actors to comply with certain standards**, thus making a contribution towards sustainable development. (Burger, D. and Mayer, C. (2003)) This is exactly what watershed management is all about. It checks the social and environmental implications of economic activities and decides if these activities are in line with the sustainable development of the specific area.

Sustainable development, understood as a process to harness potentials, is at the same time construed as a normative or ethical principle. The development interests and opportunities of future generations are placed on an equal footing with those of the present generation. This entails an obligation to **manage both natural resources and economic and social resources**, such that future generations encounter a stock of resources that saves them from poverty and offers them opportunities to satisfy their needs and undergo development that are at least equal to those enjoyed by the current generation. (Burger, D. and Mayer, C. (2003))

This vision of sustainable development implies the following dimensions:

- **An all-embracing process:** The nature of the process is such that it embraces all spheres of life, i.e. not only the economy, but also the ecological and social dimensions. All efforts are people-centred. Poverty alleviation is an absolutely essential prerequisite for sustainable development.
- **A situation-specific process:** The subjects of the development process must always find their own path to development, in accordance with the respective ecological, economic, social and cultural conditions that characterise their particular situation.
- **A process of negotiation:** Sustainable development cannot be planned on a technocratic basis, but needs to be negotiated between the civil society, the private sector and the government. (Burger, D. and Mayer, C. (2003), IIED (2001))

### 3. Watershed management and its balancing role

As indicated before, watershed management should not be understood as a specific technique. It is a continuous effort to optimise the provision of the watershed goods and services. Thereby the principle of sustainable development should take effect:

**Balancing the three dimensions of sustainable development - ecological, economical, and social - in a watershed context.**

It looks like a "mobile". Pulling at one end creates disturbances at the other end. Only if no external influences occur the situation will be balanced. It is well known that a standstill is theoretical. In practise always some external factors do influence the system and these influences create the reactions.

Influencing factors for decision making of the stakeholders in the system are for example existing or potential trade and market access, regulative frameworks (policies, guidelines - regulations, various plans, institutions), provision (or lack) of land titles, existing and potential land uses, level of education (awareness, training), changes in natural conditions, population growth, etc. To achieve the right balance a negotiating process between the different interests and viewpoints is necessary.

Negotiations or dialogues should take place on different levels and in different situations. Government with their different relevant sector line agencies, private industry and civil society representatives need to be part of it. All watershed management aspects need these dialogues: policy formulation, institutional support, planning - implementation and monitoring concepts, capacity building programmes. It is the task of watershed management to assure that in these dialogues negative impacts of individual activities on the watershed functions are considered and as much as possible avoided.

In fact the dialogue we organise today and tomorrow can be seen as part of the required regional exchange of views and opinions on how to achieve dialogues and negotiating processes at the regional, national and local level. Based on the 1995 agreement, MRC has a comparative advantage in facilitating and supporting these dialogues and negotiating processes.



## 4. Watershed management

### 4.1 Watershed management policies

Maintenance of watershed functions and the role of watershed management require an adequate policy and regulatory framework. The formulation of a watershed management policy is needed. Watershed management policy should provide guidance to relevant sectoral policies. Relevant policies are those that have an impact or a potential impact on the maintenance of watershed functions. Involved sectors are agriculture, forestry, water resources management, rural development, environment and infrastructure - transport, energy, flood management, etc.

The integration of the watershed management objective in the hierarchy of objectives of all relevant sector policies and regulations is crucial. Watershed management is not to be seen as a separate sector on its own. Watershed management is the responsibility of all involved sectors and this has to be reflected within the various policies.

### 4.2. Watershed management planning

Planning is an important instrument or platform to balance the interest of different stakeholders. Those stakeholders have to be involved which interventions have an impact on the maintenance of the watershed functions. Involvement of government, private sector and civil society organisations on all levels is fundamental.

As different levels of planning we know administrative (national, provincial, district and communal) and geographical (river basin, watershed and catchment) planning systems. For the purpose of the maintenance of watershed functions both systems are suitable, as long as the maintenance of the watershed functions is ensured. Important is the consistency of the different planning systems on the different levels when they are covering similar areas.

Watershed management does not necessarily require separate WSM-plans. If other planning levels are used, be they of sectoral, geographical or administrative nature, maintenance of the watershed functions should be ensured as one of the goals of the planning system.

### 4.3. Implementation

Implementation covers those field activities which have an impact on the maintenance of the watershed functions. They can be of agriculture, forestry, water resources management, infrastructure or similar nature. "Watershed implementation" as a separate technique does not exist. It is a selection of suitable implementation techniques from the various relevant existing sectors in order to ensure the maintenance of watershed functions.

A regional collection of accepted implementation methodologies, techniques and tools will be of great assistance to the individual governmental and non-governmental organisations. MRC can play an active role in establishing and maintaining this collection.

#### **4.4. Watershed management monitoring and evaluation**

The impact of planning and implementation of activities on the maintenance of watershed functions needs to be measured, analysed and discussed in a monitoring and evaluation system. This is a rather complicated issue because of the inter-sectoral nature of the system. Each and every plan with an impact on the watershed functions and all related implementation activities have to be looked at.

Monitoring and evaluation systems are not mainly of a controlling nature, but support to learning and decision-making are at least of equal importance. As the watershed management environment is changing over time, the requirements will change and the options of how to fulfil the requirements will change. Regular feedback into the planning and implementation system is therefore needed.

Regional networks to identify, analyse and discuss best practises, to reassess existing methodologies, instruments and tools as well as conduct capacity building measures play important roles in establishing a state of the art.

### **5. Watershed management institutions**

All aspects of watershed management need the supporting environment of responsible institutions on all levels. Institutions with clear and transparent responsibilities and mandates need to be involved in policy making, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Some of these institutions are in place and well-functioning, several not yet.

Relevant policies clearly have to indicate the responsibilities of the involved institutions. These institutions need an environment that enables them to fulfil their tasks. This includes elements of organisational development, continuous reassessment of the terms of references, capacity building programmes and ongoing budget availability.

