PART C: CSO MEETING SUMMARIES

A summary of the Cambodian Civil Society Organisations (CSO) meeting

An input to the SEA scoping process

ICEM – International Centre for Environmental Management

7/22/2009

Disclaimer

This document was prepared for the Mekong River Commission Secretariat (MRCS) by a consultant team engaged to facilitate preparation of a Strategic Environment Assessment (SEA) of proposals for mainstream dams in the Lower Mekong Basin.

While the SEA is undertaken in a collaborative process involving the MRC Secretariat, National Mekong Committees of the four countries as well as civil society, private sector and other stakeholders, this document was prepared by the SEA Consultant team to assist the Secretariat as part of the information gathering activity. The views, conclusions, and recommendations contained in the document are not to be taken to represent the views of the MRC. Any and all of the MRC views, conclusions, and recommendations will be set forth solely in the MRC reports.

This document is a record of stakeholder consultations and subsequent analysis. Whether they attended meetings or not all stakeholders have been invited to submit written contributions to the SEA exercise via the MRC website.

For further information on the MRC initiative on Sustainable Hydropower (ISH) and the implementation of the SEA of proposed mainstream developments can be found on the MRC website: http://www.mrcmekong.org/ish/ish.htm and http://www.mrcmekong.org/ish/SEA.htm

The following position on mainstream dams is provided on the MRC website in 2009.

MRC position on the proposed mainstream hydropower dams in the Lower Mekong Basin

More than eleven hydropower dams are currently being studied by private sector developers for the mainstream of the Mekong. The 1995 Mekong Agreement requires that such projects are discussed extensively among all four countries prior to any decision being taken. That discussion, facilitated by MRC, will consider the full range of social, environmental and cross-sector development impacts within the Lower Mekong Basin. So far, none of the prospective developers have reached the stage of notification and prior consultation required under the Mekong Agreement. MRC has already carried out extensive studies on the consequences for fisheries and peoples livelihoods and this information is widely available, see for example report of an expert group meeting on dams and fisheries. MRC is undertaking a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the proposed mainstream dams to provide a broader understanding of the opportunities and risks of such development. Dialogue on these planned projects with governments, civil society and the private sector is being facilitated by MRC and all comments received will be considered.

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About the MRC SEA of Hydropower on the Mekong mainstream

The Mekong River Commission (MRC) is an inter-governmental river basin organisation that provides the institutional framework to implement the 1995 Mekong Agreement. The Governments of Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Viet Nam signed the Agreement on the Cooperation for the Sustainable Development of the Mekong River Basin. They agreed on joint management of their shared water resources by cooperating in a constructive and mutually beneficial manner for sustainable development, utilization, conservation and management of the Mekong River Basin water and related resources and for poverty alleviation as a contribution to the UN Millennium Development Goals. The two upper states of the Mekong River Basin, the People's Republic of China and the Union of Myanmar, are dialogue partners to the MRC.

In a region undergoing rapid change and economic growth, the MRC considers the development of hydropower on the Mekong mainstream as one of the most important strategic issues facing the Lower Mekong region. Through the knowledge embedded in all MRC programs, the MRC is conducting this Strategic Environment Assessment (SEA) to assist Member states to work together and make the best decisions for the basin.

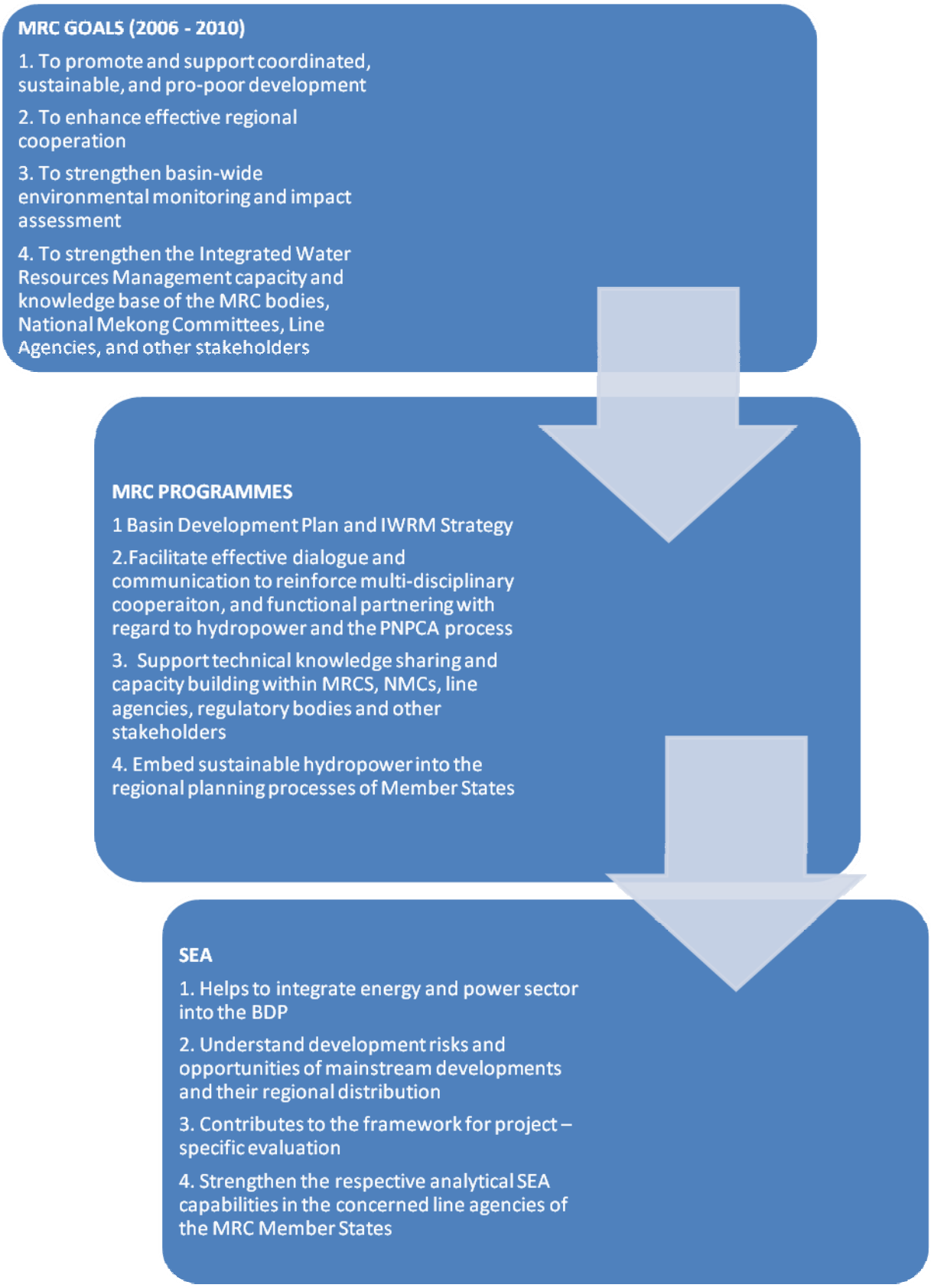
Twelve hydropower schemes have been proposed for the Lao, Lao-Thai and Cambodian reaches of the Mekong mainstream. Implementation of any or all of the proposed mainstream projects in the Lower Mekong Basin (LMB) could have profound and wide-ranging socio-economic and environmental impacts in all four riparian countries.

This SEA seeks to identify the potential opportunities and risks, as well as contribution of these proposed projects to regional development, by assessing alternative mainstream Mekong hydropower development strategies. In particular the SEA focuses on regional distribution of costs and benefits with respect to economic development, social equity and environmental protection. As such, the SEA supports the wider Basin Development Planning (BDP) process by complementing the MRC Basin Development Plan (BDP) assessment of basin-wide development scenarios with more in-depth analysis of power related and cross-sector development opportunities and risks of the proposed mainstream projects in the lower Basin.

The SEA is being coordinated by MRC's cross-cutting MRC Initiative for Sustainable Hydropower (ISH) working with all MRC programmes. The SEA will directly enhance the baseline information and assessment framework for subsequent government review of project-specific EIAs prepared by developers. It will also inform how the MRC can best enhance its support to Member Countries when the formal process under the 1995 Mekong Agreement for prior consultation on any individual mainstream proposal is triggered (i.e. the Procedures for Notification, Prior Consultation and Agreement or PNPCA). The SEA findings will also inform steps that MRC programmes may consider in the next MRC Strategic Plan Cycle (2011-2015) to help address the knowledge gaps and the key areas of uncertainty and risk concerning proposed mainstream developments.

The SEA began in May 2009 and is scheduled to complete the final report and recommendations by mid-2010. This document is one of a series of documents arising from an intensive program of consultations in the Lower Mekong Basin and detailed expert analysis of the issues associated with developing hydropower on the Mekong mainstream. The intention is to consolidate SEA activities and progressively make conclusions and outputs available for public and critical review, so that stakeholder engagement can contribute to the SEA in a meaningful way. A full list of documents is available on the MRC SEA website.

The context and aims of the MRC SEA of Proposed Hydropower Schemes on the lower Mekong mainstream



CONTENTS

NATIONAL SCOPING MISSION

This report provides a summary of discussion at the Cambodian Civil Society scoping meeting involving a cross-section of international and national NGOs working in Cambodia. Civil society plays an important role in development and conservation in the LMB. There is a wealth of information, experience and expertise embedded in LMB non-government institutions. For the SEA to be effective it must forge working relationships with the LMB civil society. These scoping meetings, together with the SEA website, form the starting point on which civil society involvement can be built into the SEA. Also, they are a critical input to shaping the scope and methodology of the assessment.

BACKGROUND

Cambodia's position on mainstream hydropower development is complicated by its relatively low level of development and high resource potential. The two mainstream dams proposed for Cambodia – Stung Treng and Sambor are targeted for export, however, of all the LMB nations, energy poverty is perhaps most wide-spread in Cambodia with per capita electricity usage of 56kWh per year, less than one-tenth the per-capita usage in Vietnam and more than 30 times smaller than Thailand's average per-capita usage (UNDP 2007). More than 90% of Cambodia's current installed capacity is generated using imported diesel, resulting in some of the highest costs for power worldwide. The relationship between national economic development and provincial livelihoods, poverty reduction and rural development in the Mekong River provinces lies at the heart of the Cambodian strategic issues of concern to the SEA.

Consultative activities in Cambodia remained sensitive to both the national and provincial scales of development issues and to the dependency of Mekong province communities on natural systems.

The Cambodia national scoping mission was conducted over five days (10 July – 17 2009). Activities included:

i. An intensive program of individual meetings with key government line agencies
ii. A National Scoping Workshop to define the spatial, temporal and thematic coverage of the SEA
iii. A Cambodian Civil-Society Roundtable to define the development context and opportunities for cooperation with between the SEA and civil-society
iv. Participation and presentations at a workshop for hydropower developers in Phnom Penh convened by MRC
v. Participation and presentation at a workshop of the GMS Environment Operations Centre in Phnom Penh on the EOC's program of support to GMS countries on SEA.

The civil society component was conducted to complement the national governmental consultations covered in a separate summary report. The Scoping mission consultations were an important start in integrating the concerns and views of Cambodian civil society into the SEA process, as well as exploring avenues for collaboration and civil society involvement in the SEA process. Together the national workshop and civil society meeting reports provide a summary of the Cambodia perspective on the scope and approach for the SEA.

1. CIVIL SOCIETY SCOPING WORKSHOP

OVERVIEW

The workshop was organised and chaired by the SEA team with support from the Cambodia National Mekong Committee. Ten representatives of eight organisations participated in the Cambodia Civil Society meeting which was held on the afternoon of the 17 July 2009 at the Sunway Hotel – Phnom Penh. A full list of participants together with the workshop agenda appears as Appendix B.

There were two main components to the workshop: introductory presentations, and plenary discussions. Their function and time allocation is set out in Table 1.

