

Briefing Notes Package
Council Study Start-up Workshop/3rd RTWG Meeting
12-14 November 2014
OSV, Vientiane

This briefing notes package provides the participants a summary of what to expect and the synopsis of the agenda topics of the upcoming Startup Workshop and 3rd RTWG Meeting. The briefing note is organized into the following topics:

- Work Plans and Staffing Plans (Day 1)
- DRIFT Assessment Methodology Framework (Day 2)
- Coordination and Progress Monitoring Through MRCS Coordinating Group (Day 3)
- Council Study Inception Report (Day 3)
- Status Updates of Selected Technical Topics (Day 3)

Work Plans and Staffing Plans (Day 1)

What to Expect

The Council Study Consolidated Work Plan and Individual Work Plans and Staffing Plans by the Thematic and Discipline Teams will be presented during the Startup Workshop. The Thematic Teams will also participate in a working group session during the Startup Workshop to discuss immediate tasks on the critical path such as the formulation of the water resources development scenarios for each of the thematic areas/sectors. **The Member Countries are requested to participate during the working group discussion and provide some guidance and recommendation on data sources and expertise available from the respective countries to help in formulating the development scenarios.**

In parallel, the Discipline Teams will also participate in a separate working group session to further discuss and refine their technical activities within the context of the entire assessment process. It is expected that through this work group session, gaps in data and activities are discovered and resolved, technical and data sharing/transfer coordination requirements between the assessment teams are further understood, expert resources are identified, and proposed schedule reviewed and adjusted if necessary. **The Member Countries are requested to participate during the working group discussion and provide any feedback on the methodology and availability of national experts to provide technical expertise and support in the assessment process.**

Synopsis

The work plans and staffing plans are developed according to the Council Study's TOR and the Inception Report. The overall approach is designed to take advantage of the expertise, and past and current studies and activities of MRCS's various Programmes. The Council Study Team is divided into several Thematic Teams and Discipline Teams, each of which is led by a Programme. The Teams will work together to achieve the desired outcomes, outputs, and deliverables of the Council Study according to the overall approach as illustrated in Figure 1 and as described below:

- Each Thematic Team (**Irrigation, Agriculture/Land Use, Hydropower, Flood Protection, Domestic and Industrial Water Use, and Navigation**) formulates the water-resources development scenarios.
- The **Cumulative Assessment Team** formulates the cumulative development scenarios in conjunction with the various Thematic Teams.
- The **Hydrologic Discipline Team** performs the hydrologic and hydraulic assessments of the baseline scenario and for each development scenario for each Theme, and documents results in a Technical Report and Working Papers, including providing relevant sections for the individual Thematic Reports and cumulative Report;
- The **Biological Resource Discipline Team** performs the biological-resource assessment and document results in a Technical Report and Working Papers, including providing relevant sections for the individual Thematic Reports and cumulative Report;
- The **Socio-Economic Discipline Team** performs the socio-economic assessment and document results in a Technical Report and Working Papers, including providing relevant sections for the individual Thematic Reports and cumulative Report;
- The **Macro-Economic Discipline Team** performs the macro-economic assessment and document results in a Technical Report and Working Papers, including providing relevant sections for the individual Thematic Reports and cumulative Report;
- The **Climate Change Discipline Team** will provide technical support to the Discipline Teams to account for climate change impacts during the assessment; and to all the teams in preparation of the various Thematic Reports, Technical Reports and Working Papers, including providing relevant sections for the individual Thematic Reports and cumulative Report.
- The **Thematic Teams** will prepare the Thematic Reports and incorporate the assessment results provided by the Discipline Teams from their Technical Reports.
- The **Cumulative Assessment Team** will prepare the Cumulative Assessment Report and incorporate the cumulative assessment results provided by the Discipline Teams from their technical reports primarily based on the results of the cumulative scenarios.

