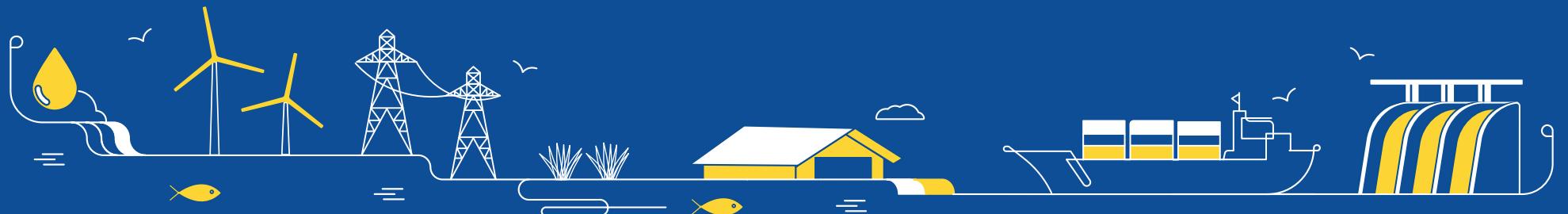




14th Regional Stakeholder Forum

Information Sharing for Transparency and Trust

Session 4: Mekong Hydropower Projects

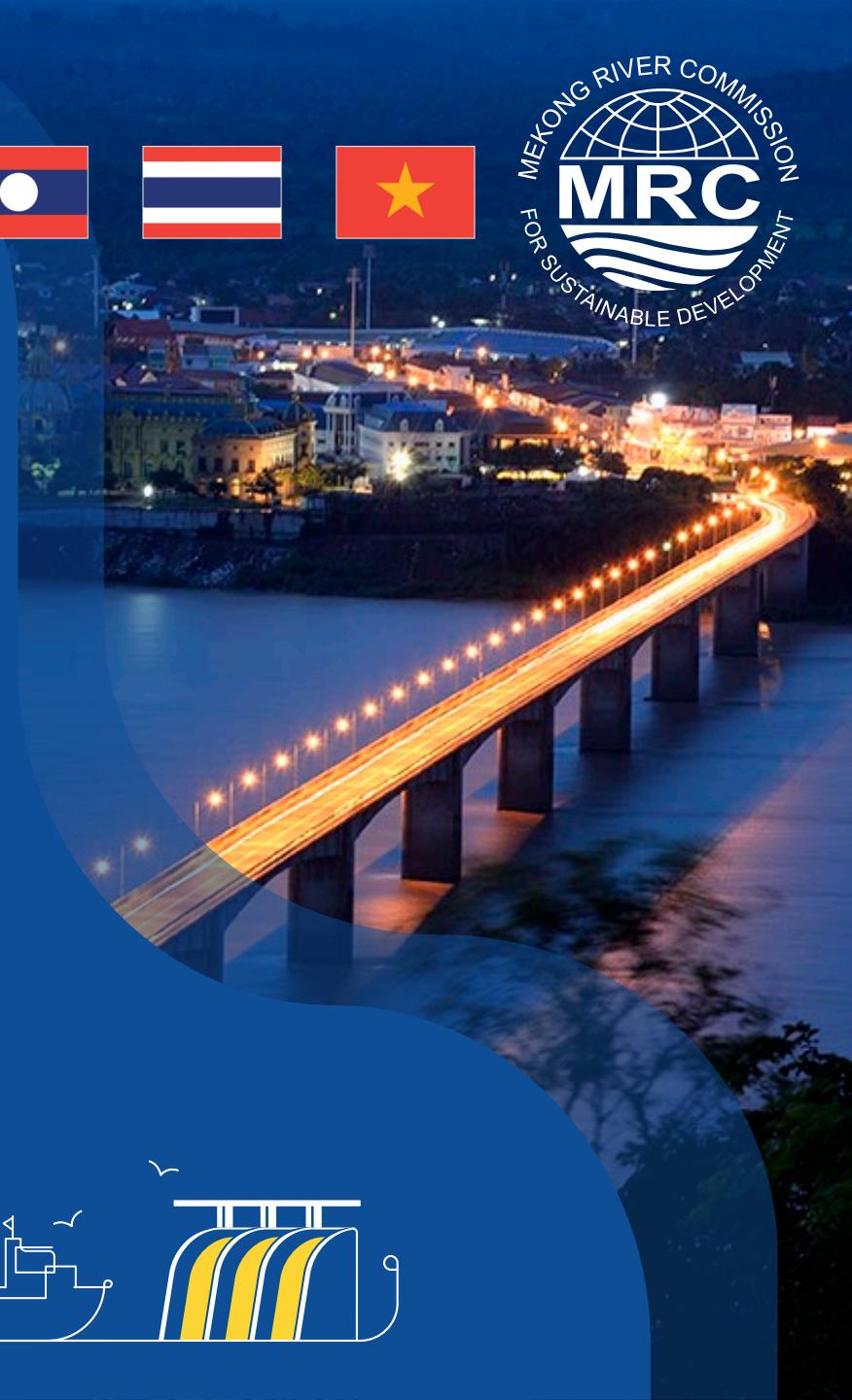


14th Regional Stakeholder Forum (RSF)
12 June 2024, Vientiane Capital, Lao PDR



Voluntary Application and Testing of MRC Transboundary Environmental Impact Assessment Guidelines on Xekong Downstream (Site A) Hydropower Project and Next Steps

Kongmeng Ly, PhD



OUTLINE

Key Principles of the TbEIA Guidelines

Voluntary Application of TbEIA on the Xekong Downstream (Site A) Hydropower Project and Lao PDR's Proposed Roadmap

Implementation timeline of the Voluntary Application and Testing of the TbEIA