Table 1 Main components of the Cambodia Civil Society Scoping Meeting

ITEM	WORKSHOP COMPONENT	FUNCTION	PROPORTION OF THE WORKSHOP
1	Presentations	▪ Stimulate discussion ▪ Share understanding of the sectoral focus and priorities of the Government of Cambodia ▪ Build understanding of the SEA	25%
2	Plenary discussions & question time	▪ Discuss the strategic development issues related to the SEA ▪ Explore opportunities for collaboration and for the SEA team to draw on the wealth of experience and knowledge of the non-government community	75%

1.1 PRESENTATIONS

The SEA team gave a brief presentation on the objectives, the mainstream hydropower projects under assessment and the SEA approach. They are available from the MRC website.[1]

1.2 PLENARY DISCUSSIONS

The plenary session focussed discussion around three key areas:

A. The SEA process and methods;
B. The key strategic issues for the SEA; and
C. Opportunities for collaboration

A. SEA PROCESS AND METHODS

CSO participants provided some strategic comments on the SEA process. CSOs reinforced the importance of the identifying and involving key stakeholders and of understanding the extent and

[1] http://www.mrcmekong.org/ish/SEA.htm

potential of influence the SEA can have. Experience from participants highlighted the real danger that outputs and reports could end up on the shelf and have little influence in shaping mainstream development. It was suggested that in order to ensure the SEA is effective, the team should ensure:

- ***SEA ownership:*** government agencies feel a sense of ownership over the entire assessment and it outputs,
- ***Targeted focus:*** specific policy contexts and institutional arrangements are targeted,
- ***Translations:*** translations of outputs are made available in each of the LMB languages,
- ***Government focal point:*** a government focal point is identified to help facilitate government involvement in the SEA, and
- ***Communication of results:*** recommended that results are presented using interesting and visual media and forms of communication.

B. KEY STRATEGIC ISSUES SUMMARY

A record of plenary discussions follows in Table 2. Below are some of the key issues raised during the meeting.

- ***Uncertainty of impacts:*** So little is known about the effects of the dams on the mainstream morphology, hydrodynamics and ecology – especially biodiversity. In part this is due to the limited understanding of these factors in the existing system. A cautious approach to development is needed otherwise there may be unknown and irreversible consequences.
- ***Fisheries & livelihoods:*** Fisheries is the fundamental natural resource, industry and food source for Cambodia. The opportunities of mainstream hydropower must be seen in the context of a trade-off with the country's predominant socio-economic and cultural activity
- ***Institutional capacity to plan and manage large hydropower:*** Several participants noted that Cambodia has limited experience within government agencies in building large-scale hydropower, indicating that such projects require significant technical and institutional capacity to plan and manage effectively.
- ***Regional advocacy:*** participants acknowledged that there is socio-economic inequity between LMB nations and were concerned that advocacy of Cambodia's national interest may be compromised due to its lower level of development. This lead into broader discussions on the reality and constraints of regional cooperation in the LMB.
- ***Energy demand:*** Several participants questioned the need for the mainstream dams and the accuracy of power demand projections for the LMB. There was concern that mainstream power development would reinforce existing inequities within Cambodia and the region – with the costs shouldered locally and the benefits exported from the project areas.

C. RECORD OF PLENARY DISCUSSION

Plenary discussion has been summarized in Table 2, with comments and questions divided by theme.

Table 2 Summary of plenary discussions

Cambodia Civil Society National Workshop, Scoping Phase, SEA	
No.	Key Themes
	1. Metrology, Climate Change, Hydrology, Water Quality & Sediment
1	Changes in hydrology and water levels for a significant distance upstream and downstream of the mainstream dams including the Kratie to Khone Falls stretch.
2	This stretch is one of the most important for deep pools in the Mekong mainstream
3	The dams will change the water quality and chemistry with unknown consequences on fish productivity and diversity
4	Climate change will exacerbate seasonal water availability in the Mekong river. How will climate change effect the operation of the mainstream projects – is sufficient known to proceed?
5	Reduction of the areas of agricultural land subject to annual flooding and nutrient enrichment with unknown consequences
6	Change in morphology of the river systems with downstream effects
7	Wetland resource both upstream and downstream of the river will be impacted
	2. Aquatic Biodiversity & Fisheries
1	Aquatic biodiversity is a critical issue – little is known about the relationship between biodiversity and stability in productivity in the Mekong mainstream – and effects of dams in reducing diversity little understood but likely to be very significant.
2	Impact on fish spawning and rearing grounds in Cambodian reaches of the Mekong significant given size of reservoirs and dams crossing the entire mainstream.
3	Changes in hydrology would interfere with the larval drift system
4	The Tonle Sap contributes almost two thirds of Cambodia's annual fish catch, largely comprising migratory fish species. At peak times, some 50,000 fish per minute pass through a given point in the Tonle Sap River. The dams will block the dry season migration of fish between the feeding habitats of the Tonle Sap Lake and upstream breeding zones in Laos and Thailand.
5	Isolation of stocks from historic habitat will reduce overall productivity
6	A serious threat to the habitat of the endangered freshwater Irrawaddy dolphin. The stretch of the river between Kratie and the Lao-Cambodian border, important in terms of deep pool habitats along the Mekong, is a crucial dry season refuge for the dolphin. The dams would lead to the extinction of the dolphin from the Mekong.
7	The giant cat fish has important habitat in the Sambor district of Kratie which would disappear with the Sambor reservoir
8	Fisheries impacts cannot be mitigated by existing available technology, e.g. fish ladders will not facilitate fish migration
	3. Terrestrial Ecology, Forestry and land use/change
1	Increased access to the affected region would promote wildlife trade from northern and western conservation areas
2	Watershed protection necessary, but forests could be threatened by enhanced access and as few relocation options for people affected by dams
	4. Agriculture, Irrigation & Water Supply
1	Agricultural systems are strongly dependent on rain fed and flood plains in the two provinces – soil condition and nutrient replenishment will be permanently reduced in some areas as extent of flooding is reduced.
	5. Transport & Navigation
1	Small boats are commonly used by villagers living along the river and islands for daily transportation and commuting. The large projects will favour the passage of large vessels but make small boat transport difficult. Will the navigation locks allow for regular and frequent use by small vessels?
	6. Power Development

1	Only 20 percent of Cambodian households currently have access to reliable electricity supply - government wants lift this to 70 percent by 2030. Unreliable power supply and high power prices are significant obstacles in attracting foreign investment. Is hydropower is the best option in addressing these energy needs? National energy policies should prioritise introducing innovative renewable and decentralised electricity technologies that are now available and cost competitive.
2	The decision-making process in relation to hydropower lacks transparency. CSOs have little information and no formal opportunities to contribute.
3	the EIA department of Ministry of Environment has had little involvement in the mainstream hydropower planning – and has limited capacity to oversee the environmental assessment and management of large scale projects
4	Cambodia's energy use is decentralised – the benefits to local communities of large hydropower projects are questionable.
5	Need for mainstream dams has not yet been adequately established. Governments are planning on the basis of inadequate analysis and information. Where is the driver for mainstream dam proposals coming from?
6	Hydropower projects should respond to local development needs as a first priority.
	7. Tourism
1	Dolphin habitat area and Tone Sap flooded forest are important tourist attractions – and could be significantly affected by the mainstream projects. Also the Khone falls area is an important tourism site which would be affected by the Don Sahong project.
	8. Poverty, ethnic groups & livelihoods
1	The fundamental dependence of Cambodia's rural populations on fisheries as a source of protein and livelihood should be the overriding consideration. The precautionary approach should be taken in development of other sectors which may impact on fisheries
2	75% of total catch in the Tonle Sap dai fishery depends on deep pool habitats in northern Cambodia – ie the mainstream stretch from Kratie to Khone Falls.
3	Reservoir fishes will not compensate for the loss of existing mainstream fisheries
4	Serious concerns about the effects on food security of a large segment of the population due to potential loss in fisheries productivity
	9. Health & Nutrition
1	Main source of people's protein intake which cannot be replaced by aquaculture
2	Loss river based livelihood and cultural activities – and food security and related mental and physical health concerns
3	Flood existing farms and fruit trees in different islands and along the river leading to significant local socio-economic losses
4	Loss of cultivable paddy land threatening food security in affected areas as well as to locales supplied by affected areas
5	Health issues linked to quality of water and social economic and poverty alleviation – Cambodia has experienced the downstream health effects of hydropower in Vietnam
6	Waterborne diseases will increase
	10 Resettlement, migration, population growth, human trafficking & urban development
1	More than 5000 would need to be resettled with the Sambor project, but the numbers are not clear, nor the costs involved - the experience with resettlement relating to hydropower projects has not been positive.
	Other Issues Raised
1	SEA should be clear for government and policy makers to understand (either through visual and animation publication)
2	The attitude of government official, in particular those in decision making positions are difficult to change – they need to be the focus of intensive interactions and awareness raising during the SEA
3	There is some coordination between MRC and CNMC, but SEA will need to include MRC and CNMC as capacity building targets
4	Consultation and communication process must be available to all stakeholders - Government, civil society as well as affected people
5	Scientific data needed to both justify dams and clarify impacts. Knowledge base must be solid and widely

	available
7	Lack of institutional capacity for large infrastructure project management
8	Confusion on the specifics of the PNPCA: difficult to support prior notification process of MRC, which does not clearly define the stage in the process when notification and consultation are triggered
9	Should make sure the government own the SEA report otherwise they just attack you in final stage

1.3 OPPORTUNITIES FOR COLLABORATION

It was pointed out that long-term and consistent commitment is required of the SEA team and MRC in order to build trust and relationships with NGOs and with government. The SEA offers an important opportunity for influencing mainstream development decisions, but a concentrated and well resourced effort will be required if NGO's are to be convinced that this is the process in which they should commit time and effort.

The following potential points of collaboration were identified:

1. ***SEA Regional Workshops:*** participants expressed a desire to continue to be involved in other formal SEA consultations – including the four regional workshops

2. ***Formal/informal regular meetings:*** As appropriate the SEA team will meet with individual organisations to keep the flow of information open.

3. ***Baseline information:*** provide information and data from NGO projects to build the 'evidence base' for the SEA (for example shape files/maps, reports). CSOs also recognised that there is a significant amount of 'grey' literature produced by NGOs that has not been peer reviewed. Reliance on this information might impede government cooperation if used and devalue the SEA evidence base.

4. ***Written submissions****:* CSOs expressed a desire to submit formal written submissions to the SEA team on issues that were of particular concern to their organisations regarding mainstream dams. The website will be important to facilitate this, but CSOs also felt that – as part of relationship building – it was important that the SEA team take a more individual approach to each NGO and provide feedback on how submissions will be utilised and a dialogue encouraged.

5. ***Existing Forums****:* There are a number of CSO forums in Cambodia which could be useful to the SEA process and it was recommended that the SEA team plug into these structures:
   (i) *River Coalition*: a coalition of 10 NGOs active in the Mekong provinces of Cambodia, with a lot of field experience and knowledge of the conditions
   (ii) *NGO Forum*: The main NGO network in Cambodia with a mandate to coordinate between NGOs. It was suggested that this be the main vehicle to facilitate communications between the SEA and CSOs
   (iii) *The Wetlands Alliance*: The Alliance engages over 30 partner organizations in the Lower Mekong Basin region with the main collaborators in the region – World Fish, WWF and AIT.

2. NEXT STEPS

A similar scoping mission was undertaken in Lao PDR, Vietnam and Thailand during August-November 2009. The results of these missions form the backbone of the MRC SEA Inception Report. The Inception report defines the SEA scope and methodology based on the outcomes of the scoping missions. The scoping mission was of particular importance, because subsequent reporting will use the consolidated list of key strategic themes to define and present the assessment. Timing for the subsequent steps and future consultation events in the SEA is outlined in Table 3.

Regional consultations will begin with the Baseline Assessment phase, culminating with a workshop in Phnom Penh (scheduled for January 2010). The Baseline Assessment phase will take each of the themes and associated key issues and analyse the trends over the past 10-20years and current status. Also, national development objectives and targets for each key theme, as explicitly defined in government policy or plans will be documented. Then the Impacts Assessment phase will overlay futures with and without dams to assess the opportunities and risks of mainstream hydropower on the issues of key concern for each LMB country. The final step is to explore avoidance, enhancement and mitigation measures to increase opportunities and minimise the risks for each nation.