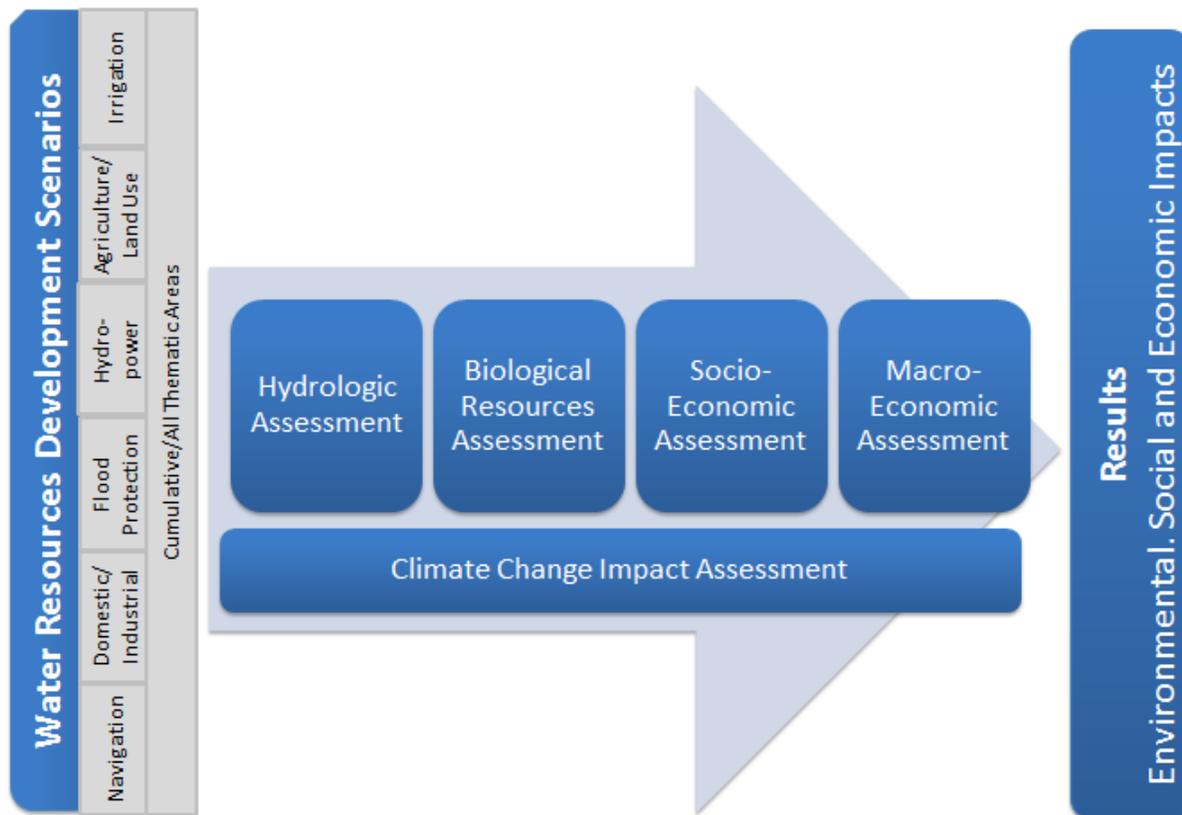


Figure 1. Council Study Overall Approach and Process Flow.

The Gantt Chart in Figure 2 shows the remaining overall schedule for the Council Study. The schedule is based on completing the Study by the end of 2015 and finalizing the recommendations by March 2016 consistent with the original plan. The schedule includes tentative target dates for conducting RTWG meetings, regional stakeholder meetings, and national consultations.

It is recognized that the proposed overall schedule is very tight and the successful completion of the Study according to this proposed schedule will depend on **several milestones on the critical path** such as the following:

- Recruitment of international/regional/national consultants (November 2014 – February 2015).
- Formulation of Development Scenarios (December 2014 – February 2015). The formulation of development scenarios requires meaningful and timely participation of national experts/consultants from the Member Countries to provide national knowledge, and to support the collection and compilation of national data and development plans.

- Selection of Baseline (January – February 2015). Timely agreement on what baseline period to choose for the baseline is required to be able to start the hydrologic assessment on schedule.
- DSF Model Setup (January – February 2015). The MRC DSF models will be used for the hydrologic assessment. The Council Study is highly dependent on its timely setup and configuration. Considering that IKMP is responsible for maintaining and configuring the MRC DSF models, the Council Study will impose a significant burden on the Programme. It is also recognized that MRC DSF’s ability to simulate sediment transport and water quality is limited and may have to be supplemented by other models. The decision on what model to use and how it will be linked with the MRC DSF should be completed on time.
- Data for Biological Resource Assessment and Socio-Economic Assessment (March 2015 – November 2015). The biological resource and socio-economic assessment will primarily be based on existing data such as past and current biological and habitat monitoring, fish survey, demographic and other socio-economic surveys such as those completed for SIM/VA and data that may be available directly from the Member Countries. Limited data collection and survey may be obtained during site visits. Neither time nor budget is allocated for additional extensive data collection.
- Consultation with Member Countries and RTWG (Continuous). While several RTWG meetings are planned, it will be necessary to consult with Member Countries between the RTWG meetings. This will be done primarily through email but additional meetings addressing specific technical issues are also envisioned.