Key TbEIA findings and Recommendations

Next Steps



Guidelines for Transboundary Environmental Impact Assessment in the Lower Mekong River Basin



Key Principles of the TbEIA Guidelines (relevant to this testing)



Application of the TbEIA Guidelines will be **voluntary**;



Non-legal binding document and a **working** document;



Application of the TbEIA Guidelines will be for both types of projects: (1) newly **proposed project** or (2) **existing project**, with no TbEIA conducted;



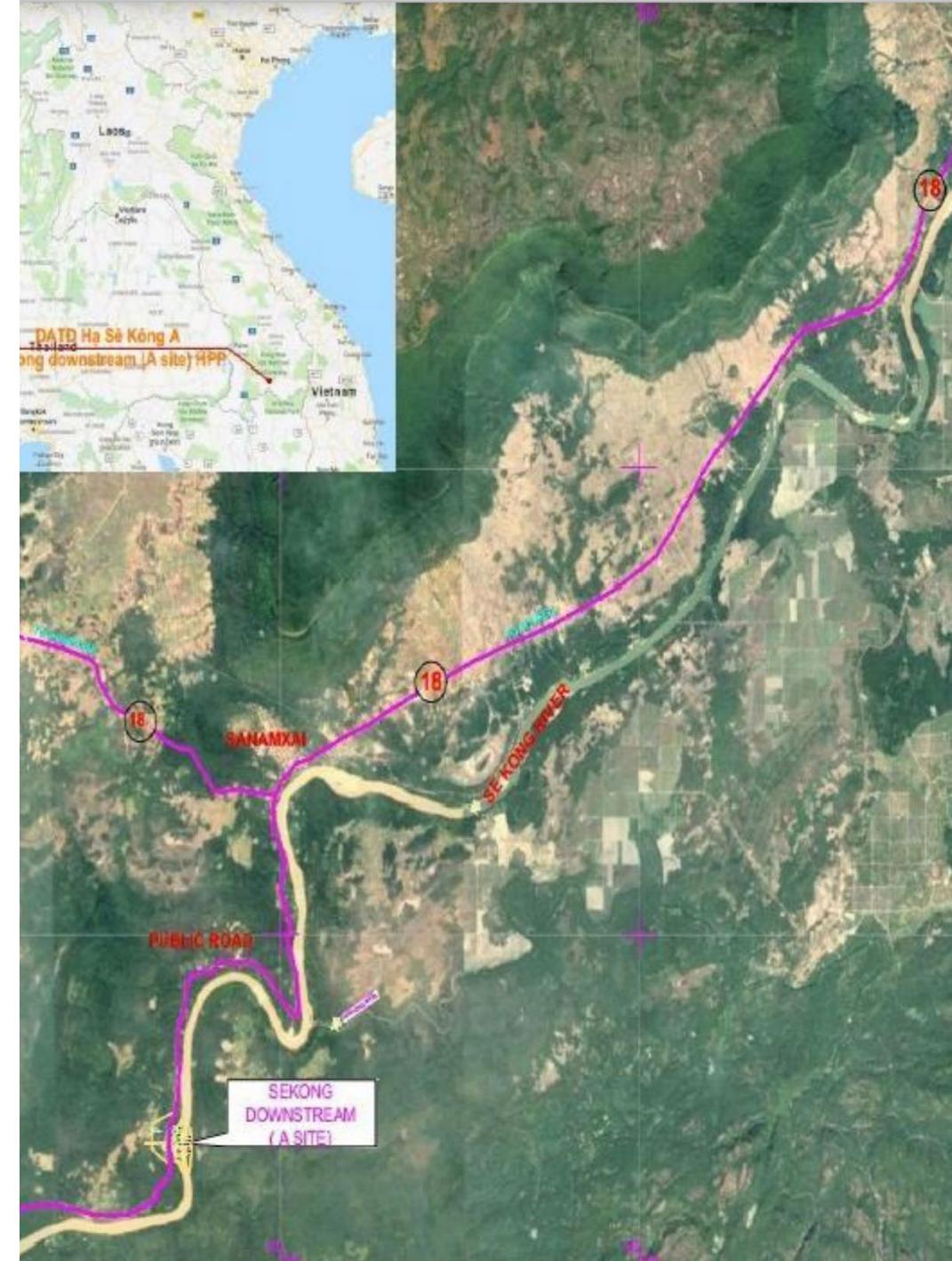
Application of the TbEIA Guidelines will be for projects located in the **Mekong mainstream** or its **significant or transboundary tributaries**;