As discussed, the environment for watershed management is changing over time. The relevant and responsible institutions have to change in similar dimensions. Organisational development includes continuous change management. Capacity building programmes need to be in place. Regional initiatives can support these programmes efficiently.

## 6. Watershed management data, information and knowledge

Proper decision making requires proper information. To get closer to achieving the vision, an enormous amount of high quality data, information, and knowledge is required. Not only is the collection of these necessary, but the analysis, the valuation, the target group oriented preparation as well as the distribution has to be looked at. Again all of this is a continuous process. The achievement of our vision depends largely on the quality of this data, information, and knowledge management.

The right mix of regional, national and local data, information, and knowledge management is to be looked at. Not more of the same but complementary contributions of the different levels will deliver the quantity and quality that is needed. Because of this a highly efficient and effective network has to be established. Continuous evaluation of the requirements and the impact of the network need to be conducted.

We all know that data, information, and knowledge management means to create a level of transparency of experiences. This is not always comfortable but essential for improvements. Using lessons learned not for accusing people or institutions of blunder, but for proactively shaping future developments should be the common understanding. By sharing lessons learned we develop win - win situations.

MRC considers this issue as being fundamental future successes.

## 7. Watershed management investments and sustainable financial mechanisms

Because of growing pressures on natural resources and increasing environmental degradation, watersheds will not be allowed to regenerate on their own, and natural regeneration processes would not be sufficient to create healthy watersheds by itself over time. Therefore external investments are required to allow for productive and sustainable use of watershed areas. Investors (private industry, insurance companies and investment banks) will base their decisions on favourable and stable conditions. Only if long-term security of their investments can be expected, these investments will be realised.

Watershed management includes clarification of up- and downstream relationships. The balance between give and take needs to be discussed. This is not only an ecological but also very much an economic issue. Innovative financial mechanisms within watersheds and between watersheds have to be established.

## 8. Resume

- Sustainable development in the Lower Mekong region needs the contribution of good watershed management.
- As a cross-cutting issue watershed management provides the necessary platform to balance the interest of the different stakeholders within a watershed context (with a watershed perspective?).
- The negotiating character of watershed management should be recognised and accepted.
- Policy and institutional changes are required to provide favourable framework for sustainable watershed management.
- Necessary financial investments and mechanisms need a favourable framework.

The processes and changes ahead of us will involve many organisations, institutions and individuals. Means and ways of how to do this efficiently and effectively need to be worked out. It is impossible to cover the whole Lower Mekong Basin within a short period of time. We will have to focus on priority problems, areas and sectors. Regional, national and local strategies and concepts need to be checked on complementarities and consistency. Cross-border networks and institutional arrangements will assist in creating win - win situations.

The most relevant capacity building issue is facilitation. As mentioned several times before, Watershed Management mainly focuses on stakeholder's participation and negotiation processes. The facilitation of these processes needs professional support.

To support the necessary changes will be the task for many of us. Only in partnership and in close cooperation with all relevant players, national - regional and international, we can get closer to our common goal: healthy watersheds in the Lower Mekong Basin.

Last but not least MRC is prepared to play an increasingly important role in contributing to watershed management programmes in the basin and in creating win - win situations for all relevant and involved stakeholders.

### References

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# Dialogue Circles



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## Introduction to the Dialogue Circles

### A. Introduction

As the title of the proceedings indicates the workshop focused on "Policy Dialogue" and discussions between participants. As plenary discussions have been of limited use at previous conferences, efforts were made to break up discussions to the fullest extent possible. To create a stimulating atmosphere, five groups of eight or nine participants were formed and, following a short presentation, discussions began. To ensure coherence between various groups "guiding questions" were provided as a focus for discussions. The questions were meant in the form of proposals rather than assignments and participants were encouraged to discuss subjects within the general area of focus that they felt to be important.

### B. Communication Guidelines

Prior to the first Dialogue Circle the moderator Christoph Backhaus introduced a set of communication guidelines, with the overall reminder:

**This is a dialogue, not a negotiation process.**

Objectives were then outlined as follows:

- to promote mutual exchange
- to generate mutual understanding
- to generate new ideas
- to increase appreciation of the ideas and experiences of others

To contribute to these objectives, the following requests were made to participants:

- to speak openly
- not to hold anything back
- to make contributions as subject experts - rather than representatives of organisations or countries
- to provide feedback on the process and atmosphere and if cause for disturbance arises

### C. Structure of the Dialogues

The workshop was divided into four Dialogue Circles.

**Dialogue Circle 1** followed the Key Note Address of the Chief Executive Officer of the Mekong River Commission Secretariat, commenting on the following statements:

- As a cross-cutting issue watershed management provides the necessary platform to balance the interest of the different stakeholders with a watershed perspective.
- The negotiating character of watershed management should be emphasized in comparison to a purely technical approach.

**Dialogue Circle 2** discussed the Country Status Report presentations, guided by the following questions:

- Which of the issues presented are the most critical ones? And how can they be addressed?
- Are there priority issues that have not been mentioned?

**Dialogue Circle 3** was based on the three papers covering (i) integrated planning, (ii) transboundary issues and (iii) collaborative approaches in natural resource management. The following questions were raised

- **INTEGRATED PLANNING:**  
Which level of planning do you consider as most relevant to initiate an integrated planning approach?
- **TRANSBOUNDARY ISSUES:**  
Are high-quality transboundary/regional multi-stakeholder platforms (MSP) possible in the Mekong Region and how?
- **COLLABORATION IN NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT:**  
If collaboration is the way forward to assist different stakeholders to meet their interests/needs and prevent conflicts in a watershed management context, who should initiate this process and how?

The final **Dialogue Circle 4** debated national and regional watershed management priorities. This discussion did not have a specific input, but made reference to the workshop as a whole. While the first three discussions took place in mixed groups, for Dialogue Circle 4, four national and two regional groups were formed. All groups received the same guiding questions with the exception of the first question, which was not addressed by the regional groups:

- What are the priorities that should be addressed to improve the situation in your country?



- What are the priorities to be addressed to improve the situation at the regional level?
- What next steps need to be taken?
- What role can MRCS play?