Num	Tasks	2014			2015												2016		
		Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
0	Study Management and Coordination																		
1	Detailed Work Plans and Staffing Plans																		
2	Consolidated Work Plan and Staffing Plan																		
3	Startup Meeting/ 3rd RTWG Meeting (Nov 12-14, 2014)		*																
4	Recruit Team Personnel																		
5	Formulate Development Scenarios																		
6	Assess Direct Socio-Economic Impacts																		
7	Assess Hydrologic Impacts																		
8	Assess Bioresource Impacts																		
9	Assess Indirect Socio-Economic Impacts																		
10	Scoping of Macro-Economics Study																		
11	Assess Macro-Economic Impacts																		
12	Assess Climate Change Impacts																		
13	Assess East Seas Coastal Area Impacts																		
14	Prepare Technical Reports																		
15	Prepare Thematic Reports																		
16	Perform Closeout Activities																		
17	1st Stakeholder Meeting (Dec 15-19, 2014)				*														
18	2nd Stakeholder Meeting (July 2015)										*								
19	Final Stakeholder Meeting (March 2016)																		*
20	4th RTWG Meeting (April 2015)								*										
21	5th RTWG Meeting (November 2015)													*					
22	Final RTWG Meeting (March 2016)																		*
23	National Consultations			*						*									

Figure 2. Council Study Overall Schedule.

Attachment 1 of this Briefing Note Package shows the draft versions of the individual Thematic and Discipline work plans and staffing plans (i.e., combined work and staffing plan document). These documents will continue to be refined as additional more detailed information becomes available. The work plans/staffing plans include the following information:

- Rationale and Objectives
- Activities
- Outputs and Deliverables
- Team Personnel
- Budget

DRIFT Assessment Methodology Framework (Day 2)

What to Expect

DRIFT (an acronym for Downstream Response to Imposed Flow Transformations) as the integrated assessment methodology for the Council Study will be presented in detail as was requested during the 2nd RTWG Meeting on 11-12 September 2014 in Phnom Penh. The presentations will start with DRIFT overall concept, its strengths and weaknesses, and why/how it is used for the Council Study. Recent enhancements of DRIFT since its use in IBFM will be presented as well.

This overview DRIFT presentation will be followed by several detailed technical sessions on how to use DRIFT from its setup, knowledge capture (or modeling responses), and analysis. Important topics such as site selection, indicator selection, baseline, development scenarios, and response curves will be discussed.

Synopsis

DRIFT is an environmental flow assessment (EFA) methodology that is used to provide flow scenarios and descriptive summaries of their consequences in terms of the condition of the river ecosystem and the impacts on human users, allowing integration at a basin level, for examination and comparison by decision makers and other interested parties. In comparing several EFA methodologies, Arthington et al. (2003) found DRIFT to have the most developed capabilities for scenario analysis and explicit consideration of social and economic effects of changing river condition on subsistence users.

DRIFT as a Decision Support System (DRIFT-DSS) that can be used to predict expected ecological and social implications of proposed water-resource management activities. It is a simplified ecosystem model in which relevant data are organised to provide predictions of ecosystem change and social impact. The process of providing the data requires specialists from many disciplines to work together. DRIFT's outputs complement the engineering and economic information usually available in similar assessments. DRIFT helps provide a balanced picture of the full suite of costs and benefits linked to water-resource changes.

For the Council Study, the DRIFT-DSS is suitable as it is a methodology that incorporates all areas of interest including environmental, social and resource-economic parameters. Importantly, it also promotes transparency as all assumptions and linkages are recorded within its database and can be queried and updated as required based on empirical evidence or improved understanding of relationships.

The Council Study Inception Report provides additional details on the DRIFT framework including the process diagram shown in Figure 3, and how DRIFT will be used in the Council Study. More detailed technical information about DRIFT is included in **Attachment 2** of this Briefing Note Package.