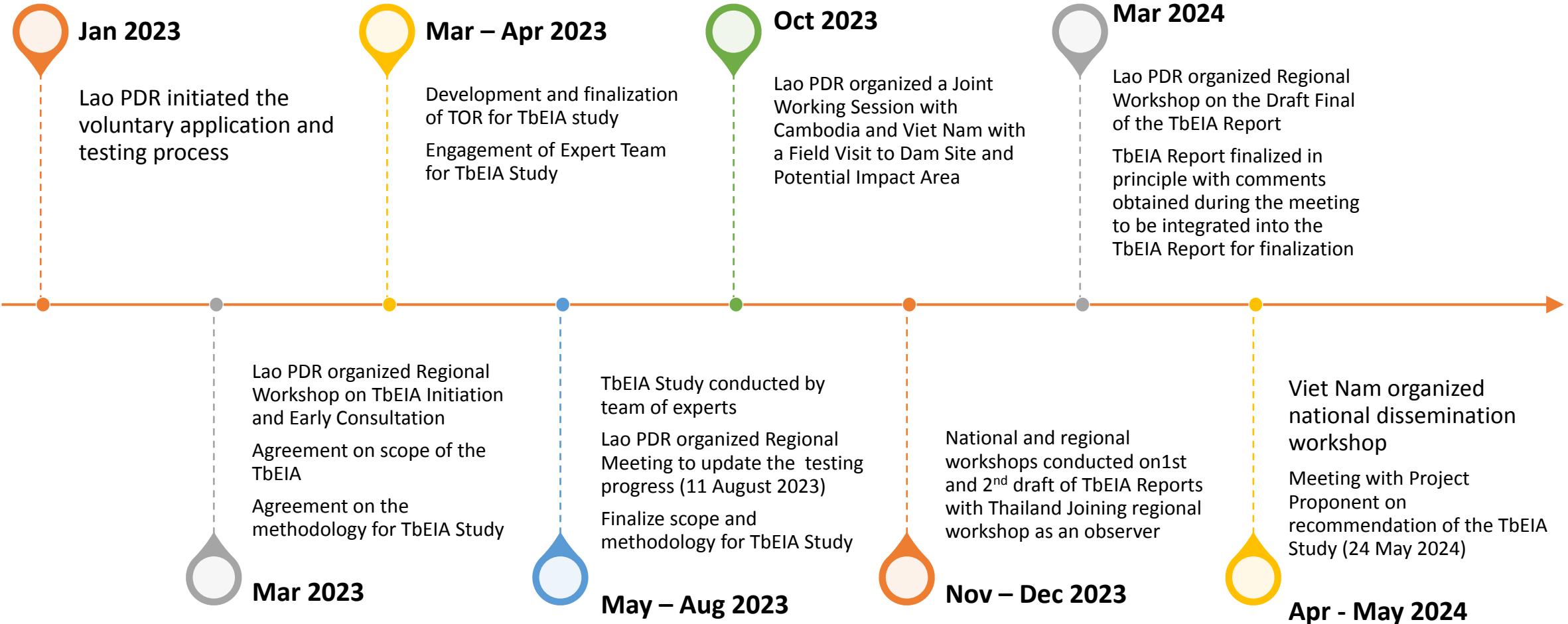
Complement to and reduce efforts in the implementation of the **PNPCA** and have more chance to get **consensus**;

Voluntary Application of TbEIA on the Xekong Downstream (Site A) Hydropower Project