Table 3 Schedule of the major consultation events

DATE		MEETING	LOCATION	SEA STAGE
		NATIONAL CONSULTATIONS		
	Viet Nam	***Scoping Phase JUNE – SEPT***		**SCOPING** What are the key development issues for the Mekong River?
JUNE	29-30	VN Government line agency meetings	Ha Noi	
JULY	02	VN National Workshop		
	03	VN Civil Society meeting		
	Lao PDR			
JULY	06-07	LAO Government line agency meetings	Vientiane	
	08-09	LAO National Workshop		
	09	LAO Civil Society meeting		
	10-11	LAO Field Mission: Xayaburi, Luang Prabang	Luang Prabang	
	Cambodia			
JULY	14-15	KH Government line agency meetings	Phnom Penh	
	16-17	KH National Workshop		
	17	KH Civil Society meeting		
AUG	03	VN Civil Society meeting	Ha Noi	
	Thailand			
AUG	14	THAI National Workshop	Bangkok	
SEP/OCT	29-01	THAI Government line agency meetings	Bangkok	
NOV	03	THAI Civil Society meeting	Bangkok	
		REGIONAL CONSULTATIONS		
	Cambodia	***Baseline Assessment Phase OCT - DEC***		**BASELINE ASSESSMENT** What are the past & current trends for these issues?
JAN	21,25	Follow Up: KH Government line agency meetings	Phnom Penh	
	22-23	Cambodian Field Mission: Stung Treng, Sambor	Sambor	
	27-28	Regional Baseline Assessment Workshop	Phnom Penh	
	Thailand	***Impacts Assessment Phase JAN - APR***		**IMPACTS ASSESSMENT** What are the future trends for these issues, with & without mainstream hydropower?
APR	19-20	Follow up: THAI Govt. Line agency meetings		
	22-23	Regional Impacts Assessment Workshop	Bangkok	
	24-25	Thai Field Mission: Ban Koum	Ban Koum	
	Lao PDR			
APR	27-28	Follow up: LAO Govt line agency meetings	Vientiane	
	30	Regional Multistakeholder Workshop	TBD	
MAY	01-02	Lao Field Mission: TBD	TBD	
	Viet Nam	***Avoidance, Enhancement & Mitigation Assessment Phase MAR - JUN***		**MITIGATION** What measures will be useful in enhancing the benefits and avoiding or mitigating the negative effects of mainstream hydropower?
JUN	18, 21-22	Follow up: Vietnam Government line agency meetings	Hanoi/Ho Chi Minh	
	24-25	Regional Mitigation Workshop	Can Tho	

APPENDIX A – WORKSHOP AGENDA & PARTICIPANTS

B1 CIVIL SOCIETY MEETING- AGENDA

MRC SEA OF HYDROPOWER ON THE MEKONG MAINSTREAM

CAMBODIAN CIVIL SOCIETY ROUNDTABLE

13:00 – 5:30 | 17 JULY 2009

SUNWAY HOTEL

AGENDA

MRC SEA HYDROPOWER ON THE MEKONG MAINSTREAM		
MRC SEA CAMBODIAN CIVIL SOCIETY ROUNDTABLE		
Date: 17 July 2009		
Location: Phnom Penh		
17 JULY: 13:00 – 17:30		
13:00 – 13:15	*Coffee and Registration*	
13:15 – 13:35	***The aims of the MRC SEA*** (i) Aims (ii) The proposed Mekong mainstream hydropower projects (iii) The approach in this SEA (iv) SEA timeline & milestones	SEA Team
ISSUES FOR THE MEKONG MAINSTREAM		
13:35 – 13:45	***Findings & Outcomes of the Cambodian National Scoping Workshop*** (i) The critical issues for the Mekong River in Cambodia (ii) The development priorities for the Mekong River (iii) Cambodia's development priorities	SEA Team
13:45 – 15:15	***Plenary discussions on critical development issues for the Mekong River in Cambodia? – The Civil Society Perspective***	All participants
15:15 – 15:30	*Coffee break*	
OPPORTUNITES FOR ENGAGEMENT		
15:30 – 15:45	***The SEA schedule and key consultation events***	SEA Team
15:45 – 17:15	***Plenary discussions on opportunities for civil-society engagement***	All participants
17:15 – 17:30	***Next steps forward***	All participants
	Close of workshop	

B2 NATIONAL WORKSHOP - LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

	NAME	POSITION	ORGANISATION
1	Teak Seng	Country Director	WWF
2	Khim Sangha	Energy Expert	WWF
3	Sun Visal	Biodiversity Monitoring Program Officer	WCS Cambodia Program
4	Ms Chea Phallika	Hydropower Officer	NGO Forum Cambodia
5	Ea Dara	Advocacy and Information officer	Culture and Environmental Preservation Association (CEPA)
6	Im Sokhun	Project Officer	CDCAM
7	Larry Haas	Senior Technical Advisor	MRC/ISH
8	Callum McCulloch	Senior Conservation Officer	Fauna & Flora International
9	Phoumin Han	BDP Economist	MRCS
10	Jeremy Carew-Reid	Team Leader	SEA Team
11	Try Thoun	Cambodia Team Leader/social systems specialist	SEA Team
12	Meng Monyrak	Natural systems specialist	SEA Team
13	Tarek Ketelsen	Project Coordinator	SEA Team
14	Peter-John Meynell	Environment assessment specialist	SEA Team

A summary of the Lao PDR Civil Society Organisations (CSO) meeting

An input to the SEA scoping process

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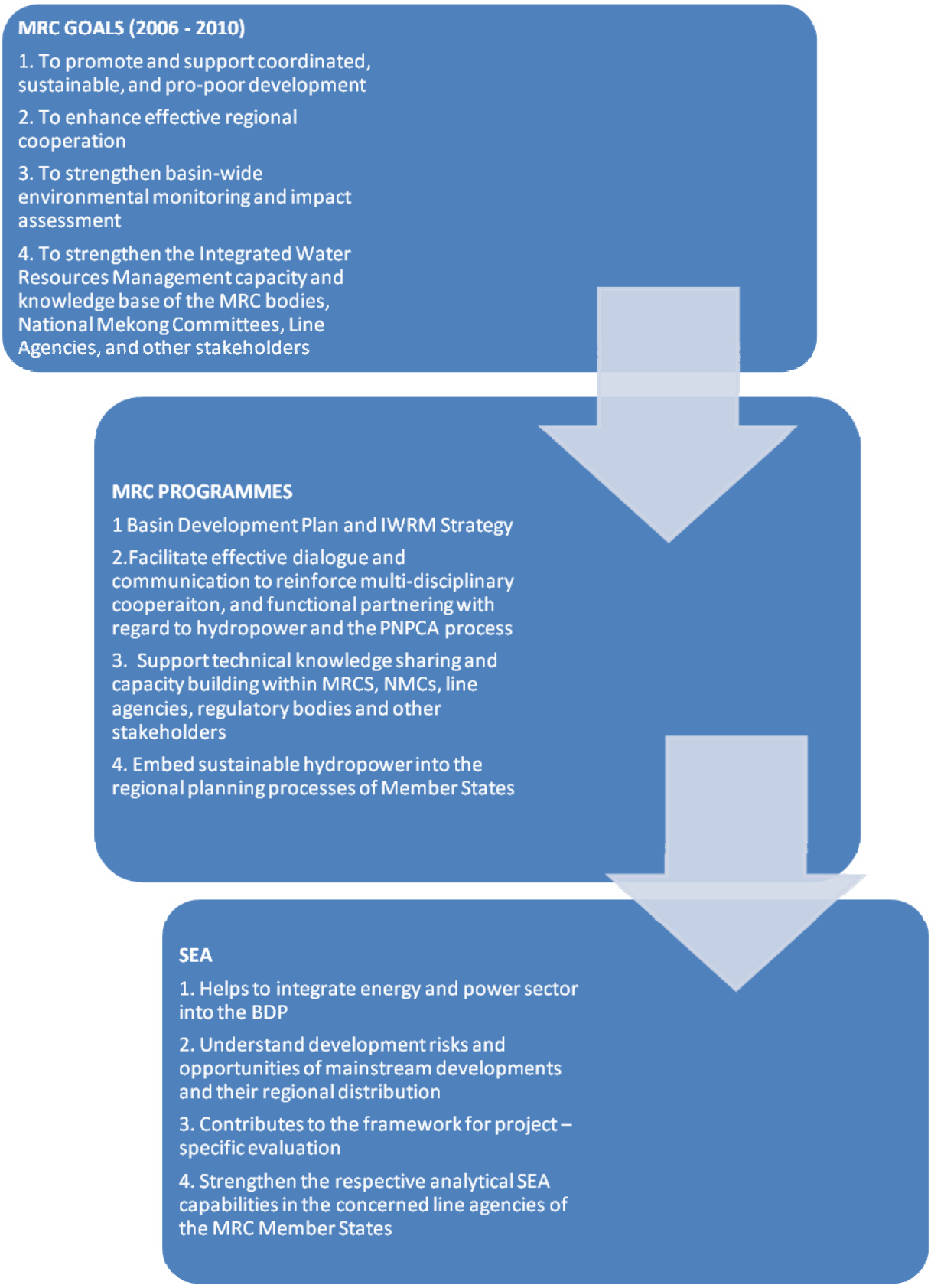
Twelve hydropower schemes have been proposed for the Lao, Lao-Thai and Cambodian reaches of the Mekong mainstream. Implementation of any or all of the proposed mainstream projects in the Lower Mekong Basin (LMB) could have profound and wide-ranging socio-economic and environmental impacts in all four riparian countries.

This SEA seeks to identify the potential opportunities and risks, as well as contribution of these proposed projects to regional development, by assessing alternative mainstream Mekong hydropower development strategies. In particular the SEA focuses on regional distribution of costs and benefits with respect to economic development, social equity and environmental protection. As such, the SEA supports the wider Basin Development Planning (BDP) process by complementing the MRC Basin Development Plan (BDP) assessment of basin-wide development scenarios with more in-depth analysis of power related and cross-sector development opportunities and risks of the proposed mainstream projects in the lower Basin.

The SEA is being coordinated by MRC's cross-cutting MRC Initiative for Sustainable Hydropower (ISH) working with all MRC programmes. The SEA will directly enhance the baseline information and assessment framework for subsequent government review of project-specific EIAs prepared by developers. It will also inform how the MRC can best enhance its support to Member Countries when the formal process under the 1995 Mekong Agreement for prior consultation on any individual mainstream proposal is triggered (i.e. the Procedures for Notification, Prior Consultation and Agreement or PNPCA). The SEA findings will also inform steps that MRC programmes may consider in the next MRC Strategic Plan Cycle (2011-2015) to help address the knowledge gaps and the key areas of uncertainty and risk concerning proposed mainstream developments.

The SEA began in May 2009 and is scheduled to complete the final report and recommendations by mid-2010. This document is one of a series of documents arising from an intensive program of consultations in the Lower Mekong Basin and detailed expert analysis of the issues associated with developing hydropower on the Mekong mainstream. The intention is to consolidate SEA activities and progressively make conclusions and outputs available for public and critical review, so that stakeholder engagement can contribute to the SEA in a meaningful way. A full list of documents is available on the MRC SEA website.

The context and aims of the MRC SEA of Proposed Hydropower Schemes on the lower Mekong mainstream



CONTENTS

NATIONAL SCOPING MISSION

This report provides a summary discussion of the Lao civil society scoping meeting undertaken with a cross-section of International and National NGOs working in Lao PDR. The SEA team recognises the critical role that civil society plays in development and conservation of the LMB and the wealth of knowledge, experience and information within non-government institutions. For the SEA to be effective it must forge working relationships with LMB civil society. The scoping meetings, together with the SEA website, form the starting point on which civil society involvement can be built into the SEA.

BACKGROUND

The LMB region is experiencing fast-paced economic growth and rapid industrialization. Regional energy demand has been growing, increasing incentives to find new sources of power. Lao PDR is the least developed of the LMB nations, due in part to a small population and rugged landscape. These two factors also contribute to a high potential for hydropower development and export-earnings from power trade. Nine of the 11 proposed mainstream dams lie within the territory of Lao PDR.

The Lao national scoping mission was conducted over six days (06 July – 12 July 2009), with the CSO meeting on the 09 July. Mission activities included:

i. An intensive program of individual meetings with key government line agencies;
ii. A national scoping workshop to define the spatial, temporal and thematic coverage of the SEA;
iii. A civil-society roundtable meeting – with donor community involvement, to define the development context and opportunities for cooperation between the SEA and civil-society;
iv. A field mission to the Luang Prabang and Xayabouly mainstream project sites;

The civil society round table meeting was conducted to complement the national government consultations, the results of which are covered in a separate summary report. The scoping mission consultations were an important start in integrating the concerns and views of Lao civil society into the SEA process, as well as exploring avenues for collaboration with civil society in the SEA process. Together the national workshop and CSO roundtable meeting reports provide a summary of the Lao perspective on the scope and approach for the SEA. They are best read as companion volumes as part of the SEA Inception Report.