Cited Reference: Arthington, A.H., Tharme, R.E., Brizga, S.O., Pusey, B.H., and Kennard, M.J. (2003). Environmental Flow Assessment with Emphasis on Holistic Methodologies. In: Proceedings of the Second

International Symposium on the Management of Large Rivers for Fisheries, February 11-14, 2004, Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

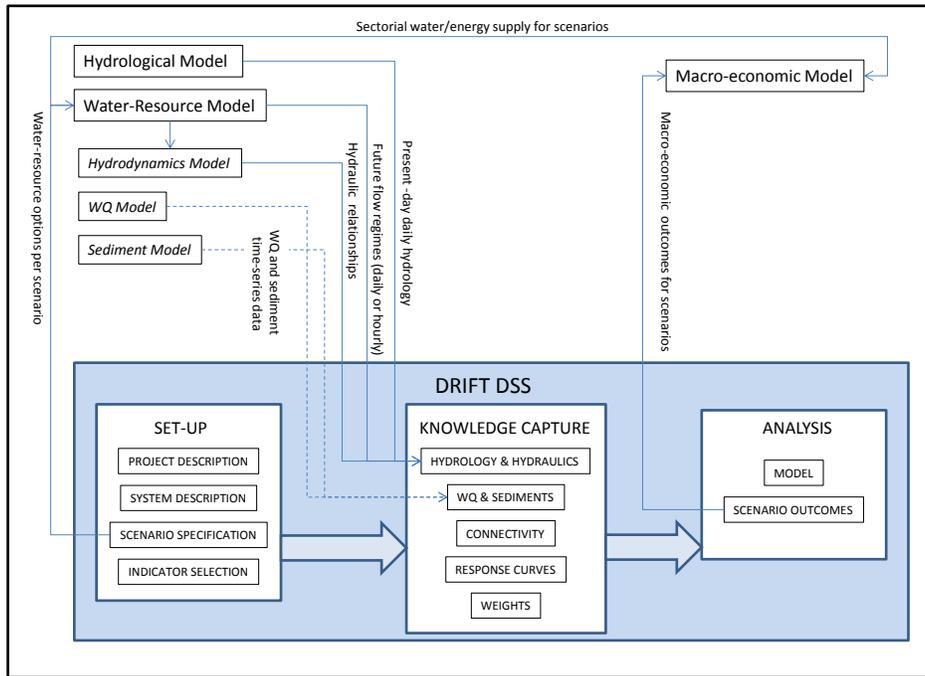


Figure 3. DRIFT DSS Data and Process Flow.

Coordination and Progress Monitoring Through MRCS Coordinating Group (Day 3)

What to Expect

The Council Study Coordination Mechanism will be revisited and discussed. The MRCS Coordinating Group structure and its functions will be presented.

Synopsis

Figures 4 and 5 illustrate the overall coordination and communication mechanism of the Council Study. Central to this is the MRCS Coordinating Group which is composed of the Technical Coordination Unit (i.e., Study Coordinator, Technical Coordinator, and Technical Coordination Advisor) and the Programme Management Leads and Technical Leads of the various Thematic and Discipline Teams. The MRCS Coordinating Group will meet on a monthly basis with the following standing agenda:

- Report and discuss overall and individual Team's progress including accomplishments and issues
- Review and discuss the overall work plan and adjustments needed, if any.
- Plan, discuss, and resolve technical issues either within the MRCS Coordination Group or ad-hoc technical working groups
- Elevate request for review, guidance, and decisions to the RTWG and NMCS, NMCs, and Line Agencies through appropriate communication protocols
- Self-monitor and evaluate performance through TCU M&E Team
- **Initiate internal midterm review and mid-term corrections.** If appropriate, solicit services of external evaluators to assess midterm and/or end term progress of the Council Study.

