



Rena Sugita

Striving for excellence or race to the bottom?

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Key messages



- **Hydropower in the Mekong Region to date has been unsustainable**
- **Integrated energy and water planning urgently needed**
- **Project developers and their financiers should commit to international standards for projects endorsed through a public process**

“Sustainable” hydropower: a myth

- *An overwhelming body of evidence globally indicates large dams have been unsustainable*
 - Resettled people unable to recover livelihoods
 - Natural resources on which people depend destroyed
 - Water pollution and changes to river hydrology, sediment and nutrient cycles, and ecology
 - Source of Greenhouse Gas emissions

Many examples of unsustainable hydropower in Mekong basin



Vinya Sysamouth

Riverbank erosion downstream of the Theun Hinboun dam

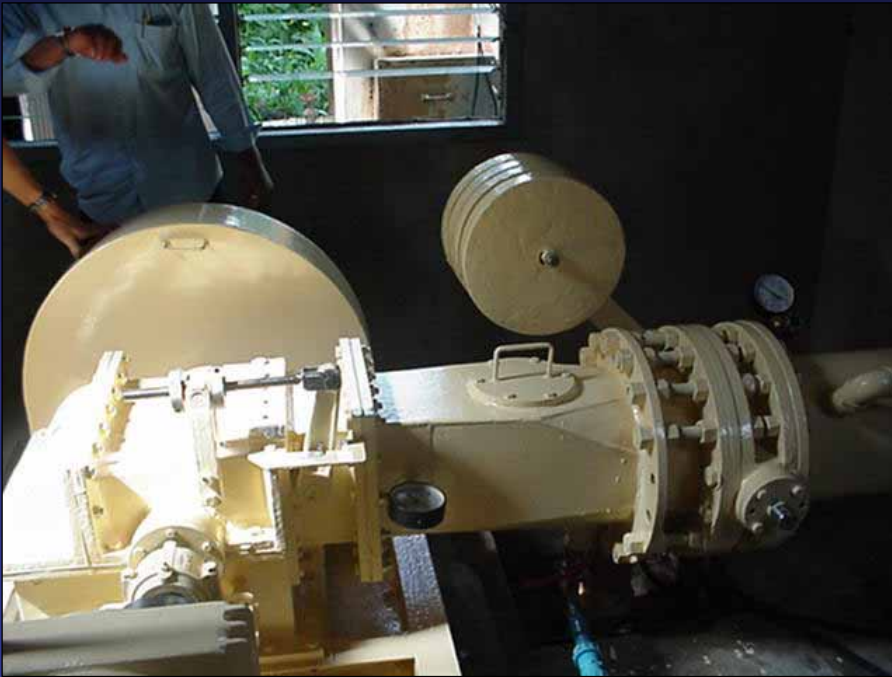
- Theun Hinboun, Laos
- Yali Falls, Vietnam
- Pak Mun, Thailand

These dams have exacerbated rather than reduced poverty

Recommendation to MRC

*Define the environmental
and social standards that
the Hydropower
Programme will promote*

Upstream solutions needed: Integrated Resources Planning (IRP)



Micro hydropower turbine, Thailand

- Mekong region demand for electricity growing
- Balanced assessment of supply and demand side electricity options urgently needed – IRP
- Public participation crucial

Recommendation to MRC

Support call for Integrated Resources Planning for electricity sector and promote the river's wider value within this process

Basin scale planning, Cumulative Impact Assessment, Strategic Environmental Assessment



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Fisher harvests fish at Siphandone,
Southern Laos

- Poor planning will lead to more dams, higher impacts, fewer revenues.
- Need to protect critical resources
 - Mekong mainstream should be off-limits to hydropower
- Need for comprehensive planning tools
- Public participation crucial

Recommendation to MRC

Call for moratorium on new dams until basin wide planning and cumulative impact assessments undertaken

Demonstrate the benefits of these approaches to MRC member governments

New hydropower proponents



Kamchay Dam, Cambodia

- New developers, mainly from Thailand, Vietnam, China, Russia, and Malaysia
- Private and public financiers also primarily from these countries
- Limited public accountability, few environmental and social standards

Performance not improving



Sekaman River, March 2004 and 2008

- Little evidence that new projects are meeting the standards set by Nam Theun 2 or even local law
 - Nam Ngum 2 and Xekaman 3, Laos
 - Kamchay, Cambodia
 - Sesan/ Srepok, Vietnam

International standards for international projects

- Adhering to international environmental and social standards reduces investment risk and improves project quality, minimizing cost to local livelihoods.
 - Governments should reject any projects that do not include comprehensive, well-funded and realistic resettlement and livelihood restoration plans
 - Dam affected communities should receive a direct share of project benefits for the life of the project
 - Projects should be developed only after reaching genuine consensus with affected communities

Recommendations

- Poorly planned dams create rather than reduce poverty
- Integrated energy and water planning is urgently needed; all development options should be examined first
- Public participation crucial
- Basin-wide planning tools, international standards, benefit sharing essential



Thank you for your attention



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