- On 20 December 2022, Lao PDR formally submitted the Xekong A Hydropower Project for voluntary application of TbEIA (via its letter No. 1132/MoNRE.LNMCS) along with the application roadmap
- Has already been subjected to the national EIA process with approved EIA report and associated environmental and social safeguard documents.
- Aim to test the implementation process of the TbEIA from Steps 1 to 8, document its lessons learnt, and promote its wider application
- Produce a TbEIA Report that complement the already approved project EIA report with measures that can be used by the Project Proponent for environmental safeguarding



Implementation timeline for the Voluntary Application and Testing of the TbEIA on the Xekong Downstream (Site A) HPP



Scope of TbEIA Study

- At the Regional Workshop on TbEIA Initiation and Early Consultation (11 March 2023), the concerned Member Countries agreed on the TbEIA study scope to include:
 - Hydrology
 - Sediment
 - Water Quality
 - Fisheries
 - Dam Safety
- The methodologies to be used and data requirements were discussed with all concerned Member Countries confirming their commitment to support the voluntary application and testing of the TbEIA.

Summary of Key findings and recommendations (1)

- Hydrology
 - **Key findings:** No impacts on flow is expected but some impacts on water levels upstream and downstream dam site are expected
 - **Key recommendations:** Installation of telemetry monitoring stations; data sharing; Joint Environmental Monitoring
- Sediment
 - **Key findings:** Due to its design characteristics, the reservoir is not expected to trap large quantity of sediment.
 - **Key recommendations:** Implementation of annual sediment sluicing and flushing in accordance the MRC Guidelines; Joint Environmental Monitoring.

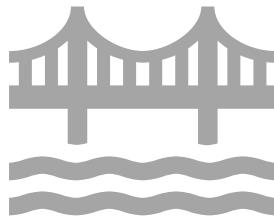
Summary of key findings and recommendations (2)



Water Quality

Key findings: Stratification of reservoir water quality is unlikely although biomass degradation could lead to the discharge of water with lower level of DO

Key recommendations: Removal of biomass prior to inundation; monitor water quality before and after inundation; implementing measure against releasing anoxic (poor DO) water quality downstream



Dam safety

Key findings: Due to the size of the reservoir, should dam break occur the impacts are expected to be localized to the Xekong River with no affect to the Mekong River.

Key recommendation: Undertake regular dam safety inspection; Formulate Emergency Action plan for each phase of hydropower development (Under Construction, Impounding, Operation)

Summary of key findings and recommendations (3)

- Fisheries
 - **Key findings:** Both barrier and flow impacts are expected on fisheries with the dam expecting to hinder fish migration and the reservoir to create a deeper and slower-flowing than baseline habitat, and thereby reduce biological productivity and aquatic biodiversity of the Xekong River
 - **Key recommendations:**
 - Enhance the proposed left bank verticle slot fishway to reduce slope and water velocity to facilitate safe passage of fish
 - Construction of a second larger but nature-like fishway with entrance downstream of the turbines on the right bank
 - Enhance downstream fish passage via spillway to divert large-size fish from turbines
 - Support improved fisheries management project
 - Joint environmental monitoring for fisheries

Implementation consideration of TbEIA Recommendations

- With the support from the MRCS, Lao National Mekong Committee Secretariat summarized for the Project Proponent's consideration key recommendations at project level for implementation consideration.
- 24 May 2024 – A Meeting between MRCS, LNMCS and Project Proponents was organized to:
 - Discuss the results of the TbEIA Study
 - Discuss Implementation consideration of project level recommended safeguard measures
- Project Proponents
 - Expressed appreciation to the MRC for supporting the TbEIA study on its project
 - Acknowledged the provided valuable information on both baseline condition and potential project impacts on areas that were not previously accessible during the undertaking of its national EIA study
 - Welcomed and would further study and consider the integration of the recommended measures into the relevant project safeguarding documents, and the project operation

Next Steps

1. The MRC Secretariat will provide the necessary support to the Member Countries for dissemination of the results of the voluntary application and testing of MRC TbEIA on the Xekong Downstream (Site A) Hydropower Project, with all national dissemination workshops to be completed by the end of **June 2024**.
2. The MRC Secretariat will draft a Briefing Report on the Lessons Learnt from the Voluntary Application and Testing of the TbEIA on the Xekong Downstream (Site A) Hydropower Project, detailing
 1. Any lessons learnt and challenges from this application by all concerned parties, including the consultants, the Country of Origin, the Potentially Affected Countries, the Observing Country, and the MRC Secretariat.
 2. Provide corresponding recommendations and/or actions to promote a wider future application of the TbEIA Guidelines in the Lower Mekong River Basin.
3. Per the recommendation of the TbEIA report, the MRC Secretariat proposes to initiate joint monitoring of the Xekong Downstream (Site A) Hydropower Project for key parameters, building on and under the monitoring of the CRMN and methodology of JEM.



Thank you!