To assist collation of ideas during the dialogue circles, each group were provided with pin boards on which to attach and display ideas and findings. A facilitator and a rapporteur were appointed to each group. The facilitator was assigned to guide the discussion, whilst the rapporteur recorded and organized ideas and findings on the group's pin boards. For Dialogue Circle 4, the groups were also requested to provide a summary presentation of main outcomes and findings to the plenary. A documentation unit led by Jeremy Broadhead collected information from all the groups and fed it back into the workshop by way of a short presentation.

According to the evaluation and personal feedback collected during the workshop the atmosphere within groups was always positive and stimulating. It was also noted that although discussions within the mixed groups were open and productive manner, the volume in the conference room rose significantly for the country group discussions.

The remainder of the document is intended to serve as an overview of the content of group discussions. The information used is based on results displayed on each of the groups' pin boards, complemented by additional comments from the rapporteurs. For each Dialogue Circle the results of a single group are presented followed by a summary outline of the results of all groups. The summary is identical to that fed back to workshop participants by the documentation unit.

## Dialogue Circle 1

The Dialogue Circle 1 debated the Key Note Address. As an entry point for discussion we extracted two of the main statements from the keynote address and asked the groups to comment on them:

- As a cross-cutting issue watershed management provides the necessary platform to balance the interest of the different stakeholders with a watershed perspective.
- The negotiating character of watershed management should be emphasized in comparison to a purely technical approach.

The first statement generated some controversial discussion. The main issue raised was the question of whether watershed management should be seen as a sector of its own, or be integrated across relevant sectors as a cross-cutting issue. Both approaches found supporters among the participants and, in this context, many groups also asked for clearer definitions of watershed management and related terms. This was especially the case with respect to the terms 'watershed management' and 'integrated water resources management'. Many participants underlined the importance of capacity building especially at sub-national levels and it appeared a common conviction that only by strengthening human resources could watershed management be sustainably integrated into relevant sectors.

The second statement was generally agreed upon, partly due to its general nature, and nobody defined watershed management as a purely technical approach. The speech of Dr Olivier Cogels however, made the point that watershed management is seen primarily as a negotiation process and that watershed management as a technique has a secondary role to play. To trigger discussion more effectively, this point should have been made clearer.

### Example: Findings of Group 1:

#### In response guiding questions:

- Question 1: Agree with statement, but:
  - Likely to function only where economic benefits are clear
  - There is a need to address various issues before watershed management approach becomes applicable
- Question 2: Yes.

#### Remaining Questions:

- Alternatives to watershed management? Is watershed management superior to
  - Landscape approach
  - Ecosystem management
  - Bioregional approach
  - Integrated Water Resources Management (what is the difference?)

- Do current political/ administrative country structures facilitate watershed management?
- How can watershed management be integrated into wider area development approaches?
- Does watershed management require an institutional set-up or is it a tool?

## Further Issues:

- Current watershed management practice means integrated water resources management rather than watershed management.
- Current watershed management practice is sectorally organized and therefore often redundant. WSM in practice often aims to maximize sectoral benefit
- Water resources management is separate from land management.
- Alignment of natural and administrative boundaries should be reinforced.
- Watershed management is typically successful in small local areas.
- Decentralisation is fashionable but capacity and business are lacking.
- Negotiation is crucial to *optimise* results among competing stakeholders who want to *maximize* benefits with respect to their own goals.
- Basin wide establishment of watershed management approaches requires economic feasibility studies.
- The number of interest groups gets progressively larger with watershed size.
- Economic benefits of watershed management need to be realised.

## Visions:

- A technical approach not enough - stakeholder participation essential.
- Stakeholder participation requires capacity building and relevant mechanisms for doing so.
- River Basin organization provides a political and administrative framework for watershed management as a tool.
- Watershed management is a process, which does not end within an implementation period.
- There is a need for incentives for local application of watershed management and transboundary impacts are not sufficiently considered.
- There is a need for upstream-downstream benefit sharing mechanisms (local, national, regional).

## Summary of Dialogue Circle 1

*As a cross-cutting issue watershed management provides the necessary platform to balance the interest of the different stakeholders with a WS perspective:*

1. Watershed management related definitions need to be clarified, e.g. the difference between watershed management (already integrated) and integrated water resources management (to be integrated).
2. Watershed management is complex and has many levels and aspects - clear policies, mechanisms and institutional responsibilities are needed.
  - Watershed management is typically more successful in local areas and benefits are clearer
  - Decentralisation is proceeding but capacity and resources are limited
  - Should new institutions be created or the existing collaboration be improved?
3. Alternatives to watershed management:
  - Is watershed management a tool or an institution of its own?
  - Watershed management will only work where there are economic benefits - economic feasibility studies needed
  - Short term economic focus indirectly destroys watersheds
  - What are mechanisms for compensation and is money available?
4. Within countries, watershed management has not taken root and watersheds are managed sectorally
5. Role of MRC
  - Provide a platform for integration of watershed management and a framework for watershed management as a tool
  - Raise awareness of the importance of watershed management to stakeholders
  - Minimise transboundary impacts
  - Create a platform for integration to take place

*The negotiating character of watershed management should be emphasized in comparison with a purely technical approach.*

1. Generally agreed

## Dialogue Circle 2

The **Dialogue Circle 2** was divided into two sessions according to the thematic areas within the Country Status Reports. **Dialogue Circle 2A** covered the *planning consistencies, implementation experiences* and *impact monitoring*. The **Dialogue Circle 2B** referred to *enabling regulations, institutional framework, capacity building* and *financial mechanisms*.

### Dialogue Circle 2A:

The dialogue Circle 2A centred on two questions concerning the presentation of the Country Status Report:

- Which of the issues presented are the most critical? And how can they be addressed?
- Are there priority issues that have not been mentioned?

The Country Status Reports were produced with the goal of gathering all information available on the status of watershed management in the four countries. Defining the current position should help to identify the needed changes in order to approach the vision formulated and discussed in the first session. In Dialogue Circle 1 this vision received new stimulus and inputs. For this round we wanted to put the Status Report under scrutiny and hoped to derive some common priorities from among the participants.