1. CIVIL SOCIETY SCOPING WORKSHOP

OVERVIEW

The CSO workshop was organised and chaired by the SEA team with support from the Lao National Mekong Committee. 11 representatives of 8 organisations participated in the meeting which was held on the 16 July 2009 at the Novotel – Vientiane. A full list of participants together with the

workshop agenda appears as Appendix A.

There were two main components to the workshop: introductory presentations, and plenary discussions. Their function and time allocation is set out in Table 1.

Table 4 Main components of the Vietnam Civil Society Scoping Meeting

ITEM	WORKSHOP COMPONENT	FUNCTION	PROPORTION OF THE WORKSHOP
1	Presentations	▪ Stimulate discussion ▪ Share understanding of the sectoral focus and priorities of the Government of Vietnam ▪ Build understanding of the SEA	25%
2	Plenary Discussions & Question time	▪ Discuss the strategic development issues related to the SEA ▪ Explore opportunities for collaboration and for the SEA team to draw on the wealth of experience and knowledge of the non-government community	75%

1.1 PRESENTATIONS

The SEA team gave a brief presentation on: (i) the objectives, the mainstream hydropower projects under assessment, and the SEA approach, and (ii) the regional energy context within which the SEA must engage. They are available from the MRC website.[2]

1.2 PLENARY DISCUSSIONS

The plenary session focussed discussion around three key areas:

A. The SEA approach and operational issues facing the SEA team;
B. The key strategic issues to define the scope of the SEA; and
C. Opportunities for collaboration

A. THE SEA PROCESS

CSO participants provided comments on the SEA process:

- ***Stakeholder consultations***: the plenary recommended that the SEA increase consultation activities. Discussion concluded that meetings with INGOs in Lao PDR cannot replace meetings with local communities and community/mass organisations, which play an important role in social organising (e.g. Community Fisheries Association in Lao, *Ihsan* in Thailand). Specifically,
    - Projects on the Lao-Thai border near large fishing communities (e.g. Ban Koum site)

[2] http://www.mrcmekong.org/ish/SEA.htm

present a good opportunity for bilateral local stakeholder workshops;
- The SEA should utilise the MRC BDP stakeholder consultation program if additional consultation events lie outside the capacity of the SEA;
- Alone, the web is not an effective consultation tool for CSO stakeholders in the region. Consultations would be more successful if the SEA worked through existing authority structures such as Buddhist monks and respected elders in arranging for local community inputs and involvement.

- ***Understanding of the ESIA & SEA process:*** the plenary noted that the level of understanding of SEA and ESIA in the LMB varies greatly between nations and stressed that a large component of this SEA might necessary involve capacity building.

- ***Maintaining momentum:*** the plenary noted that the SEA team will find it difficult to maintain momentum and support for the SEA in the four nations, given that the team cannot always be present. Effective involvement of stakeholders will be hard to achieve unless substantial resources are put into this critical aspect of the SEA. Discussion generated a list of options for coordinating civil society inputs (see section C).

- ***SEA lines of communication:*** the plenary recommended that the SEA regular lines of communication include more than government stakeholders.

B. KEY STRATEGIC ISSUES SUMMARY

A record of the discussion is presented in Table 2. Below are some of the key issues raised during the meeting.

- ***ESIA quality:*** The SEM II support team to the WREA EIA Department, advised that the quality of ESIAs submitted to WREA by mainstream project developers has been very low – so far four of the mainstream dam assessments. In general, biodiversity does not feature in these documents, yet in Lao, biodiversity remains crucial for local livelihoods. The need to go back to companies for revisions and additions delays the planning process and undermines the government's EIA system.

- ***Institutional Capacity for Environmental Assessments:*** The EIA department of WREA is a new and growing institution. At present capacity for reviewing environmental assessments of very large infrastructure projects remains low. This constraint in capacity also applies to ensuring mitigation measures are implemented. Overall there is a concern that the project specific environmental assessment and management will not be adequate. These constraints are compounded with many projects on the same reach of the river are being considered.

- ***Land-use dynamics:***
  - The Mekong riparian zone is an important component of the total national arable area and the country's topography provides little capacity for the development of new rice growing areas at higher altitudes. A recent study by the Chinese looking to develop an additional 1million ha concluded that there is not the potential for expansion.
  - Displaced farmers are likely to become shifting cultivators utilizing slash and burn practices, or experience lower yields on less suitable land;

- Already 640,000ha of paddy have been lost along the mainstream and in river valleys in the tributaries due to urban development. Experience of growing populations and urbanisation of Vientiane Capital City (VCC) indicates that growing urban centres and resulting infrastructure development in arable areas has a strong impact on local food security.

- ***Groundwater connectivity:*** The SEA should not ignore the implications of the mainstream dams on groundwater, especially in the floodplains where the seasonal groundwater level can be close to the surface. Implications should be considered both in terms of impacts of reservoirs on water levels and quality, as well as on the shift in water use dynamics and groundwater demand induced by mainstream projects.

- ***National energy drivers:*** Hydropower development should depend on actual development needs, and is not justifiable as a revenue stream alone. A major component driving Lao national energy demand is rural electrification. The plenary recommended that the SEA assess the suitability of mainstream dams in meeting this market, drawing on the well-studied lessons from China's experience – China having the largest decentralized power program in the world.

- ***Distribution of benefits:*** Mitigation measures or benefits from mainstream hydropower may not profit affected communities when considered in relation to: new skills set required, migration patterns, urbanisation and increased access to mainstream areas. The plenary gave the example of aquaculture as a mitigation measure, is likely to shift production from current fishers to a new set of stakeholders.

IUCN and WWF presented statements on the mainstream projects, with substantive comments summarised below.

STATEMENT 1: IUCN (INTERNATIONAL UNION FOR THE CONSERVATION OF NATURE)

IUCN prepared a formal submission to the SEA team outlining their position. The IUCN delegates welcomed the SEA process and the regional cooperation required to carry it out and they stressed:

- ***Energy demand:*** The mainstream dams will have significant negative impacts on the timing and quality of flows in the Mekong River. It is therefore important to demonstrate the need for the 11 proposed projects. IUCN do not believe that the LMB needs these dams at this stage, further; there is a serious risk that mainstream dams in the near future could exacerbate existing regional inequities.

- ***Scope out alternatives:*** the tributary dams will have less impact than the mainstream dams, and should be properly explored before these mainstream projects, with a preference for:
  i. Adding additional dams to tributaries that have already been dammed; and then
  ii. Utilizing free flowing tributaries; and lastly
  iii. Mainstream dams should be the last option.

- ***Fisheries trade off:*** Fisheries will be the major sectoral trade-off for mainstream dams, with wide-reaching environmental and livelihoods implications. IUCN drew attention to the following strategic points:
  i. Fisheries are estimated to be worth USD 3billion annually to the LMB
  ii. A recent MRC expert panel estimated that 40-60% of fisheries could be lost with one

mainstream dam. The delegation raised the question how would future protein intake be met and what major socio-economic adjustments at local levels would be required?

iii. Impacts of mainstream dams on fisheries cannot be mitigated – Governments should be realistic about what they expect fish ladders to achieve. Current fish ladder approaches proposed by mainstream developers would involve serious risk of failure.

STATEMENT 2: WWF – WORLD WIDE FUND

The WWF delegates outlined their position on the mainstream projects, confirming their support for the SEA process. WWF questioned whether the region needs these mainstream projects at this stage of LMB development.

- ***PNPCA[3] process:*** Acknowledged that the PNPCA process is important and that regional cooperation in principle is a positive direction to move towards. However, the PNPCA process remains unclear. When will it be triggered and what role will civil society have? There was concern that inadequate civil society involvement in the PNPCA process may perpetuate and reinforce current inequities in the development process.

- ***Livelihoods & biodiversity:*** commended MRC on the scientific information base at the MRC – especially on biodiversity, hydrology and livelihoods. However, concerns were expressed over how this evidence basis is actually informing decision making processes in the region and how it is made available to governments and civil society. In this regard, the SEA could have a pioneering role.

- ***Misinformation:*** There is a significant amount of misinformation regarding aspects of the mainstream projects and their effects. The WWF delegates expressed hope that the SEA would directly tackle these points and ensure that stakeholders are quickly given access to project specific details, even if still evolving. Specifically:
  i. The effectiveness of fish ladders in facilitating migration of LMB species
  ii. The degree to which aquaculture and reservoir fisheries can replace or compensate for a collapse in wild/capture fisheries
  iii. The extent to which increased socio-economic development from mainstream dams will improve equity and livelihoods in the basin.

- ***Moratorium:*** in light of these points, WWF supports a 10year moratorium on making a decision on mainstream dams. In the meantime, WWF looks forward to supporting the MRC build scientific understanding of this important river system specifically through the SEA, the ECSHD, and the MRC/WFF joint sediment study.

C. RECORD OF PLENARY DISCUSSION

Plenary discussion has been summarized in Table 2, with comments and questions divided by theme.

[3] PNCPA – Prior Consent Prior Notification Agreement

Table 5 Summary of plenary discussions and key issues

INGO/Donor Consultation Workshop, Scoping Phase, SEA	
No.	**Key Themes**
	1. Metrology, Climate Change, Hydrology, Water Quality & Sediment
1	Changes in water flows creating adverse ecological and socio-economic impacts
2	Changes in water quality, particularly downstream of a dam, having significant effects on fisheries
3	Sedimentation issues are not well understood but potentially very significant (WWF collaborating on MRC study on this issue)
	2. Aquatic Biodiversity & Fisheries
1	Serious irreversible adverse impacts on fisheries and associated livelihoods
2	Fisheries impacts cannot be mitigated by existing available technology, e.g. fish ladders will not work with Mekong species, aquaculture will not replace losses as scale of land needed to replace equivalent catches and protein levels is unavailable
	3. Terrestrial Ecology, Forestry and land use/change
1	Much greater focus is needed on biodiversity effects and conservation.
2	Loss of cultivable paddy land and unavailability of replacement land forcing affected people to return to slash & burn with consequent impacts on biodiversity
3	Watershed protection necessary, but could be threatened as few options for relocation of people affected by dams
4	Wildlife trade and protected areas are influenced by greatly enhanced access and the introduction of new infrastructure.
	4. Agriculture, Irrigation & Water Supply
1	Peaking operations: If mainstream dams operate 8 hours per day, up to 4 metres daily drawdown, making irrigation difficult
2	There is little potential for increasing rice production areas in Lao PDR – primarily due to topography - potentially exacerbating the impacts of any lost rice paddy areas along the Mekong mainstream.
3	Displaced rice farmers typically will turn to slash and burn/shifting cultivators
4	In floodplain areas the groundwater table is close to the surface. Need to understand the implications from: (i) reservoir effects on groundwater levels & quality and (ii) shifting water use dynamics on demand for groundwater
	5. Transport & Navigation
1	Peaking Operations: If mainstream dams operate 8 hours per day, up to 4 metres daily drawdown, making navigation difficult
	6. Power Development
1	Projections of future power demand for the LMB region is contested with many uncertain assumptions.
2	Other power sources (e.g. renewables) not considered sufficiently
3	Planned upstream tributary dams should be constructed or existing dams have performance enhanced before mainstream dams are considered
4	Hydropower should depend on development needs – given their far reaching implications, the mainstream projects are not justifiable as a revenue stream alone
5	Clarification whether operating at peak demand, and consequent evaluation of associated impacts needed
	7. Tourism
	8. Poverty, ethnic groups & livelihoods
1	Importance of fisheries and associated businesses for Mekong populations, and associated adverse impacts, including fishing, trading, fish processing and transportation. One dam could cause 40-60% productivity loss. More dams mean higher losses
2	Single largest trade-off is how to replace riparian communities' main source of livelihood via fisheries, particularly in Cambodia
3	Biodiversity is the main single source of the majority of people's livelihood base – changes or further degradation of biodiversity will have serious consequences for livelihoods and well-being

4	Lack of replacement land for resettlement and livelihood compensation
5	Mitigation measures (e.g. aquaculture) shifts production and marketing away from those who manage it now, to new stakeholders
	9. Health & Nutrition
1	Wild catch fish are the main source of people's protein intake which cannot be replaced by aquaculture
2	Loss of cultivable paddy land and unavailability of replacement land threatening food security in affected areas as well as to locales supplied by affected areas
	10 Resettlement, migration, population growth, human trafficking & urban dvt.
1	Potential for affected people to be reduced to landless urban dwellers and forced to seek livelihoods in urban centres, with consequent implications for overload on urban infrastructure and services
	Other Issues Raised
1	Consultation and communication process in the SEA must be available to all stakeholders, Government, civil society as well as affected people – adequate resources need to be allocated to this process.
2	Relevance of impact mitigation not viewed as very relevant to GoL* decision-making processes, therefore good information is necessary in order for everyone to fully understand the scope and cost of impacts
3	Scientific data needed to both justify dams and clarify impacts. Knowledge base must be solid and widely available
4	Questionable whether knowledge base actually influences policies or processes
5	GoL human and budgetary capacity very limited to deal with hydropower planning, social & environmental mitigation measures, monitoring
6	How to support prior notification process of MRC, which MRC does not clearly define, nor at what stage in the process is there a requirement to provide notification to neighbouring countries

** GoL – Government of Lao PDR*

C. OPPORTUNITIES FOR COLLABORATION

The provision of information is critical for effective collaboration. The Lao CSO community identified the following opportunities for collaboration:

1. ***IUCN Water Dialogue:*** IUCN's Mekong Region Water Dialogue has a network of national working groups with 9-10 representatives from: (i) government (e.g. WREA in Lao PDR), (ii) universities, (iii) private sector, and (iv) civil society. The working groups meet every three months. Utilising this network presents another opportunity for the SEA to coordinate national consultations at a regional level. Additional for the baseline assessment, the water dialogue has a series of reports.

