LESSONS LEARNT FROM THE CURRENT BDS AND APPROACH TO PREPARING THE BDS 2021-2030 AND SP 2021-2025

THE 9TH MRC REGIONAL STAKEHOLDER FORUM
DAY 2: PREPARATION OF BASIN DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2021-2030 AND MRC STRATEGIC PLAN 2021-2025
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Part 1

Lessons learned in implementing the current Basin Development Strategy

The implementation of the BDS 2016-2020 resulted in a number of important lessons. They have been used to prepare the BDS 2021-2030
A focus on traditional basin planning is not sufficient

• During 2016-2020, communities in various parts of the Mekong River Basin were confronted with unusual or rapidly changing flow conditions and water-related emergencies (including a dam breach)

• In most cases, it took too long for national and regional water management agencies to clearly communicate to the public what was happening and how they were responding to the situation

• With increasing development and erratic climate events, the number of water-related incidents is likely to rise

• Since many incidents may have transboundary impacts, river basin coordinators (such as the MRC) will NEED to focus increasingly on coordination of basin management and operational issues
Reactive regional planning is likely to lead to sub-optimal outcomes

• Regional planning that only assesses impact of existing national plans, and recommends not implementing certain projects, is unlikely to be accepted by national governments:
  ➢ **NEED** to offer also other possible options and projects

• While MRC has succeeded in working with countries to change the design of some infrastructure projects to minimize negative impacts, current national plans have not been changed over several MRC planning cycles

• This is largely due to a failure to identify a regional plan capable of producing higher regional benefits and lower regional costs

• Breaking this cycle of only reacting to established plans, to proactively identify alternative pathways that achieve higher benefits across sectors and between countries, is critical to the Mekong River Basin vision
The scope of issues and challenges faced by basin countries is basin-wide

• The development of basin water resources is having increasingly evident transboundary effects. This is illustrated in rapid water level fluctuations, diminished sediment flows, and a change in the annual hydrograph

• Future developments, including for flood and drought risk reduction, will further augment these changes

• Managing these changes in the most effective way possible can only be done through:
  ➢ Cooperation between all six riparian countries,
  ➢ Requiring a strategy applicable to the entire basin and
  ➢ To guide the actions of all relevant actors towards common goals.
Better use could be made of existing data

• A substantial amount of data has been collected over many years by the Member Countries and the MRCS

• However, the value of this data is limited without effective data management systems and tools in place

• A lack of integration and harmonisation between regional and national systems introduces inefficiencies and difficulty accessing information and data when it is needed.

• The application of new technology is part of the solution:
  ➢ Using compatible and modern decision support systems (DSS)
  ➢ Connected to monitoring stations, earth observation data providers, and other data centres to support water management
Examples of water resources development and management products that a modern DSS can support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Solutions</th>
<th>Hours</th>
<th>Days</th>
<th>Months</th>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Decades</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• On-line monitoring</td>
<td>• Hydrology assessments for water usages</td>
<td>• Assessment of development scenarios and projects</td>
<td>• Infrastructure development</td>
<td>• Water and environmental planning</td>
<td>• Climate change adaptation</td>
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<td>• Flash flood forecasting</td>
<td>• Reservoir operation</td>
<td>• Reservoir sedimentation management</td>
<td>• Water and environmental planning</td>
<td>• Reservoir operation</td>
<td>• Water quality management</td>
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<td>• Real-time control</td>
<td>• Water allocation</td>
<td>• Drought management</td>
<td>• Reservoir operation</td>
<td>• Water allocation</td>
<td>• River sediment management</td>
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<td>• Emergency management</td>
<td>• Seasonal forecasting</td>
<td>• Reservoir sedimentation management</td>
<td>• Water allocation</td>
<td>• Reservoir operation</td>
<td>• Reservoir sedimentation management</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Flood forecasting and early warning</td>
<td>• Drought management</td>
<td>• Reservoir sedimentation management</td>
<td>• Reservoir operation</td>
<td>• Water allocation</td>
<td>• Reservoir sedimentation management</td>
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<td>• Navigation guidance</td>
<td>• Reservoir sedimentation management</td>
<td>• Optimization of hydropower operations</td>
<td>• Water allocation</td>
<td>• Reservoir operation</td>
<td>• Reservoir sedimentation management</td>
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<td>• Repository of water-related data</td>
<td>• Annual water accounts</td>
<td>• Annual water accounts</td>
<td>• Water allocation</td>
<td>• Reservoir operation</td>
<td>• Reservoir sedimentation management</td>
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</table>

Examples of water resources development and management products that a modern DSS can support.
An alternative approach to decentralised monitoring is necessary

• The approach to the decentralisation of core river basin function monitoring activities over 2016-2020 focused on the handover of both:
  ➢ the operational aspects of data collection, processing and analysis
  ➢ and the financial responsibility for those activities to individual implementing agency budgets within Member Countries

• This approach has been found to be unsustainable and requires a re-think. A better approach would involve:
  ➢ the complete decentralisation of data collection functions, while
  ➢ maintaining a regional approach to the management of a core monitoring network for the mainstream with financial support provided by Member Country contributions to the MRC budget
The strategies and action plans of all relevant actors need to be aligned to achieve the BDS Outcomes

• To achieve the basin vision and goals, **ALL water resource management actors** need to be working towards **common objectives**

• Without this **alignment**, the BDS outcomes can only ever be partially achieved

• The MRC Strategic Plan 2021-2025 is therefore fully integrated through its **results chain** with the BDS and the impact pathway from activity to outcome is more fully described *(vision ➔ strategic priorities ➔ outcomes ➔ outputs ➔ activities)*