Again, the issue of human resources received great attention. The lack of connection between planning and implementation was often ascribed to a lack of capacities, especially at the local level, where implementation should take place. While all groups stated that consistency across planning approaches and agencies had to be improved, no such agreement evolved concerning the allocation of responsibilities among the various sectors and levels. It was clear that sub-national levels had to be strengthened but the means and the extent were disputed.

With regard to implementation and monitoring, the current lack of information collection and data sharing was highlighted. Several groups suggested that MRC should become the main facilitator for regional data exchange. Impact Monitoring was identified as being a too isolated activity at the moment. Although impact monitoring is part of the majority of projects, the data and experience collected is seldom linked back to planning and implementation processes.

## Example: Findings of Group 3

### Planning consistencies:

- Integrated planning approaches???
- There is a need to streamline planning approaches
- Steering is necessary at all levels
- Links between different levels of planning should be established
- There is a need for Capacity Building related to integrated planning
- National and provincial planning often neglects local needs
- What can be the role of Civil Society?
- There is a general lack of capacity at local level

### Implementation experiences:

- Data gathering and sharing are not undertaken systematically
- Research coordination is needed
- MRC has to play the central role in regional data and information exchange
- Data is available but not in a format appropriate for decision makers
- There is a need to link information collection and decision-making
- Research activities should be promoted
- Linkage need to be made between sector to share experiences
- A feedback mechanism is needed to link between planning, implementation experiences, and impact monitoring

### Impact Monitoring:

- There is a lack of technical equipment for monitoring
- Budgets are lacking for impact monitoring
- Transboundary impact monitoring guidelines are required

### How to address?

- Investment at all levels for implementation of policies and capacity building
- Enhanced mechanisms for coordination of integrated planning
- Learning from experiences in other countries
- Involvement and empowerment of local people

## Summary of Dialogue Circle 2A

### Planning Processes:

1. Sectoral vs. area based approaches
  - Should watershed management policy coordinate sectors or should watershed management be incorporated into sectoral planning?
  - Capacity building in integrated planning is required
2. Confusion amongst agencies and levels regarding roles
  - Clearer coordination mechanisms are needed
3. Human resources/social issues need greater attention
  - Inputs from local people are needed but management capacity may be limited
4. Planning processes and plan contents need simplification

### Implementation experiences:

1. Implementation often goes ahead without adequate planning and is sometimes contradictory to policy.
2. Institutional capacity and interdisciplinary knowledge are often limited and there is a lack of capacity at the local level
3. There is a lack of data/ data sharing to guide implementation
  - Demonstration of benefits of data collection is needed.
4. Legal framework, political will and incentives area are needed for implementation

### Impact Monitoring:

1. Definition of Impact Monitoring and national level standards required
2. Impact Monitoring should be linked back to policy and objectives
3. Positive and negative impacts of watershed management should be studied in pilot watersheds
4. Investment/ budget allocation required for Impact Monitoring

## Dialogue Circle 2B:

In Dialogue Circle 2B the same questions were applied:

- Which of the issues presented are the most critical ones? And how can they be addressed?
- Are there priority issues that have not been mentioned?

Comments from many participants indicated that a clearer legal and institutional framework is required. Although financial mechanisms were also seen as an important tool for the future, two groups clearly expressed that without comprehensive legislation a specific budget for watershed management cannot be allocated. To guide this process all groups postulated the creation of a new authority. While one group suggested installing a "River Basin Authority" others recommended the establishment of "Watershed Committees" at national, provincial and local levels. One group proposed that watershed management budget should be channelled through these committees.

Upstream-downstream compensation was repeatedly mentioned as a crucial issue. Without compensation and incentive mechanisms local stakeholders could hardly be convinced to participate in processes the results of which they could not foresee. All in all the issues presented in the Country Status Reports reflected the priorities of the participants. However, the discussion often focused on institutional framework, planning processes and capacity building, while the other thematic areas, although still of significance, were seen as subordinate ("downstream") problems.

## Example: Findings of Group 4

### Institutional Framework/Regulations

- Legal mechanisms for cross sectoral integration need to be established (roles/ responsibilities have to be clarified)
- Information, Communication, Coordination and Networking are required
- Conflicting sectoral interests need to be addressed (hydropower, irrigation, forestry)
- There is a need for joint development and a vision involving different sectors
- A "River Basin Authority" could be also an instrument at lower levels (small rivers, catchment)
- Barriers to progress include manpower, finances and transfer of power



## Capacity Building:

- Local institutions need to be strengthened
- Vision for scaling up local approaches/ activities is needed
- Better use needs to be made of local/regional expertise in training
- Appropriate curricula need to be developed
- Research and database facilities are needed

## Financial Mechanisms

- External Funding in some countries is the main source of finance
- Internal financing systems need to be developed
- Trust funds could be established
- "Polluters pay" and "users pay" should be used as a principles

## Summary of Dialogue Circle 2B

### Enabling Regulations:

1. National coordination mechanisms need a legal basis
2. Watershed management is currently donor driven and is therefore not included in national legislation or budgets
3. Guidelines for national watershed management policy and regional cooperation are required
4. Sectoral conflicts need to be resolved and overall watershed management regulations are needed
5. The principles applied in international conventions should be reflected in national legislation

### Institutional Framework:

1. A joint development vision is required to guide individual sectors involved in watershed management.
2. Watershed management committees should be established at national, provincial and local levels
3. One group suggests a "River Basin Authority"

### **Capacity Building:**

1. Training and capacity building is more important than research
2. Local institutions need to be strengthened and watershed management curricula need to be developed
3. Planners awareness of consequences should be raised so that plans reflect long-term realities.
4. Research into upstream-downstream compensation and long term costs/benefits of environmental management is needed
5. Pilot areas should serve as capacity building sites

### **Financial mechanisms:**

1. Legislation is needed before government budget can be allocated to watershed management
2. One group suggests budget should be channelled through national watershed management committees
3. Watershed management is mainly financed by external sources - internal systems are required (trust funds, polluter/user pays)
4. One group suggests that international funding should drive integration for watershed management

## Dialogue Circle 3

As inputs, Dialogue Circle 3 had three issue papers presented on Integrated Planning (Dr. Manfred Poppe), Transboundary Issues (John Dore) and Collaboration in Natural Resource Management (Dr. Vitoon Viriyasakultorn). Each area was addressed by a single question:

- **INTEGRATED PLANNING:**  
Which level of planning do you consider as most relevant to initiate an integrated planning approach?
- **TRANSBOUNDARY ISSUES:**  
Are high-quality transboundary/regional multi-stakeholder platforms (MSPs) possible in the Mekong Region and how?
- **COLLABORATION IN NRM:**  
If collaboration is the way forward to assist different stakeholders to meet their interests/needs and prevent conflicts in watershed management context, who should initiate this process and how?