2. ***INGO Forum:*** capacity to coordinate between INGOs in Lao PDR, and an email network (LaoFAB) capable of disseminating information throughout the Lao development community.

3. ***Mitigation measures:*** WWF is willing to engage with relevant partners to identify tools to strengthen the process of planning impact mitigation measures.

4. ***Institutional connectivity:*** IWMI is willing to work with the SEA Team to assess the institutional frameworks of the LMB and find optimal hooks to link to the power trade & hydropower decision making processes.

5. ***University/research networks:*** recommended some high-profile multi-stakeholder networks for the SEA to tap into – DRAGON (based at Can Tho University) and Wetland Alliance

Program (based at AIT) – as they provide linking mechanisms between government, INGOs and academic research.

6. ***Public/mass networks:*** plenary recommended the M-Power network, Save the Mekong and mekonginfo.org as options for including a large group of LMB stakeholders. Papers and reports could be disseminated through their communication structures.

7. ***Written submissions****:* suggested that all of the networks and stakeholders identified should be approached for written submissions and existing materials they have which may help the SEA.

8. ***Wildlife trade assessments:*** IUCN, WWF, WCS and Traffic need to provide an assessment of implication for wildlife trade and access to protected areas. Particularly drawing on WCS efforts to develop a curriculum on wild life trade control at the National University of Lao (NUoL);

9. ***WREA capacity building:*** SEM II project is working on building capacity to conduct EIAs within WREA. There are SEM representatives in Champassack and Xayabouly. SEM II would welcome opportunities to work with the SEA where appropriate – capacity building in WREA in the use of environmental assessment tools was an obvious area for collaboration.

2. NEXT STEPS

Similar scoping missions were undertaken in Vietnam, Cambodia and Thailand during August-November 2009. The results of these missions form the backbone of the MRC SEA Inception Report.

The Inception report sets out the SEA scope and methodology based on the outcomes of the scoping missions and other stakeholder consultations. The scoping mission was of particular importance, because subsequent reporting will use the consolidated list of key strategic themes to define and present the assessment. Timing for the subsequent steps and future consultation events in the SEA is outlined in Table 3.

Regional consultations will begin with the Baseline Assessment phase, culminating with a workshop in Phnom Penh (scheduled for January 2010). The Baseline Assessment phase will take each of the themes and associated key issues and analyse the trends over the past 10-20 years and current status. National development objectives for each theme, as explicitly defined in government policy or plans, will be reviewed. Then the impacts assessment phase will overlay futures with and without dams to assess the opportunities and risks of mainstream hydropower on the issues of key concern for each LMB country. The final step will explore avoidance, enhancement and mitigation measures to increase opportunities and minimise the risks for each nation.

Table 6 Schedule of the major consultation events

DATE		MEETING	LOCATION	SEA STAGE
		NATIONAL CONSULTATIONS		
	Viet Nam	***Scoping Phase JUNE – SEPT***		**SCOPING** What are the key development issues for the Mekong River?
JUNE	29-30	VN Government line agency meetings	Ha Noi	
JULY	02	VN National Workshop		
	03	VN Civil Society meeting		
	Lao PDR			
JULY	06-07	LAO Government line agency meetings	Vientiane	
	08-09	LAO National Workshop		
	09	LAO Civil Society meeting		
	10-11	LAO Field Mission: Xayaburi, Luang Prabang	Luang Prabang	
	Cambodia			
JULY	14-15	KH Government line agency meetings	Phnom Penh	
	16-17	KH National Workshop		
	17	KH Civil Society meeting		
AUG	03	VN Civil Society meeting	Ha Noi	
	Thailand			
AUG	14	THAI National Workshop	Bangkok	
SEP/OCT	29-01	THAI Government line agency meetings	Bangkok	
NOV	03	THAI Civil Society meeting	Bangkok	
		REGIONAL CONSULTATIONS		
	Cambodia	***Baseline Assessment Phase OCT - DEC***		**BASELINE ASSESSMENT** What are the past & current trends for these issues?
JAN	21,25	Follow Up: KH Government line agency meetings	Phnom Penh	
	22-23	Cambodian Field Mission: Stung Treng, Sambor	Sambor	
	27-28	Regional Baseline Assessment Workshop	Phnom Penh	
	Thailand	***Impacts Assessment Phase JAN - APR***		**IMPACTS ASSESSMENT** What are the future trends for these issues, with & without mainstream hydropower?
APR	19-20	Follow up: THAI Govt. Line agency meetings		
	22-23	Regional Impacts Assessment Workshop	Bangkok	
	24-25	Thai Field Mission: Ban Koum	Ban Koum	
	Lao PDR			
APR	27-28	Follow up: LAO Govt line agency meetings	Vientiane	
	30	Regional Multistakeholder Workshop	TBD	
MAY	01-02	Lao Field Mission: TBD	TBD	
	Viet Nam	***Avoidance, Enhancement & Mitigation Assessment Phase MAR - JUN***		**MITIGATION** What measures will be useful in enhancing the benefits and avoiding or mitigating the negative effects of mainstream hydropower?
JUN	18, 21-22	Follow up: Vietnam Government line agency meetings	Hanoi/Ho Chi Minh	
	24-25	Regional Mitigation Workshop	Can Tho	

APPENDIX A – WORKSHOP AGENDA & PARTICIPANTS

A1 CIVIL SOCIETY MEETING- AGENDA

MRC SEA OF HYDROPOWER ON THE MEKONG MAINSTREAM

LAO PDR CIVIL SOCIETY ROUNDTABLE

13:00 – 17:00 | 09 JULY 2009

VENUE: NOVOTEL, VIENTIANE

AGENDA

MRC SEA HYDROPOWER ON THE MEKONG MAINSTREAM		
MRC SEA LAO PDR CIVIL SOCIETY ROUNDTABLE		
Date: 9 July 2009		
Location: VIENTIANE		
09 JULY: 13:00 – 17:30		
13:00 – 13:15	*Coffee and Registration*	
13:15 – 13:35	***The aims of the MRC SEA*** (v) Aims (vi) The proposed Mekong mainstream hydropower projects (vii) The approach in this SEA (viii) SEA timeline & milestones	SEA Team
ISSUES FOR THE MEKONG DELTA		
13:35 – 13:50	***Findings of the initial MRC review of LMB concerns*** (i) LMB country priorities (ii) Lao's priorities	SEA Team
13:50 – 14:15	***Findings & Outcomes of the Lao PDR National Scoping Workshop*** (iv) The critical issues for the Mekong River in Lao (v) The development priorities for the Mekong River (vi) Lao's development priorities	SEA Team
14:15 – 15:30	***Plenary discussions on critical development issues for the Mekong River in Lao PDR?***	All participants
15:30 – 15:45	*Coffee break*	
OPPORTUNITES FOR ENGAGEMENT		
15:45 – 16:00	***The SEA schedule and key consultation events***	SEA Team
16:00 – 17:15	***Plenary discussions on opportunities for civil-society engagement***	All participants
17:15 – 17:30	***Next steps forward***	All participants
	Close of workshop	

A2 NATIONAL WORKSHOP - LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

	NAME	POSITION	ORGANISATION
1	Jan Noel Duff	EIA CTA to WREA	SEM II project
2	Chisato Fukuda	Environmental Governance Officer	IUCN
3	Sengpaseuth	Lao Mekong Water Dialogue coordinator	IUCN
4	Frauke Haake	Energy Specialist	WWF
5	Roger Mollet	Fisheries specialist	WWF
6	Vene Vongphet	representative	WCS
7	Florian Rock	representative	GTZ
8	Ulrich	Watershed Management program	GTZ/MRCS
9	Franz Wahl	Independent social specialist	-
10	Diana Suhardiman	Research Associate	IWMI
11	Thongthip Chandalay	ISH Coordinator	LNMC
12	Larry Hass		MRCS - ISH
13	Jeremy Carew-Reid	Team Leader	SEA Team
14	Peter-John Meynell	EIA specialist	SEA Team
15	Elizabeth Man	Social systems specialist	SEA Team
16	Phaknakhone Rattana	Lao national team leader	SEA Team
17	Bounheuang Phanthasith	Natural systems specialist	SEA Team
18	Tarek Ketelsen	Project coordinator	SEA Team

A summary of the Thai Civil Society Organisations (CSO) meeting

An input to the SEA scoping process

ICEM – International Centre for Environmental Management

12/3/2009

Disclaimer

This document was prepared for the Mekong River Commission Secretariat (MRCS) by a consultant team engaged to facilitate preparation of a Strategic Environment Assessment (SEA) of proposals for mainstream dams in the Lower Mekong Basin.

While the SEA is undertaken in a collaborative process involving the MRC Secretariat, National Mekong Committees of the four countries as well as civil society, private sector and other stakeholders, this document was prepared by the SEA Consultant team to assist the Secretariat as part of the information gathering activity. The views, conclusions, and recommendations contained in the document are not to be taken to represent the views of the MRC. Any and all of the MRC views, conclusions, and recommendations will be set forth solely in the MRC reports.

This document is a record of stakeholder consultations and subsequent analysis. Whether they attended meetings or not all stakeholders have been invited to submit written contributions to the SEA exercise via the MRC website.

For further information on the MRC initiative on Sustainable Hydropower (ISH) and the implementation of the SEA of proposed mainstream developments can be found on the MRC website: http://www.mrcmekong.org/ish/ish.htm and http://www.mrcmekong.org/ish/SEA.htm

The following position on mainstream dams is provided on the MRC website in 2009.

MRC position on the proposed mainstream hydropower dams in the Lower Mekong Basin

More than eleven hydropower dams are currently being studied by private sector developers for the mainstream of the Mekong. The 1995 Mekong Agreement requires that such projects are discussed extensively among all four countries prior to any decision being taken. That discussion, facilitated by MRC, will consider the full range of social, environmental and cross-sector development impacts within the Lower Mekong Basin. So far, none of the prospective developers have reached the stage of notification and prior consultation required under the Mekong Agreement. MRC has already carried out extensive studies on the consequences for fisheries and peoples livelihoods and this information is widely available, see for example report of an expert group meeting on dams and fisheries. MRC is undertaking a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the proposed mainstream dams to provide a broader understanding of the opportunities and risks of such development. Dialogue on these planned projects with governments, civil society and the private sector is being facilitated by MRC and all comments received will be considered.

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Email: mrcs@mrcmekong.org

About the MRC SEA of Hydropower on the Mekong mainstream

The Mekong River Commission (MRC) is an inter-governmental river basin organisation that provides the institutional framework to implement the 1995 Mekong Agreement. The Governments of Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Viet Nam signed the Agreement on the Cooperation for the Sustainable Development of the Mekong River Basin. They agreed on joint management of their shared water resources by cooperating in a constructive and mutually beneficial manner for sustainable development, utilization, conservation and management of the Mekong River Basin water and related resources and for poverty alleviation as a contribution to the UN Millennium Development Goals. The two upper states of the Mekong River Basin, the People's Republic of China and the Union of Myanmar, are dialogue partners to the MRC.

In a region undergoing rapid change and economic growth, the MRC considers the development of hydropower on the Mekong mainstream as one of the most important strategic issues facing the Lower Mekong region. Through the knowledge embedded in all MRC programs, the MRC is conducting this Strategic Environment Assessment (SEA) to assist Member states to work together and make the best decisions for the basin.