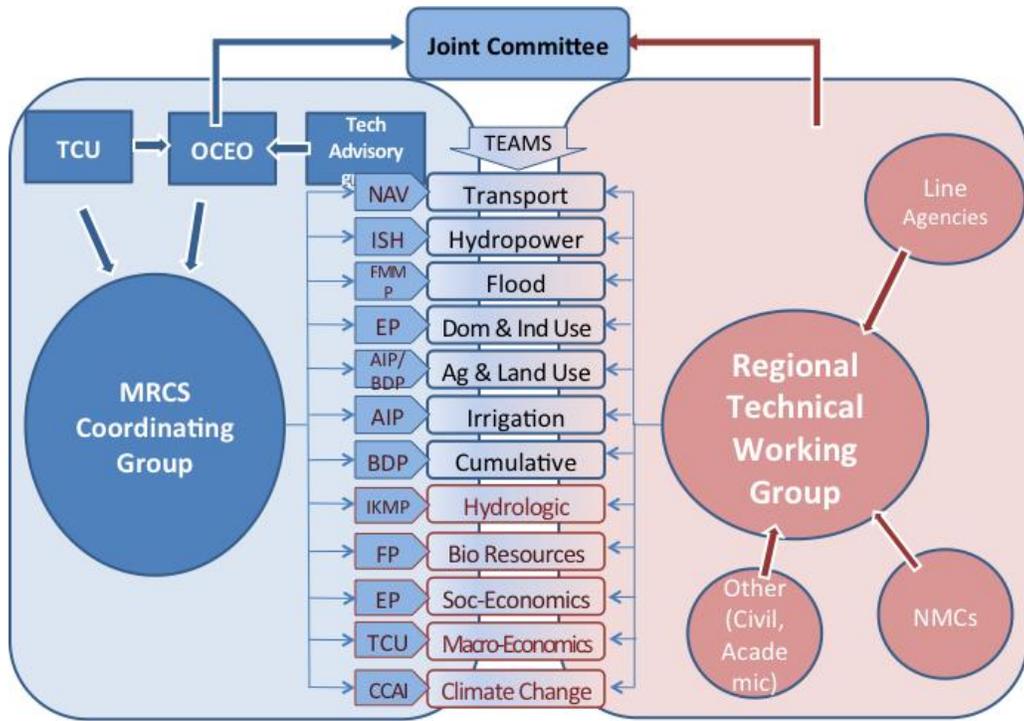


Figure 4. Council Study Overall Organizational Structure.