The discussions on the first paper revealed the same controversies that characterized the dialogue on planning consistencies (2A). Virtually all existing levels were identified as relevant in initiating an integrated planning approach. One of the main questions is the relationship between top-down and bottom-up approaches. While one group suggested starting at the local level and working up to the national level, another group preferred the opposite: initiate planning at the national level and follow through to the lower levels. The idea of transboundary MSPs received doubtful acceptance. All groups generally welcomed the concept of such a platform, but questioned whether it was likely to function owing to limited access to the decision-making levels. Furthermore, it was disputed whether national political systems would allow for such gatherings given their potential influence. Nobody denied, however, that they could be a useful tool to improve the flow and exchange of data and information in the region. MRC was named as a potential facilitator for MSPs.

As most of the groups decided to talk about all three issue papers, they were running short of time when the discussion finally turned to the last presentation. Nonetheless, it was clear that collaboration in natural resource management is highly appreciated despite being appointed to different actors and levels. While one group saw civil society organisations or even universities as relevant initiators in the collaborative process, other groups preferred well known actors, such as MRC or national governments.

## Example: Findings of Group 2

### Integrated Planning:

- Unit of planning should be manageable e.g., sub-basin and more local
- Planning should be a step-wise process from local to national to transboundary
- Planning should consider spatial analysis, development objectives and competing interests and needs and these should be linked to the wider regional context
- The first step should be the development of a plan at the national level according to policy and in view of development objectives.
- Implementation planning should start with minimal objectives rather than many long-term objectives
- The national level must not only initiate but facilitate the planning process from the local levels to facilitate real ownership
- At the local level, community and agencies etc. should fulfil the planning requirements with respect to national initiatives
- Macro (national) and micro (local) level planning must be supportive and complementary

### Transboundary Issues:

- Multi-stakeholder platforms may only be good for sharing concerns but influence and change will take place at the higher political level
- Multi-stakeholder platforms are possible if the concerned countries talk the same "language" on common issues and concerns
- Multi-stakeholder platforms possible ..... BUT!

## Summary of Dialogue Circle 3

Which level of planning is most relevant in initiating integrated planning approaches?

1. National level - in view of development objectives
2. Local level - then work up to national and transboundary levels
3. The level in each country with the existing mandate for planning
4. Intersectoral level
5. River basin level

Are high-quality transboundary/regional multi-stakeholder platforms (MSP) possible in the Mekong Region and how?

1. MSPs will only be useful for sharing concerns, technologies and experience etc. but decision making will take place at higher levels.
2. MSPs possible, if there are common issues and concerns (as in Lower Mekong at present)
3. A third party, in addition to countries and MRC, will be needed to facilitate
4. However, national political systems may not tolerate MSPs

If collaboration is the way forward to assist different stakeholders to meet their interests/needs and prevent conflicts in watershed management context, who should initiate this process and how?

1. Different initiators are needed for national, regional and local levels.
2. In Thailand and Cambodia, NGOs, civil society organisations and universities can initiate
3. National Mekong Committees should lead collaboration related to national basin development plans and watershed management activities.

## Dialogue Circle 4:

For Dialogue Circle 4 the group design was changed to form four country groups and two regional groups. Without specific inputs the groups were asked to discuss national and regional priorities for watershed management based on the presentations and dialogues over the two days of the workshop.

In presenting their results all country groups underlined the importance of capacity building and institutional framework at both the regional and the national level. In line with the country status reports, participants from the countries stated that it was not so much the lack of institutions as the lack of integration and clarity among institutions that posed challenges. Another point identified by all the groups related to data collection. Strengthening of information exchange and development of a regional database were repeatedly proposed.

Nonetheless, every country also came up with specific priority issues. Cambodia, for example, proposed the production of a manual for watershed management planning. Laos emphasized the role of the Basin Development Plan. Thailand suggested creation of a regional multi-stakeholder platform for watershed management and Vietnam mentioned the importance of improving local awareness on watershed management.

Concerning the role of MRC, the countries basically agreed that the organisation should serve as a platform for information exchange, dialogue, capacity building, data collection and should also act as a facilitator in solving transboundary issues.

The regional groups were asked to focus on regional priorities. Clarification of roles and responsibilities as well as scales and measures seemed to be a major concern. In this regard, the relationship between the Basin Development Plan and Watershed Management Component of MRCS was regarded to be especially confusing. To facilitate the allocation of responsibilities among these partners a clearing process concerning the range of scales and their relationships to each other was identified as being potentially useful. Furthermore, it was argued that the links between MRC and other important actors in the region, such as ASEAN and ADB/GMS, had to be improved.

Regarding the role of MRC, its influence and coverage were fundamentally questioned. Referring to a recently published article in the Far Eastern Economic Review the MRCS was characterized as a "paper tiger". Several proposals were made to increase its political weight, including the addition of 3<sup>rd</sup> body or a review of the 1995 agreement. From a regional perspective the four countries were also prompted to review their expectations of MRC.

## Summary of Dialogue Circle 4

### Cambodia Group

#### National Priorities:

- Capacity Building, integrated planning, strengthening data on watershed management, financial support for watershed management.

#### Regional Priorities:

- Coordination and cooperation, monitoring and evaluation of transboundary impacts, BDP.