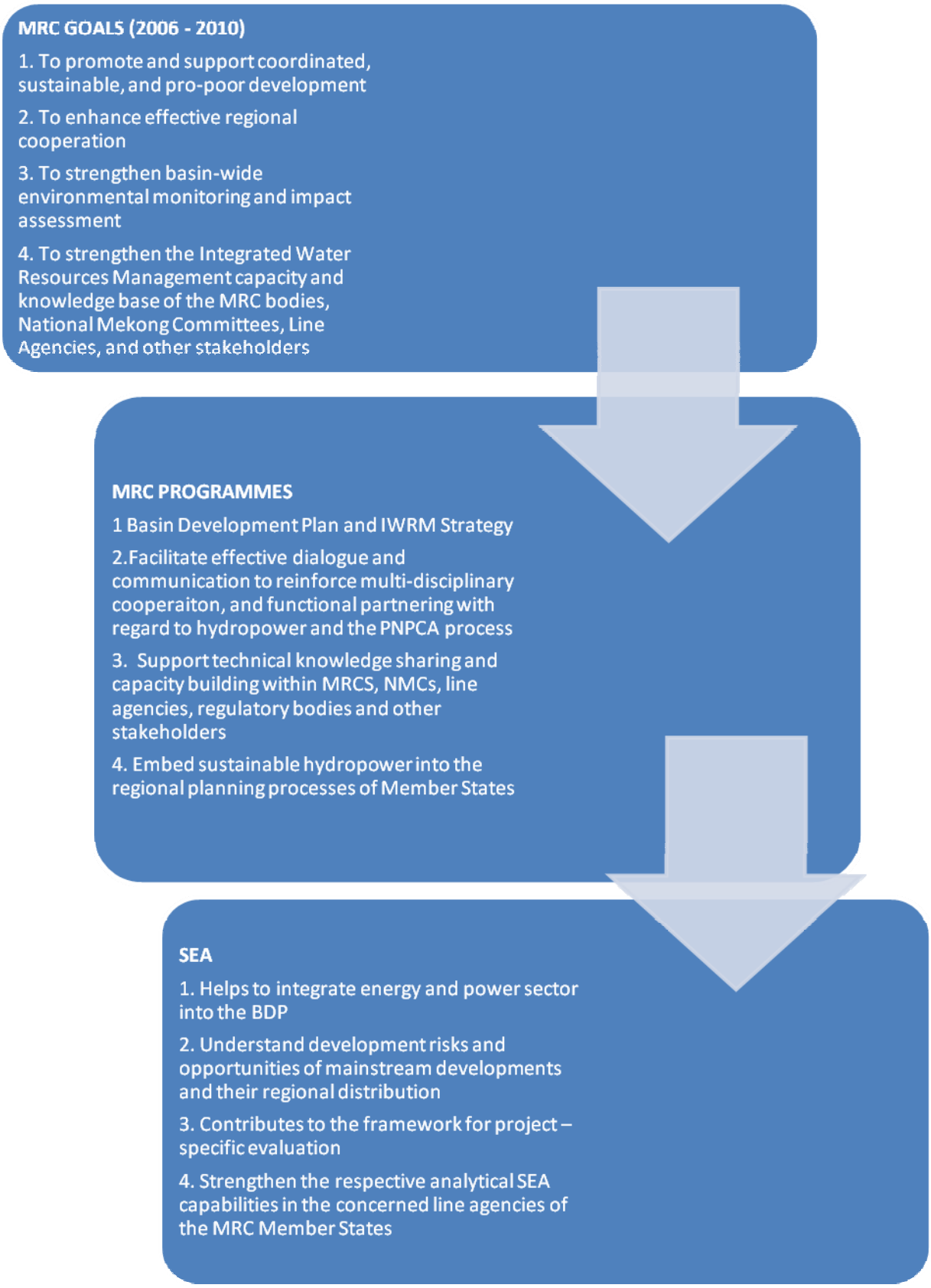
Twelve hydropower schemes have been proposed for the Lao, Lao-Thai and Cambodian reaches of the Mekong mainstream. Implementation of any or all of the proposed mainstream projects in the Lower Mekong Basin (LMB) could have profound and wide-ranging socio-economic and environmental impacts in all four riparian countries.

This SEA seeks to identify the potential opportunities and risks, as well as contribution of these proposed projects to regional development, by assessing alternative mainstream Mekong hydropower development strategies. In particular the SEA focuses on regional distribution of costs and benefits with respect to economic development, social equity and environmental protection. As such, the SEA supports the wider Basin Development Planning (BDP) process by complementing the MRC Basin Development Plan (BDP) assessment of basin-wide development scenarios with more in-depth analysis of power related and cross-sector development opportunities and risks of the proposed mainstream projects in the lower Basin.

The SEA is being coordinated by MRC's cross-cutting MRC Initiative for Sustainable Hydropower (ISH) working with all MRC programmes. The SEA will directly enhance the baseline information and assessment framework for subsequent government review of project-specific EIAs prepared by developers. It will also inform how the MRC can best enhance its support to Member Countries when the formal process under the 1995 Mekong Agreement for prior consultation on any individual mainstream proposal is triggered (i.e. the Procedures for Notification, Prior Consultation and Agreement or PNPCA). The SEA findings will also inform steps that MRC programmes may consider in the next MRC Strategic Plan Cycle (2011-2015) to help address the knowledge gaps and the key areas of uncertainty and risk concerning proposed mainstream developments.

The SEA began in May 2009 and is scheduled to complete the final report and recommendations by mid-2010. This document is one of a series of documents arising from an intensive program of consultations in the Lower Mekong Basin and detailed expert analysis of the issues associated with developing hydropower on the Mekong mainstream. The intention is to consolidate SEA activities and progressively make conclusions and outputs available for public and critical review, so that stakeholder engagement can contribute to the SEA in a meaningful way. A full list of documents is available on the MRC SEA website.

The context and aims of the MRC SEA of Proposed Hydropower Schemes on the lower Mekong mainstream



CONTENTS

NATIONAL SCOPING MISSION

This report provides a summary of discussion and conclusions from the Thai Civil Society scoping meeting undertaken with a cross-section of national NGOs and community action groups working in the Mekong provinces of Thailand. The SEA team recognises that civil society plays an important role in socio-economic development and environmental management in the LMB and that there is a wealth of experience and knowledge embedded in non-government institutions. For the SEA to be effective it must forge effective working relationships with civil society in the LMB. The series of CSO scoping meetings, the later regional workshops, together with the SEA website, provide opportunities for building that relationship with CSOs and for facilitating their involvement in the SEA.

BACKGROUND

Consultations during the SEA process have identified fisheries, agriculture and electricity power emerging as three dominant strategic themes for development in the LMB. Priorities amongst these themes shift between nations but also between national stakeholders. For example, power generation and power trade was highly valued by the Lao government while consultations with the Thai government revealed that power trade and meeting future energy demand was not seen as the critical concern in relation to the development and management of the Mekong River. Priorities for the Thai government were fisheries, agriculture and livelihoods. Agriculture in particular was noted as the sector which could stimulate socio-economic development through irrigation projects.

Thai civil society also considered fisheries as one of the issues of highest importance with implications for biodiversity, local livelihoods and cultures, and future economic development. Agriculture was given less emphasis. Further, there was a feeling that the importance of agriculture and its ability to fuel development in the Mekong provinces is overstated by the government. In general, mega-projects – whether for irrigation and/or power – were not viewed as the answer to development in the riparian provinces. The differing concerns of government and CSO stakeholders reflect a different scale of focus which permeates across all issues of the SEA. Thai CSO constituents and concerns are grounded at the local sphere. Thai government agencies, while cognizant of the local-level concerns, emphasise management and planning at the provincial and national level. The Thai CSO community have seen this difference in focus manifest as an over-emphasis of the benefits of mega-projects and neglect or downplaying of their negative impacts which remain largely at the local level.

The Thai national scoping mission was conducted over three months (August – November 2009). Activities included:

i. An intensive program of individual meetings with key government line agencies
ii. A National Scoping Workshop to define the spatial, temporal and thematic coverage of the SEA
iii. A Thai Civil Society Organisations Roundtable to define the development context and opportunities for cooperation with between the SEA and civil-society

The civil society component was conducted to complement the national governmental consultations, covered in a separate summary report. The Scoping mission consultations were an important start in integrating the concerns and views of Thai civil society into the SEA, as well as exploring avenues for collaboration and civil society involvement in the assessment process. Together the national workshop and CSO roundtable reports provide a summary of the Vietnam perspective on the scope and approach for the SEA.

1. CIVIL SOCIETY SCOPING WORKSHOP

OVERVIEW

The workshop was organised and chaired by the Thai National Mekong Committee. The workshop was facilitated by Dr Apichart Anukularmphai, leader of the SEA Thai national team. There were 51 representatives of more than 40 organisations participating in the meeting which was held on the 03 November 2009 at the Centara Hotel – Udon Thani. A full list of participants together with the workshop agenda appears as Appendix B.

There were two main components to the workshop: introductory presentations, and plenary discussions. Their function and time allocation is set out in Table 1.

Table 7 Main components of the Thai Civil Society Scoping Meeting

ITEM	WORKSHOP COMPONENT	FUNCTION	PROPORTION OF THE WORKSHOP
1	Presentations	▪ Provide a framework for discussion ▪ Share understanding on the nature of the mainstream projects as currently understood ▪ Share understanding of the sectoral focus and priorities of the Government of Thailand ▪ Build understanding of the SEA	25%
2	Plenary Discussions & Question time	▪ Discuss the strategic development issues related to the SEA ▪ Explore opportunities for collaboration and for the SEA team to draw on the wealth of experience and knowledge of the non-government community	75%

1.1 PRESENTATIONS

The SEA team gave a brief presentation on the SEA objectives, the characteristics of the mainstream hydropower projects under assessment, and the SEA approach. The presentations are available from the MRC website.[4]

1.2 PLENARY DISCUSSIONS

[4] http://www.mrcmekong.org/ish/SEA.htm

The plenary session focussed discussion on three areas: the key strategic issues the SEA should address, the opportunities for collaboration with the Thai CSO communities, the Thai experience with dams and recommendations for the SEA. Plenary discussion is summarised in the following six sections. A detailed record of discussion is presented in section C.

A. The strategic framing considerations for the SEA;
B. The key strategic issues for the SEA;
C. Thematic record of the plenary discussion;
D. Lessons learnt from Thai experience with dams;
E. Formal recommendations from plenary; and
F. Opportunities for collaboration

A. KEY FRAMING CONSIDERATIONS

There was significant opportunity for discussion during the CSO roundtable. Some of the discussion touched upon the methodological issues and underlying principles of the SEA. A summary of these key framing considerations has been extracted from the plenary record and presented below as they flag some important issues that the SEA team will need to address in ensuing stages of the SEA process.

1. **Differing world views**: The SEA is operating at the regional/national level of decision making level, while concerns of the Thai CSO participants were focussed on the local scale. It is indicative of a rift between a globalised and localised world view. How the SEA deals with those two perspectives is one of its main challenges and will influence its success.

2. **Promotion of sustainable development:** The MRC as a key regional promoter of sustainable development has an obligation to provide advice to the Mekong countries on the sustainability of the mainstream hydropower projects. The SEA should first provide recommendations on the basis of sustainability principles as to whether or not the projects should go ahead. It should not proceed on an assumption of mainstream hydropower development when the sustainability of the projects remains contested. In this assessment, MRC should not be exploring what is *possible*, but should be helping LMB nations to work out what development is *needed*.

3. **Focussing on "strategic" issues:** Concern was raised by plenary on the appropriateness of sifting many issues down to a few key strategic issues. Some issues which may be significant at the local level will be under-emphasised as the SEA focuses on national development priorities. This reflects a perception that the SEA is a top down assessment and that issues which do not register at the national level will be forgotten.

4. **SEA consultation:** Plenary felt an effective SEA must be grounded as a participatory process, and there was a call to expand the SEA consultation program. CSO are not equal stakeholders in the SEA process, because they are further removed from decision making authority. The SEA should take this into account during the implementation of consultation programs

5. **Tailoring national approaches:** The SEA approach in each country may need to be different, because there are big differences in terms of institutions and governance requirements and

structures. For example Article 67 of the Thai Constitution requires local consultation before approval of dam projects.

6. **Relationship between opportunities and risks:** Demand and support for large infrastructure projects seldom arises in the communities who must then live with their impacts.