• The contribution to BDS outcomes by **other regional organizations and initiatives** has been more explicitly identified
Need to inform the public in a timely manner

• **Unbalanced, biased and incorrect statements and journalism** on water-related issues in social and other media are an increasing concern for the basin countries and the MRC

• **Misinformation is contributing to conflicting perceptions** across stakeholder groups, feeding mistrust and affecting regional relations

• To mitigate this situation, MRCS, in collaboration with key actors, such as MLC Water Center and basin countries, **NEED to provide**:
  - timely factual and even-handed information in traditional and social media on the actual situation in the basin
  - the **causes of changes** and possible impacts
  - and how they are responding to unusual water-related issues
Country-to-country capacity building could be improved

• The **capacity** of some countries to effectively oversee the large-scale water infrastructure being developed and operated in their territories is **insufficient**

• This capacity **needs to be urgently developed** to ensure that the infrastructure is in good condition when concession agreements come to an end (and loans are repaid) and greater economic benefits to the countries can be realised

• There is also a need for increased **capacity in planning and management** of many water-related sectors

• Different human and technical capacity among basin countries provides an opportunity for greater use of **country-to-country knowledge sharing** and capacity building
Part 2
Approach to preparing the BDS 2021-2030 and the SP 2021-2025
Purpose of the BDS 2021-2030

• The BDS sets out how water and related resources of the Mekong River Basin will be utilised, managed and conserved over the period 2021-2030

• For the 4 Lower Mekong River Basin countries the BDS is in-line with their commitment to the 1995 Mekong Agreement

• The BDS is consistent with the objectives of the Mekong-Lancang Cooperation (MLC) in the area of water cooperation, involving all 6 basin countries
Preparation of BDS 2021-2030

General Approach

• Development of a narrative of the Basin Vision toward 2040

• Based on the Vision, 10-year strategic priorities and outcomes (2021 - 2030) and outputs (2021-2025) are developed to achieve the vision

• The MRC, through implementation of its Strategic Plan, will deliver many BDS Outputs at the regional level

• The LMB countries will prepare a National Indicative Plans (NIP) to implement the BDS at the national level, capturing the benefits from regional cooperation
Approach to develop BDS 2021-2030

• Progress made in implementing strategic priorities of BDS 2016-2020
• Status and trends of the basin based on the 2018 MRC State of Basin Report
• Scenario assessments of the MRC Council Study to understand the trade-offs to develop a 20-year shared vision and shape the 10-year strategic priorities
• National and regional perspectives and alignment between them
• Strategic priorities of MRC Sectoral Strategies including MASAP, BFMS, Navigation Masterplan, SHDS, DMS, SBEM
• A review of water-related strategies and plans of regional organizations, initiatives and programmes, and mapping of priority areas relevant to achieving BDS outcomes
• Contributions from member countries, dialogue partners, development partners, other cooperation mechanisms, private sector and broader stakeholders
Contents of BDS 2021-2030

1. Introduction
2. Water resources management and development
3. Trends & long-term outlook: environment, social, economic and climate change
4. Strategic needs, risks and responses
5. Basin development pathway
   • Vision toward 2040
   • Sustainable development opportunities toward 2030
   • Sustainable development goals (SDGs)
   • Strategic priorities for basin development & management toward 2030
   • Basin Development Strategy results chain: outcomes and outputs
6. Implementation of the Strategy
Purpose of SP 2021-2025

This SP sets out how the MRC will implement the BDS and strengthen the organization over the next five years:

• The MRC will coordinate the implementation of the BDS and deliver many of its Outputs, some of which in cooperation with other regional cooperation networks

• The MRC will implement an organisational development plan to:
  ➢ Strengthen the MRC (organization and operations)
  ➢ support national implementation of core river basin management functions and
  ➢ transition towards regional planning and management processes that are embedded in the national planning, decision-making and governance systems, and funded by the basin countries
Approach to preparation of MRC SP 2021-2025

• This SP is fully aligned with the BDS 2021-2030

• The SP extends the BDS strategic priorities, outcomes and outputs with activities, required resources, and implementation arrangements

• Besides the BDS, the SP will take into account:
  ➢ The recommendations from the mid-term review of the SP 2016-2020
  ➢ The institutional direction established by the MRC Decentralization Roadmap
  ➢ Contributions from member countries, dialogue partners, development partners, other cooperation mechanisms, broader stakeholders
Process

Preparation
- Internal MRCS meeting
- EGBP Meeting
  * Concept note & TORs of IEs & NAs
- On board of IEs and NAs
- Working session of IEs & NAs
  * Guidance note
- * Draft chapters 1, 2 & 3
- * Paper on national perspectives
- National meetings
  * SWOT
  * Stakeholder Forum

Formulation
- National meetings
  * 1st draft BDS & SP
  * *Pre-draft BDS
  * EGBP meeting
  * *1st draft BDS & SP

Finalization
- National meeting
  * 2nd draft BDS & SP
  * Address final concerns from MRC Joint Committee and Council in the final BDS & SP
  * *2nd draft BDS & SP
  * EGBP & EGSP meeting
    * *Finalizing draft BDS & SP

Approval
- * Final draft BDS & SP
  * Debriefing to JC & Council Members by CEO
  * Approval by JC & Council
  * Publications

Timeline:
- May 2019
- June 2019
- Aug 2019
- Sep 2019
- Oct 2019
- Nov 2019
- Dec 2019
- Jan 2020
- Feb 2020
- Mar 2020
- Apr 2020

Key Dates:
- 49th MRC JC Meeting
- 26th MRC Council Meeting
- 50th MRC JC Meeting

Note:
- IEs: International Experts, including Development Planner and Environmental Planner
- NAs: National Advisors (one from each member country of Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Viet Nam)
Thank you