#### Next Steps:

- Strengthen the national watershed management working group
- Create a manual for watershed management planning
- Establish watershed management pilot projects

#### Role of MRC:

- To facilitate multi-stakeholder platform dialogues
- To develop an Mekong River Basin Manual for watershed management planning
- To test watershed management approaches at experimental watersheds

### Lao PDR Group

#### Priorities and next steps:

- Streamlining existing laws and guidelines into a watershed management framework
- Improving coordination mechanisms
- Capacity building at all levels
- Watershed management model development
- Improving data collection and exchange for impact monitoring

#### Role of MRC:

- MRCS should be a key point for information exchange.
- To link the 2 MRCS components: Watershed Management Component with Basin Development Plan
- To facilitate transboundary processes

## **Thailand Group**

### National Priorities:

- Integrated implementation, continued commitment to actions agreed

### Regional Priorities:

- Create a regional multi-stakeholder platform

### Next Steps:

- Encourage members to accept and utilize inputs from the regional platform
- Capacity building, information sharing

## **Vietnam Group**

### National Priorities:

- Develop a legal basis for watershed management, clarify institutional arrangements, follow-up after planning, capacity building, improve local WSM awareness, develop watershed management database

### Regional Priorities:

- Capacity building, land-use planning assessment, watershed management database

### Next Steps:

- Policy framework, comprehensive assessment of watershed management

### Role of MRC:

- Coordination mechanism in watershed management and other programmes
- Facilitate exchange of experiences and information among countries
- Support in solving transboundary issues



## Regional Group I and II:

### Priorities:

- Clarify relationship between MRC Watershed Management Component and Basin Development Plan
- Clarify confusion over scales - regional, basin, watershed, catchment, sub-basin
- Focus on influence of cross-border trade (e.g. China-Thai Free Trade Agreement) and agribusiness and roads
- Improve links between states, MRC, ASEAN and GMS
- Platform for cross-border learning

### Role of MRC(S):

- Facilitate transboundary planning, dialogue and information collection and exchange
- Support and provide technical assistance on WSM at regional level.
- MRCS is paper tiger in need of political weight, e.g. ASEAN. 1995 agreement needs to be reviewed to increase relevance and effectiveness.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> body (ASEAN?) to add political weight?
- Member states need to ask the question: "what do we want from MRC?"



# Abstracts of Presentations of Issue Papers



## **Transboundary Issues**

by John Dore ..... 53

## **Integrated Planning**

by Dr. Manfred Poppe ..... 55

## **Collaborative Approaches in Natural Resource Management**

by Dr. Vitoon Viriyasakultorn... 57



## Talking about transboundary issues

Summary of Presentation  
By John Dore

The Mekong Region comprises the five countries of Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam - plus China's Yunnan Province. The major river basins of the region - from east to west - are the Irrawaddy, Salween, Chao Phraya, Mekong and Red. There are challenges for the region relating to:

- growth in water and energy demand
- altering of natural flows
- maintaining wetland, riverine and fishery ecosystems

The presentation given to the MRC Watershed Dialogue intended to provide a 'bigger picture' to discussions by focusing on a larger scale than watersheds - that is, the regional scale; and some important contextual issues - such as, the rapid expansion of hydropower in some parts of the region.

Big decisions are being taken in the region involving mega-projects which have major implications for watershed management at all scales. These include Salween hydropower, Lancang hydropower & navigation, GMS/ASEAN power grid, Thailand water grid. The argument made was that there are better ways to talk about these mega-projects - all of which have transboundary impacts. Multi-Stakeholder Platforms (MSPs) have much to offer. MSPs are just one part of governance. The basic principles of an MSP are:

- Actors with either a right, risk or general interest (stakeholders) are identified
- Usually through representatives, invited and assisted to interact in a deliberative forum
- Aiming for all participants to learn, and understand alternative perspectives
- *Possibly* negotiate workably strategies and agreements for proposing to decision-makers

In all the waters of the Mekong Region, local communities, governments, civil society organizations (local, national, regional and international), business interests, donors and international agencies have interests, which they wish represented in governance. Few would claim that historical or current regional water governance is adequate, which partly explains the interest and optimism, of some but not all actors, to make 'genuine' MSPs part of regional governance orthodoxy. There is a hope that using MSPs may contribute to greater transparency, and more informed, and equitable decisions. This is not just a utopian dream. There is an increasing number of examples in Mekong Region countries of promising governance forums in water and water related areas, such as energy and fisheries. At the local/national level these include MSPs about Se San hydropower, Cambodian fisheries law, and community-led research and watershed management.

Proponents of MSPs have no magic formula to sweep away many hurdles which exist for the approach to be more widely tried in the Mekong Region. The political context is not ideal, and there are difficulties and differences of opinion about process which inevitably affects outcomes. Nevertheless, there is positive progress, and more is possible.

## Towards integrated planning for watershed management

Summary of Presentation  
By Dr. Manfred Poppe

The incorporation of watershed management objectives into national and local development planning can be promoted by means of integrated planning at all administrative levels and across national boundaries of the Lower Mekong Region. An essential instrument to pilot innovative approaches to watershed management would be the preparation of integrated territorial development plans that could overcome disjointed decision-making by sectors leading to unwanted development outcomes across the region. Better regional planning is needed so that spatial functions that are important for watershed protection are retained as an essential part of the surrounding development landscape. The consecutive planning steps should be based on the national and local planning systems established at the different administrative levels and aim to firmly integrate development-cum-conservation goals into spatial development plans and programmes.

A brief analysis of the existing planning systems in the four countries, regarding the policy, structure, resources and support for integrated planning, revealed the following characteristics: (*see text box*)

### **Planning structure**

- Multi-level systems of planning are not well defined at present.
- Inter-linkages between more comprehensive strategic planning and sectoral planning and between different planning levels remain superficial.
- Fragmented sector approaches do not support area focused planning.
- This leads to conflicting development strategies because coordination among the socio-economic plans, sectoral plans and physical/land use plans is not taking place.

### **Planning policy**

- Overlapping legal regulations, policies and guidelines at central and local level prohibit inter-sectoral coordination.
- An integrated spatial planning policy at national and local level is not emphasized.
- Area-based policy interfaces between levels and sectors are missing.