B. KEY STRATEGIC ISSUES SUMMARY

A detailed record of the discussion follows in Table 2. However below are the consolidated conclusions identified and adopted by plenary in the last working session of the CSO roundtable.

1. **Focus of the SEA:** The key question which the SEA should address is - should the mainstream Mekong River be dammed or not? Rather than to commission a SEA to consider what effects the construction of dams on the main stream will have.
2. **Ecosystem Dependency:** The ecological systems of Mekong River have served traditional ways of life of local cultures and have long enabled local communities in the basin to live happily and peacefully. For communities diversity is one of the reasons for the success of local livelihoods. Maintaining those natural and social systems should be a key consideration in the evaluation of the proposed projects.

3. **Community participation& local knowledge**: More public participation should be facilitated through listening to opinions of civil society and by utilizing local knowledge in the evaluation of dam projects. The potentially affected populations should be identified as development partners in the decision making process.

4. **Thai experience with dams:** Many existing Dams in Thailand have created severe impacts on the livelihood of local populations, natural resources and environment. There should be a serious effort in collecting this information and lessons learned for inclusion in the SEA.

5. **Energy alternatives & demand:** The main purpose of the proposed mainstream dams is for power generation. Alternative options for power generation should be considered to avoid mainstream hydro-power dams. Also, projected power demand should be reviewed and adjusted to be more accurate in conformity with the real demand.

6. **Improved efficiencies**: Government should invest in improving performance of existing tributary dams before exploring further options
7. **Top-down development is a self-perpetuating cycle:** large-scale development will induce further development which will not be controlled by communities and not be based on community needs but on larger private sector and national development forces. There is the potential for development to spiral out of local control

8. **Food security:** Food security should be a fundamental consideration in the SEA. Fish is a vital source of food for the North-eastern people of Thailand and linked closely to the dietary culture of the region. Therefore, the effects on fish species, their habitats and their productivity are more important than the availability of electricity and maintenance of fisheries is fundamental to maintaining Mekong culture, well-being and livelihoods.

9. **Ecological integrity:** The survival of various fish species depend on the complex ecological regimes of the river including water level, water velocity, water chemistry, breeding and

rearing grounds and migratory pathways. The provision of fish ladders/ fish paths is not a solution in maintaining this ecology as evidences proven from many existing dams in Thailand.

10. **Benefits of megaprojects**: Will megaprojects in the NE region actually improve livelihoods. Power and water supply are good for investor, but the link to improved local livelihoods is less clear and more tenuous. Government policies generally emphasize providing irrigation water for farmers on the assumption that it will solve the poverty of farming population. Large irrigation schemes are not the answer to poverty in the NE region of Thailand. The experience has been that farmers in irrigated areas incur more debt than farmers outside irrigated areas.

11. **Intangible cultural benefits:** In the impact assessment process, due consideration should be given to the traditional way of life and spiritual aspects which cannot be measured in economic terms. Also the SEA should consider the inter-linkage of the ecology of upper, middle and lower reaches of the Mekong River – ie as one river system.

C. RECORD OF PLENARY DISCUSSION

Plenary discussion has been summarized in Table 2, with comments and questions divided by theme.

Table 8 Summary of plenary discussions

No.	Thailand Civil Society National Workshop, Scoping Phase, SEA Key Themes
	1. Metrology, Climate Change, Hydrology, Water Quality & Sediment
1	Sediment dynamics are poorly understood including annual sediment accumulation and the influence of China on this important geomorphologic process. This has implications for soil and water quality and then on the riparian vegetation that can grow downstream
2	In the Songkhram basin it was found that connectivity with ground water reduces the control on flooding offered by dams
3	Flooding is an issue for Loei province and the local feeling is that flood frequency is increasing
4	Drought management is also an issue – need support in understanding and managing droughts
5	There are some fault lines in the LMB (Dien Bien Phu, Petchboon), the SEA should consider geologic instability as an issue for dams close to these fault lines. This has the potential to be an issue for 2 projects (Xayaboury & Pak Lay)
6	River geomorphology & channel course has a strong influence on erosion
7	Questionable whether hydropower reservoirs will improve flood protection – this has not been the Thai experience where poor coordination in dam management has led to serious incidence of flooding
8	In the Songkhram River changes in water levels impacts aquatic species, and has disrupted the fish life cycle
9	Salinity issues are a big problem for the Kong-Chi-Mun project and reservoirs have been shown to influence ground water salinity
10	Need more information on dry and wet season hydrology and the impacts of all developments in the Mekong channel. For example, rapid blasting accelerates flows and increases erosion and is a more significant problem for Mekong provinces of Thailand
11	Concern for the combined influence of climate change and mainstream development on the river's hydrology (specific issues like glacial melt in the Himalayas was mentioned)
	2. Aquatic Biodiversity & Fisheries
1	Aquatic habitats of Mekong fish are vulnerable and there is insufficient study to fully understand the effects of the mainstream dams.
2	Fish ladders are not effective in the Thai experience – fish diversity will be impacted. The SEA should draw

	from existing experience to demonstrate that fish ladders have not worked in the Mekong region
3	Songkhram is an important spawning ground which would be severely impacted by the mainstream dams
4	It is not just spawning grounds that will be impacted but all stages of the fish life cycle (breeding, spawning, rearing, feeding etc). All these stages need differing and unique hydrological conditions which will be changed by the dams
5	Fish stocks in the Chi River are already declining and some species are on the edge of local extinction
6	Overfishing in the Chi basin is already a problem. The loss of Mekong fishing grounds will exacerbate overfishing in tributary catchments
7	Water quality (DO) and water chemistry is important to fish survival
8	Some Thai dams have seen fish species compositions drop from >120 to 20 species
9	Aquaculture in the mainstream River should be promoted and supported
10	There is an existing need for some fishing-free and impact-free zones to protect fish populations
	3. Terrestrial Ecology, Forestry and land use/change
1	Equity should drive development and the use of natural resources
2	Approach should focus on ecosystems not just agriculture. There are some critical areas (Songkhram) which would be devastated by changes to the timing and flows in the river
3	Flooded forests and floodplains need sediment – how will the sediment regime be changed by the dams
	4. Agriculture, Irrigation & Water Supply
1	Called into question the assumed link between large scale irrigation projects (Nam Ngum was mentioned specifically) and local livelihood improvement. If large scale diversions do go ahead, then these should prioritise upstream areas (where the need is greater but the development costs are also higher)
2	Preference for gravity-fed irrigation systems, because of lower operational costs on receiving communities
3	The focus on hydropower is too specific the MRC should focus on overall development and water resource management
4	Agriculture is becoming increasingly unattractive to NE populations
5	Salinity of ground water prevents its use for agriculture and domestic purposes
6	There are trade-offs between water users
7	From the Thai experience, inundated areas are often also the productive agricultural land (e.g. Sirindhon). So dams may compete with agriculture for both land and water resources
8	Dam development is common but sustainability and security in agricultural opportunities have never been seriously developed for the North east
9	China has better experience with multi-use dam development, especially irrigation and increased agricultural productivity – need to assess the lessons
	5. Transport & Navigation
1	The Mekong is a future strategic corridor for China's access to the sea
2	The length and poor navigability of the Mekong Channel through the LMB detract from its use for large-scale navigation
	6. Power Development
1	What do we need the mainstream project electricity for? Do we need the mainstream dams or not? Once that question is answered then if may be appropriate to address which projects and under what conditions should they proceed.
2	Hydropower is an out-of-date mode of electricity production in Thailand. The Thai experience has been overwhelmingly negative
3	Solar, nuclear and other forms of power generation and conservation are not well studied and their potential contribution in meeting demand needs to be better understood.
	7. Tourism
1	Eco-tourism is an under-developed resource that has local level support, but is often neglected at the decision making level.
2	Diversity in culture is important for sustainable tourism and many facets of culture are intimately linked with natural systems
3	Naga festival is very important culturally, but also to tourism. How will the SEA deal with such complex

	phenomena in which risk is high but understanding is low? And will issues like these make it past the SEA screening process?
	8. Poverty, ethnic groups & livelihoods
1	SEA is not asking the right question, if the focus of the MRC is sustainable development for the LMB, then the question is not what will be the effect s of 11 mainstream hydropower projects, rather – what are the priorities for Mekong communities and how can livelihoods and socio-economic security be achieved. SEA should identify and promote development that maximises benefit to local people as a founding principle, not continue to reassess types of development which are already proven to be of little benefit to communities.
2	Impacts will be concentrated on Mekong communities with benefits going elsewhere
3	Local knowledge will help contextualise the SEA, therefore, it is important to incorporate community field studies in the assessment
4	People living near dam sites are amongst the most disadvantaged in Thailand
5	Mainstream hydropower is not a priority for local people
6	Ancillary infrastructure development surrounding mainstream dams can have impacts on local people
7	Distribution of benefits: People who are affected by Ubon Rat dams still do not have access to electricity
8	Diversity in source of livelihoods is important for NE (poor) communities who are dependent on natural resources. It is one of the major reasons for the success of local livelihoods
9	Livelihoods are intricately linked with river and natural resources
10	Should be consultation with all affected dam communities (Pak Chom was specifically mentioned)
11	Cost benefit analysis should explore different populations scales: national, local
	9. Health & Nutrition
1	Diet is intricately linked to culture
2	Food security is much more important than energy security
	10 Resettlement, migration, population growth, human trafficking & urban development
1	Development is a self-reflexive cycle. So dam development will induce further development which will not be controlled by the communities but larger national forces
2	Government keeps pushing a poverty agenda for the NE. But there are many in the NE who do not consider themselves to be poor and who are living sustainably. Government pushes poverty agenda because there is a lot of money in mega-projects and often few benefits to local communities
	Other Issues Raised
1	SEA cannot understand or is not appropriate for localized world view – it is more suited for centralized globalised context
2	Important that the scope of the SEA extends to China, UMB and Chinese influence on regional development
3	SEA must be a participatory process – and needs to receive greater attention
4	Need to improve information dissemination to Mekong communities through the SEA process
5	Development should learn from history. Pa Mong Mainstream dam was first proposed decades ago and was staunchly rejected – there is a body of understanding to draw on. The SEA is still looking at positives and negatives when the Thai, and international experience has been overwhelmingly negative (examples from china dams, pak mun dams, chao praya dams)
6	The issue of mainstream hydropower cannot be detached from cooperation between Mekong countries and regional/international stability
7	Good governance reflects an ability to listen to civil society – it is vital that the recommendations from CSO have an influence on the SEA. Demonstrations, public dissatisfaction and unrest occur when local livelihoods and equity are not given enough consideration
8	SEA should include a review of the impacts and experience of Thai and lessons learnt should be used to inform assessment of mainstream dams. Poverty incidence of people living around 72dams in Thailand has proven that development objectives have not been realised.
9	Academics should be proactive in contributing to the SEA to inform the assessment process
10	SEA is not operating in a political vacuum. What are the implications of the SEA coming out in favour or

	against the dams
11	Fundamental issue with decision making and governments – they do not value local experience and wisdom
12	All mainstream dams should have a public hearing process
13	Engineering approach to development solutions is not appropriate for Thailand. The Thai focus is not to control nature but to live harmoniously with nature
14	SEA teams need to report back to CSOs and clearly outline how information will be used and disseminated
15	Changes to demarcation between borders is already an issue
16	Ministries and line agencies continue to approach development as a sectoral issue, local people think more holistically.

D. LESSONS FROM THE THAI EXPERIENCE WITH DAMS

Thailand has had the longest history with dam development of the LMB countries. There are 72 hydropower dams in Thailand which have been installed during the past half century. There was a strong sense of responsibility from Thai CSO participants to share with other LMB countries the lessons and outcomes of the Thai experience with dams. There was also a feeling that the MRC was the most effective and appropriate vehicle for this exchange because as a regional non-partisan institution it has a mandate on cooperation and improving scientific understanding behind development decision making. While some pointed out benefits of dams, they noted that special efforts were typically required to secure these benefits. The impacts of dams were also discussed at length, such that participants recommended MRC undertake a review of the Thai experience with dams as part of the SEA. A preliminary scope for the review of the Thai experience could be drawn out from the plenary discussion.