Council Study Coordination Mechanism

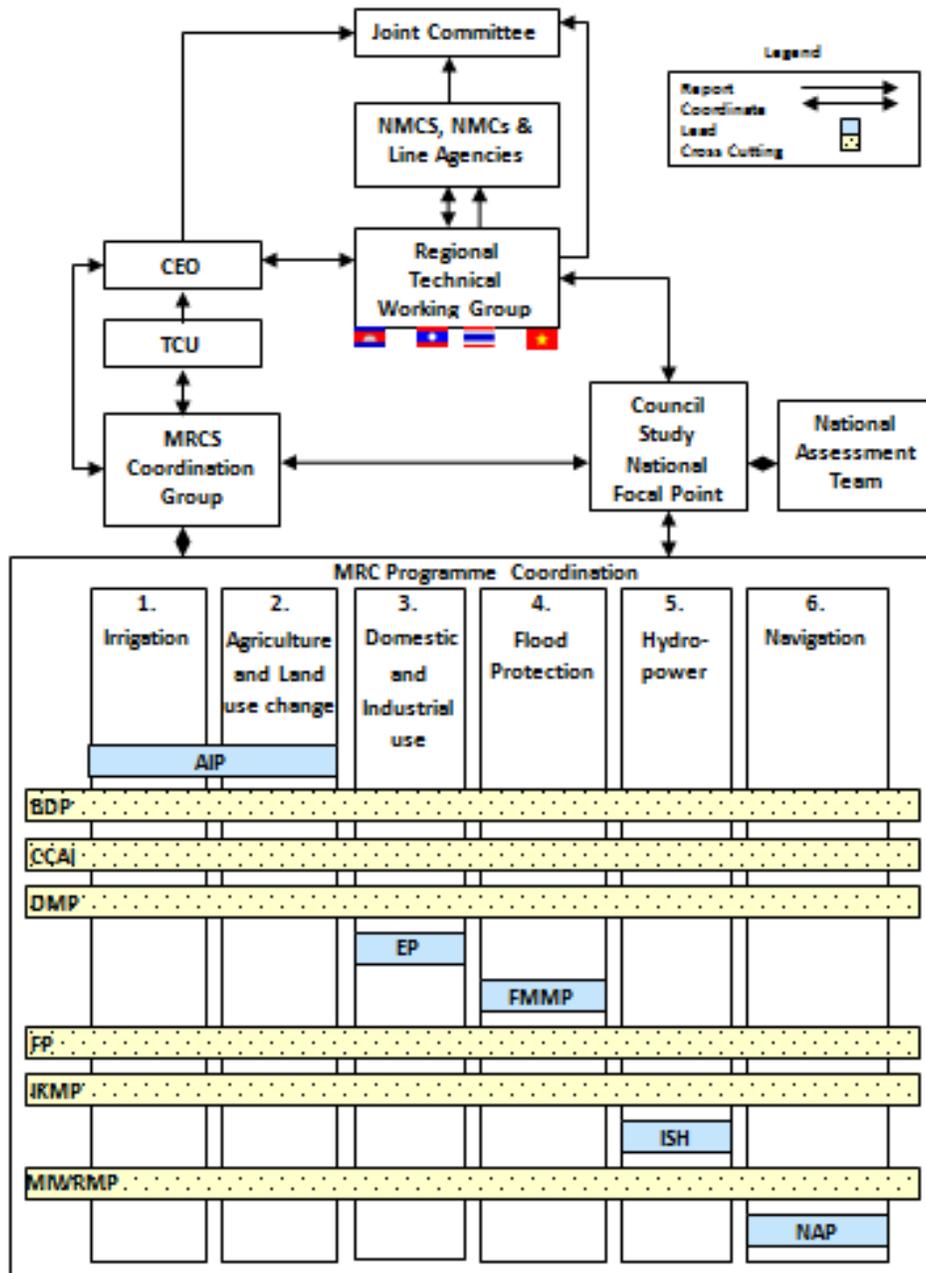


Figure 5. Council Study Coordination and Communication Mechanism.

Council Study Inception Report (Day 3)

What to Expect

The draft final version of the Council Study Inception Report will be presented highlighting changes

based on comments received from the 2nd RTWG meeting on September 11-12, 2014 in Phnom Penh. **The Draft Final Inception Report is submitted along with this Briefing Note Package.**

Synopsis

Final meeting notes of the 2nd RTWG meeting was sent to the Member Countries through the Focal Points on October 7, 2014. In addition, a status update of the next step comments listed in the meeting notes was also sent along with final meeting notes. It should be noted that not all the next step comments required a change in the Inception Report but instead are expected to be addressed during the Startup Workshop and/or during Council Study Implementation.

Table 1 below provides an update of status of next step comments.

Table 1 - Status of Comments Related to Next Steps Expressed by Member Countries during the 2nd RTWG Meeting (Prepared on 3 November, 2014)

Next Step Comment	Status
<p>Viet Nam requested the Secretariat to ensure that the recommendations from the Member Countries on the methodologies and how to address shortcoming are seriously taken into account in the updated Inception Report which should be sent to the Member Countries early in advance prior to the startup workshop. The Secretariat should exert efforts in making the information in the Inception Report easy to understand by the readers.</p>	<p>The Inception Report has been revised to incorporate the comments made by the Member Countries related to the report itself. Additional edits were also made to make the terminologies more consistent and the report easier to read and understand to the extent possible.</p>
<p>Viet Nam requested MRC Programme to include activities under the Council Study in their work plan.</p>	<p>The Study Coordinator and the MRC Programmes have worked closely together beginning the week of October 6, 2014 to prepare draft work plans and staffing plans for the various thematic and discipline teams. Draft work plans/staffing plans are sent to the Member Countries with this Briefing Note Package and they include detailed list of activities. In addition, the work plans and staffing plans will be presented during the Startup Workshop.</p>
<p>Viet Nam advised to find ways and means on how the Countries can be involved in the process. For the recruitment process, the countries also need to see a clear plan.</p>	<p>The consolidated work plan along with the work plans and staffing plans of the individual teams include the proposed team personnel for each Thematic and Discipline Team including proposed national/regional/international consultants. According to the overall schedule, the recruitment of the external consultants will be in November 2014 to February 2015 time frame. The input of Member Countries in terms of identifying potential candidates will be sought in particular during the Startup</p>