### **Planning resources**

- Centralized control over financial resources impacts that central policies and programs tend to dominate over local level approaches.
- Low level of professional planning competence at national and local levels, requiring 'systemic' capacity building.

### **Planning support**

- No institutions with the mandate and capacity to enforce planning and development control exist.
- Widespread ad-hoc decision making on development without reference to spatial frameworks that guide development.

It is evident that all four countries require more "integrated planning", i.e. a holistic planning approach based on a commonly accepted set of inter-sectoral spatial development objectives in order to promote watershed management. Area-based should integrate development-cum-conservation goals into national and local development plans and programmes.

Integrated planning should follow actual decentralization and deconcentration policies which provide opportunities for new arrangements such as innovative forms of collaboration between national and local agencies, horizontal networking and coordinated strategies for area development.

Area-based planning aims to establish integrated spatial development objectives which assign priorities to alternative strategies and actions. The objective is to create inter-linkages between different streams of planning at each level through a dialogue process that involves all stakeholders. A planning strategy that facilitates negotiation of different interests is strongly needed at each level and between different territories, levels and sectors. Appropriate fiscal authority must be delegated to local authorities to enable them to fulfil their roles in planning and managing area development.

Summarizing, spatial planning can promote watershed management objectives through the strengthening of concrete watershed functions in spatial development strategies. It supports the assimilation of watershed management in the objectives of all sector plans. Planning approaches hence should view spatial development processes and related institutional reforms and capacity building in an integrated manner. Institutional constraints could be reduced by creating appropriate incentives for mutual coordination under a policy- and area-based fiscal management framework.



## Collaborative Approaches in Natural Resource Management

Summary of Presentation  
By Dr. Vitoon Viriyasakultorn

During the cold war era national and international security was mainly understood as the absence of military conflicts. Threats were defined as being military by nature. In the last decade however, research focused more and more on so called non-traditional security issues. These comprise such diverse fields as economic stability, cultural heterogeneity, ecological vulnerability and last but not least Natural Resources Conflict.

Conflict over natural resources has generally been defined by environmental problems: land use, natural resource management, water resources, forestry, energy, air quality, toxicity, and mineral resources. The problems include local but also international environmental changes such as global warming, the ozone layer, and acid deposition, mainly due to boundary nature.

The nature of environmental conflicts can be defined by the following traits:

- a. Conflict is a result of scarcity or decreasing quality and represents social struggles against uneven usage and allocation of resources;
- b. Environmental conflict reflects poor performance by governments in developing complex public policy;
- c. Environmental conflict involves the issues of power and rights;
- d. Environmental conflict is an inevitable consequence of development and can be constructive.

Translated to the watershed context in the Mekong Basin this means that with continuing population pressure and ongoing degradation of natural resources conflicts within and between populations of watersheds are more likely to occur. On the other hand, if environmental conflict is seen as an inevitable consequence of development, underlining the constructive potential, arising disputes over natural resources can also be taken as a chance to develop comprehensive collaboration principles and mechanisms.

True collaboration is a process in which two or more stakeholders with different interests in a common problem explore and work through their differences together in search for solutions of mutual gain. Under some circumstances, local stakeholders are pressured or manipulated into cooperation. This is not collaboration, but coercion, which creates an environment in which conflict will inevitably emerge.

Research in this area has shown that, for stakeholders to be willing to work together in managing natural resources or to participate in managing a conflict, they need to believe that:

- Collaboration will produce positive outcomes
- Other options for achieving solutions will not serve their interests
- It is possible to reach fair agreement in resource management among multiple stakeholders
- There is capacity among the stakeholders to participate in collaborative management
- Other key stakeholders will agree to participate

Collaborative programs are appropriate when:

- An issue is complex
- Many parties are interested or affected
- No single agency or organization has complete jurisdiction
- Parties are willing to participate

Watershed management aims at balancing the three dimensions of sustainable development - ecological, economical and social - in a watershed context. To achieve the tight balance a negotiating process between the different interests and viewpoints is necessary.

Thus, to collaborate is to negotiate.

# List of Participants





## Cambodia

### Warwick Browne

Oxfam America East Asia  
MRBM Regional Program Officer  
Email: wbrowne@oxfamamerica.org

### Chay Sakun

Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries  
Deputy Director of Department of Planning, Statistics and International Cooperation  
Email: chaysakun@yahoo.com

### Ken Serey Rotha

Ministry of Environment  
Department of Nature Conservation and Protection  
Deputy Chief of Department of Nature Conservation and Protection  
Email: sereyrotha@everyday.com.kh

### Theng Tara

Ministry of Water Resources Management & Conservation  
Director of Department of Water Resources Management & Conservation  
Email: taratheng@ccttnet.com.kh

### Sok Khom

Cambodia National Mekong Committee  
Programme Officer, EP, CNMC  
Email: khom@cnmc.gov.kh

### Ty Sokhun

Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries  
Forestry Administration  
Director  
Chairman NWG

### Min Bunnara

MRC-GTZ Cooperation Programme  
Country Coordinator  
Email: bunnara@mrcmekong.org

### Christoph Backhaus

MRC-GTZ Cooperation Programme  
Moderator  
Email: chris.backhaus@online.com.kh

### Iris Richter

MRC-GTZ Cooperation Programme  
Information Management Officer  
Email: richter@mrcmekong.org

## Germany

### Lueder Cammann

InWent, Feldafing/Germany  
Senior Project Manager  
Email: lueder.cammann@inwent.org

### Thomas Petermann

InWent, Zschortau/Germany  
Senior Project Manager (WSM)  
Email: thomas.petermann@inwent.org

### Friederike von Stieglitz

GTZ  
Planning and Development Department  
Senior Planner  
Email: Friederike.Stieglitzvon@gtz.de

### Peter Hilliges

KfW  
Protection on Natural Resources Division Asia  
Vice President  
Email: peter.hilliges@kfw.de

### Manfred Poppe

Plan Dialog  
Consultant  
Email: Manfred.Poppe@plandialog.de

## Lao P.D.R.

### Anonh Khamhung

Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry  
Department of Planning  
Director  
Chairman NWG  
Email: sysanhouth@yahoo.com

### Sourasay Phoumavong

LNMC  
Deputy Director General  
Email: sourasay@yahoo.com

### Phoumy Vongleck

Prime Minister Office  
Director General of Department of National Land Use Planning and Development  
Email: prongleck@hotmail.com

**Bounthong Bourhom**

National Agriculture and Forestry Research Institute

Acting Director

Email: bounthong@yahoo.com

**Thongphan Latanalangsy**

Provincial Forestry and Agriculture Office

Vientiane Capital

Staff of Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Office

**Christian Valentin**

National Agriculture and Forestry Research Institute

Project Coordinator of MSEC

Email: c.valentin@cgiar.org

**Edvard M Baardsen**

Asian Development Bank

Lao Resident Mission

Deputy Head of Mission

Email: ebaardsen@adb.org

**Peter-John Meynell**

UNDP

UNDP-IUCN-MRC Wetland Programme

Team Leader

Email: mekongwetlands@iucnlaos.org

**Sengkham Inthiravongsy**

MRC-GTZ Cooperation Programme

Country Coordinator

Email: sengkham@mrcmekong.org

**Jens Kallabinski**

GTZ

Rural Development in Mountainous Areas in Northern Laos

Programme Coordinator

Email: jens.kallabinski@gtz.de

**Rod Lefroy**

International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT)

Regional Coordinator

Email: r.lefroy@cgiar.org

**Alfred Birch**

Nam Ngeum River Basin Development Sector Project

Deputy Team Leader/IWRM Specialist

Email: alfbirch@generalmail.com

**Kingkham Manivong**

Water Resources Coordination Committee

Head of Policy Unit

**Bounkouang Souvannaphanh**

Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry

Deputy Director of Planning Department

**Olivier Cogels**

MRCS

Chief Executive Officer

Email: cogels@mrcmekong.org

**Dao Trong Tu**

MRCS

Operation Division

Director

Email: trongtu@mrcmekong.org

**Vitoon Viriyasakultorn**

MRCS

Agriculture, Irrigation and Forestry Programme

Programme Coordinator

Email: vitoon@mrcmekong.org

**Muanpong Juntopas**

MRCS

Basin Development Plan

Social Economist

Email: mjuntopas@mrcmekong.org

**Hans Guttman**

MRCS

Environmental Programme

Coordinator

Email: guttman@mrcmekong.org

**Wolfgang Schiefer**

MRCS

Chief of Programme Coordination Section

Email: schiefer@mrcmekong.org

**Uchiumi Susumu**

MRCS

Agriculture, Irrigation and Forestry Programme

Programme Officer

Email: uchiumi@mrcmekong.org

**Manfred Hans Saab**

MRCS

Basin Development Plan

Senior River Basin Planner

Email: manfred@mrcmekong.org

**Cornelis van Tuyll**

MRCS

Agriculture, Irrigation and Forestry Programme

MRC-GTZ Cooperation Programme

Programme Coordinator

Email: tuyll@mrcmekong.org

# List of Participants

## Christoph Feldkoetter

MRCs  
Agriculture, Irrigation and Forestry Programme  
MRC-GTZ Cooperation Programme  
Technical Advisor  
Email: cfeldko@mrcmekong.org

## Timo Menniken

MRCs  
Agriculture, Irrigation and Forestry Programme  
MRC-GTZ Cooperation Programme  
Junior Consultant  
Email: t.menniken@gmx.de

## Jeremy Broadhead

MRCs  
Agriculture, Irrigation and Forestry Programme  
MRC-GTZ Cooperation Programme  
Consultant  
Email: jeremybroadhead@yahoo.co.uk

## John Dore

IUCN  
Water & Nature Initiative (WANI)  
Regional Water & Wetlands Program (RWWP)  
Coordinator for Asia  
Email: johndore@iucnt.org

## Juergen Koch

GTZ  
Country Director  
Email: Juergen.Koch@gtz.de

## Sergio Feld

UNDP  
Policy Advisor, Environment  
Email: Sergio.feld@undp.org

## Thailand

### Kasemsum Chinnavaso

Office of Natural Resources and Environmental  
Policy and Planning  
Deputy Secretary General  
Email: chinnava@oepp.go.th

### Pakawan Chufamane

TNMC  
Director of Mekong Affair Branch  
Email: pchufamane@yahoo.com

### Surat Thawachwiboon

Department of Water Resources  
Senior Policy and Planning Analyst  
Email: surat\_thawachwiboon@yahoo.com

### Nipon Thangtham

Kasetsart University  
Faculty of Forestry  
Watershed Management Expert  
Email: ffornt@nontri.ku.th

### Vanchai Viranan

MRC-GTZ Cooperation Programme  
Country Coordinator  
Email: vanchai@mrcmekong.org

## Vietnam

### Nguyen Hong Toan

Vietnam National Mekong Committee  
Secretary General  
Email: vnmc-ppmd@hn.vnn.vn

### Vu Hong Chau

Water Resources Planning Institute  
Deputy Director  
Email: vhchau49@yahoo.com

### Nguyen Ba Ngai

Vietnam Forestry University  
Head of Scientific Management and International  
Cooperation Division  
Email: ngai-xm@hn.vnn.vn

### Eric Coull

WWF International  
WWF Indochina Programme  
Representative  
Email: Eric@wwfvn.org.vn

### Pham Thi Thuy Co

MRC-GTZ Cooperation Programme  
Country Coordinator  
Email: thuyco@mrcmekong.org









**Mekong River Commission Secretariat**



**InWEnt**  
Capacity Building International, Germany



**Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) GmbH**  
MRC-GTZ Cooperation Programme  
Watershed Management Component (WSMC)

**Contact:**

**MRC-GTZ Cooperation Programme**  
**Watershed Management Component (WSMC)**  
c/o Mekong River Commission Secretariat  
P.O. Box 3802  
Vientiane  
Lao PDR  
Phone: (856) 21 263263 - 284 ext.4076  
Fax: (856) 21 263263 - 284 ext.4077  
Email: [wsmc@mrcmekong.org](mailto:wsmc@mrcmekong.org)