	Workshop and continuously through the initiatives of the individual Thematic and Discipline Teams.
Viet Nam further requested the Secretariat to record all the recommendations from the Countries in the meeting notes of this 2 nd RTWG meeting and share the meeting notes with the Countries	The draft meeting notes of the 2 nd RTWG meeting which includes recommendations and next steps was circulated to the MCs on September 18, 2014. Comments received from the MCs were incorporated in a revised final draft meeting notes dated October 7, 2014 which is submitted along with this document (i.e., Status of Next Steps). It should be noted that Laos and Thailand had no additional comments to what they provided during the 2 nd RTWG Meeting.
Viet Nam also wishes to see in the annex attached to Inception Report the link with Viet Nam's Delta Study and how both Studies can supplement each other.	A brief report will be prepared to discuss synergies between Viet Nam's Delta Study and the Council Study and suggestions for different levels of collaboration between the two studies. The potential synergy between the Council Study and the Mekong Delta Study will also be presented during the Startup Workshop.
Viet Nam also recommended that the indicators and scenarios need to be more precise and, for that, the Member Countries need to agree on the scoping documents for indicators and scenarios.	Scenarios: Each thematic team will be responsible for selecting scenarios appropriate for their thematic area. These will be discussed and refined in consultation with the Member Countries, MRCS Coordinating Group, as well as with other experts – particularly with regard to the MRCs capabilities to model the selected scenarios. The cumulative scenario(s) will comprise a combination of the thematic scenarios. Indicators: The Biological Resource Assessment (BRA) and Social Task specialists will provide a short-list of possible indicators with rationale for selection. These will then be evaluated to ensure that the information required for each indicator will be forthcoming – either through the modelling or a links to other biophysical/social indicators.
Viet Nam advised the MRCS to have a Work Plan beyond 2016.	A Draft Overall Schedule/Work Plan was prepared and circulated for initial review by the thematic and discipline teams. The schedule is based on completing the study by March 2016 with most of the technical work completed by the end of 2015 as per original schedule. It is recognized that it is a difficult and challenging schedule given the current delays. If and when a decision is reached that the 2015 target cannot be met, the new schedule/work plan will be revised to extend the Study to 2016.
Thailand advised the Secretariat to come up with clear indicators, baseline and response	As noted earlier, a series of knowledge capture workshops by the thematic and discipline teams

<p>curve in order to proceed with designing the work plan and to also circulate the latest information about the DRIFT technics for further dissemination to the line agencies. Thailand looks forward to having a technical meeting on this issue.</p>	<p>(which include national experts from the MCs) will be held as part of the DRIFT assessment technique. The workshops will be led by the DRIFT technique expert along with the DRIFT data manager. DRIFT technical sessions are also going to be conducted during the Startup Workshop. A project report on DRIFT which contains technical information is provided with this Briefing Note Package.</p>
<p>Viet Nam questioned the number of the participants from the Member Countries for the start-up workshop whether it should be the same as the composition of the RTWG (seven from each country). and suggested six persons from the six thematic groups.</p>	<p>During the 2nd RTWG meeting itself, the CEO expressed its support to have four representatives per member country participate during the Startup Workshop. It is expected that one of the participants will focus on providing overarching review of the work plans while the other participants will focus on the discipline-specific assessments: environment, social, and economic.</p> <p>To accommodate request of the Member Countries, the final number of MC participants for the Startup Workshop was at least 4 (but not more than 7). For the 3rd RTWG, the final number of MC participants is up to 7.</p>
<p>Thailand (with agreement from Lao PDR) suggested that the decision should be made by each NMC but proposed to have four persons per country: one delegate with overall perspective and the three to provide key outputs on biological, economic and socio-economic aspects.</p>	<p>Same comment as above.</p>

Status Updates of Selected Technical Topics (Day 3)

What to Expect

Selected technical topics will be presented during the RTWG Meeting to solicit RTWG's feedback and additional guidance:

- Baseline and Development Scenarios
- Hydrologic Assessments Tools (MRCS DSF) Progress Update
- Mekong Delta Study Progress Update
- Synergy between Council Study and Mekong Delta Study

Options for baseline and development scenarios will be discussed among the Teams and representatives of Member Countries during the Start-up Workshop and the results will be presented during the RTWG Meeting.

Synopsis

The reader is referred to the Inception Report for detailed technical information about baseline and development scenarios and the MRCS DSF. The Mekong Delta Study was presented during the 2nd RTWG Meeting and progress updates will be presented during the 3rd RTWG Meeting. The presentation on the synergy between the Council Study and Mekong Delta Study is in process and will be made available during the 3rd RTWG Meeting.