Multi-use opportunities: Thailand has both single-use and multi-use dams primarily for power and irrigation users. The connectivity between sectors requires high level political commitment and cooperation as well as design concessions on infrastructure. There are examples in Thailand where infrastructure has unsuccessfully attempted multi-use operations. For example, Rasi salai and Pak Mun dams are not able to allocate water equitably between the two user groups and dry season irrigation has induced follow-on salinity problems for the reservoirs. The Thai experience would offer valuable insight into competition between power and irrigation sectors and the extent to which cooperation is possible.

Retro-fitting & improving efficiencies: Changing government priorities in Thailand have seen some irrigation dams being retrofitted with small-scale hydropower and some measures to improve the efficiency of hydropower projects. While, typically, the scales of these projects are smaller than the mainstream proposals, a review will present some of the benefits and challenges of keeping infrastructure flexible to shifting government agendas.

Decommissioning: Some dams in Thailand have never been fully operational or are undergoing decommissioning. The reasons why projects have failed or are being decommissioned would be a valuable input into the SEA process.

Changes to local livelihoods: The reality of socio-economic development, poverty alleviation and improved livelihoods for communities directly affected by Thai dams is well documented and spans several decades. This is an important body of knowledge to inform discussion of the impacts of the mainstream proposals. In some cases (Hua Na, Rasi Salai and Pak Mun dams) there were no follow

up projects to support or develop the community infrastructure needs which loaded communities with the negative impacts while undercutting the potential benefits. In other cases mentioned (Ubon Rat Dam) many of the directly affected communities still do not have access to electricity generated by the dam leading to demonstration, civil unrest and the breakdown of community trust of mega-projects and government planning. A systematic study of changes to post-dam community livelihoods would be critical for SEA mitigation measures recommended for the mainstream proposals.

Effectiveness of fish ladders: A variety of fish ladders and passes have been tried in Thailand and their effectiveness has been assessed by communities as well as scientific monitoring programs. The experience has been negative. For example, at Pak Mun dam reduction in fish resources has led to increased food insecurity. Further, the ineffectiveness of the Pak Mun fish passage has impacted on the power generating capacity of the project forcing the dam gates to be kept seasonally open to allow fish migration. Other dams in the Chao Praya catchment have seen a shift in fish species composition because of dam operation and the type of passage offered. In the Songkhram River, there is evidence that changing water levels can affect the life-cycles and composition of aquatic species. On the Chi River, declining fish numbers and species composition has exacerbated overfishing. Fish size has been decreasing and increasing pressure from fishers is placed on spawning grounds with livelihood as well as biodiversity implications.

Sediment & nutrient dynamics: downstream communities realise the importance of sediment accumulation in Mun River in nutrient transport and improving the fertility of downstream areas. The Thai experience offers some insight into the sedimentation issues associated with dam operation as well as the problems of increased upstream agriculture and fertiliser use on downstream communities.

E. OPPORTUNITIES FOR COLLABORATION

It was discussed that long-term commitment is required of the SEA team in order to build trust and relationships with CSOs. Some of the key opportunities for collaboration were consolidated by plenary into specific recommendations as set out in the next section.

Specifically, the following potential points of collaboration were identified:

- ***Communication of MRC products:*** Previous MRC's works/products have not been shared or delivered to the general public. It might be published for internal use only. MRC needs to put greater resources and efforts into communicating information about projects to local communities

- ***Increased stakeholder involvement:*** Thai CSO would welcome the opportunity for increased involvement and consultation in the SEA process. Additional workshops were mentioned as a potential avenue, as well as CSO participation in field missions to project sites.

- ***Mekong province resources:*** Academic and research organisations of the thai Mekong provinces are undertaking some of the leading research on community issues and the opportunities and risks of development on local livelihoods. The plenary encouraged these institutions to actively cooperate with the SEA team.

F. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PLENARY

The plenary drafted a set of recommendations. These recommendations were the tangible outcomes of the summary conclusions that the plenary drafted as a way of moving the SEA forward in a direction considered in-line with the concerns and principles of Thai communities of the Mekong provinces.

The SEA should:

1. Organize stakeholders meetings in the proposed project areas namely Ban Kum and Pak Chom.

2. Conduct in-depth study of the impacts created by existing dams by involving the civil society/ those with experiences of existing problems and lessons.

3. Raise awareness of the lessons learned from Thai experiences by organizing technical hearings with local educational and research institutions and with MRC as the host.

4. Widely disseminate the results of studies on risks and opportunities of dam construction to the wider public through various media and television.

5. Increase number of participants in meetings/ public hearings in order to create a wider network of stakeholders and balance in views and experiences.

6. To involve politicians and high level administrators in listening to the opinions of civil society. The Department of Water Resources should invite high level decision makers to the closing ceremonies instead of opening ceremonies so they can hear the results of discussions.

Based on opinions expressed during the workshop which mostly are concerned with the lessons learned from past experiences with existing dams, most participants do not support the construction of mainstream dams. However, for projects which emphasize the maintenance and provision of continued access to natural resources for local communities, not just for a group of individuals/ investors, then the projects should be carefully considered with respect to risks and opportunities. The question which needs to be addressed by the SEA is “for what and for whom are the dams being constructed?”

2. NEXT STEPS

A similar scoping mission was undertaken in Lao PDR, Cambodia and Vietnam during August-November 2009. The results of those missions and the government and CSO consultative workshop reports form the backbone of the MRC SEA Inception Report.

The Inception report determines the SEA scope and methodology based on the outcomes of the scoping process. Timing for the subsequent steps and future consultation events in the SEA is outlined in Table 3.

Regional consultations will begin with the Baseline Assessment phase, culminating with a workshop

in Phnom Penh (scheduled for January 2010). The baseline assessment phase will take each of the themes and associated key issues and analyse the trends and their drivers over the past 10-20years and current status. Government targets and development plans for the theme sectors will be documented. The risks and opportunities assessment phase will overlay futures with and without dams to assess the effects of mainstream hydropower on the issues of key concern for each LMB country. The final step is to explore avoidance, enhancement and mitigation measures to increase opportunities and minimise the risks for each nation.

The scoping mission was of particular importance, because subsequent reporting will use the consolidated list of key strategic themes to define and present the assessment.

Table 9 Schedule of the major consultation events

DATE		MEETING	LOCATION	SEA STAGE
		NATIONAL CONSULTATIONS		
	Viet Nam	***Scoping Phase JUNE – SEPT***		**SCOPING** What are the key development issues for the Mekong River?
JUNE	29-30	VN Government line agency meetings	Ha Noi	
JULY	02	VN National Workshop		
	03	VN Civil Society meeting		
	Lao PDR			
JULY	06-07	LAO Government line agency meetings	Vientiane	
	08-09	LAO National Workshop		
	09	LAO Civil Society meeting		
	10-11	LAO Field Mission: Xayaburi, Luang Prabang	Luang Prabang	
	Cambodia			
JULY	14-15	KH Government line agency meetings	Phnom Penh	
	16-17	KH National Workshop		
	17	KH Civil Society meeting		
AUG	03	VN Civil Society meeting	Ha Noi	
	Thailand			
AUG	14	THAI National Workshop	Bangkok	
SEP/OCT	29-01	THAI Government line agency meetings	Bangkok	
NOV	03	THAI Civil Society meeting	Bangkok	
		REGIONAL CONSULTATIONS		
	Cambodia	***Baseline Assessment Phase OCT - DEC***		**BASELINE ASSESSMENT** What are the past & current trends for these issues?
JAN	21,25	Follow Up: KH Government line agency meetings	Phnom Penh	
	22-23	Cambodian Field Mission: Stung Treng, Sambor	Sambor	
	27-28	Regional Baseline Assessment Workshop	Phnom Penh	
	Thailand	***Impacts Assessment Phase JAN - APR***		**IMPACTS ASSESSMENT** What are the future trends for these issues, with & without mainstream hydropower?
APR	19-20	Follow up: THAI Govt. Line agency meetings		
	22-23	Regional Impacts Assessment Workshop	Bangkok	
	24-25	Thai Field Mission: Ban Koum	Ban Koum	
	Lao PDR			
APR	27-28	Follow up: LAO Govt line agency meetings	Vientiane	
	30	Regional Multistakeholder Workshop	TBD	
MAY	01-02	Lao Field Mission: TBD	TBD	
	Viet Nam	***Avoidance, Enhancement & Mitigation Assessment Phase MAR - JUN***		**MITIGATION** What measures will be useful in enhancing the benefits and avoiding or mitigating the negative effects of mainstream hydropower?
JUN	18, 21-22	Follow up: Vietnam Government line agency meetings	Hanoi/Ho Chi Minh	
	24-25	Regional Mitigation Workshop	Can Tho	

APPENDIX A – WORKSHOP AGENDA & PARTICIPANTS

B1 CIVIL SOCIETY MEETING- AGENDA

MRC SEA OF HYDROPOWER ON THE MEKONG MAINSTREAM

THAILAND CIVIL SOCIETY ROUNDTABLE

08:00 – 17:00 | 03 NOVEMBER 2009

CENTARA HOTEL | UDON THANI

AGENDA

MRC SEA HYDROPOWER ON THE MEKONG MAINSTREAM		
MRC SEA THAILAND CIVIL SOCIETY ROUNDTABLE		
Date: 03 November 2009		
Location: CENTARA HOTEL, Udon Thani Province		
8:30 - 8:40	Opening remarks	Director TNMC
8:40 – 8:50	Opening Remarks	MRCS CEO Mr Jeremy Bird
8:50 – 9:15	ISH – Regional institutional context for the SEA of hydropower on the mainstream	MRC ISH – Mr Voradeth Phonekeo/Larry Haas
9:15 – 9:45	Overview of the projects	Mr Peter-John Meynell
9:45 – 10:10	The MRC SEA: objectives, approach and timing	Dr Jeremy Carew-Reid
10:10 - 10:30	Coffee break	
10:30 – 10:50	Results from the Thai national government consultations	Dr Jeremy Carew-Reid
10:50 - 11:00	Approach to workshop discussions (10mins)	Dr Apichart
11:00 – 11:15 11:15 - 12:00	Plenary 1A: initial comments on themes for discussion Plenary 1B: Facilitated discussion according to key themes 1. Fisheries 2. Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Resources 3. Power sources and security 4. Environment and Biodiversity 5. Livelihoods, poverty and socio-economics 6. Other?? 7. other	Facilitator Dr Apichart
12:00 - 13:00	Lunch	
13:00 – 15:00	Plenary 2: facilitated discussion according to key themes continued	Facilitator Dr Apichart
15:00 – 15:30	Coffee break	
15:30 – 16:30	Presentations of resolutions from plenary 2 -(i) issues & (ii) points of agreement	Facilitator Dr Apichart
16:40 – 16:50	The next steps	Dr Jeremy Carew-Reid
16:50-17:00	Closing remarks	Facilitation Dr Apichart

B2 NATIONAL WORKSHOP - LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

	NAME		ORGANIZATION	PROVINCE
1	Pakawan	Julamanee	TNMC, Water Resource Department	Bangkok
2	Nirat	Phuriphanpinyo	TNMC, Water Resource Department	Bangkok
3	Paramin	Sansongsak	TNMC, Water Resource Department	Bangkok
4	Penpisuth	Sriprasert	TNMC, Water Resource Department	Bangkok
5	Surajit	Chirawate	Chairman of the Water Resource Senator Commission	Bangkok
6	Thaworn	Deerun	CARE Thailand, Field Office	Khon Kaen
7	Warisaralee	Keawplaung	Moon River Basin, Committee	Surin
8	Wuthichai	Sriprachan	Lumtakong Sub-basin Network, Committee	Nakorn Ratchasima
9	Trisith	Poomsuk	Moon River Basin NGO Network	Surin
10	Prom	Pholboon	Moon River Basin NGO Network	Bureerum
11	Bunyanart	Sattaruangchaisri	Hauysamran Sub-basin Working Group	Srisaket
12	Nopparat	Krungmee	Natural Resource and Environment Volunteer	Surin
13	Hansa	Chokdee	Community Ecology Institute	Ubon Ratchathani
14	Thongpon	Chaikham	Lower Moon Sub-Basin Network	Ubon Ratchathani
15	Udom	SaengPong	PhoSri Tambon Adminstration Organization	Ubon Ratchathani
16	Kittipop	Tonkitcharoen	Ban Kan Rai Leader Network	Ubon Ratchathani
17	Prasith	Wansret	Director of Water Resources Regional Office No.4	Khon Kaen
18	Somkid	Singsong	Subsomboon Village	Khon Kaen
19	Jongkol	Pimwapee	Chairman of 5T	Khon Kaen
20	Samart	Phongsa	Manager of Esarn Cooperatives Limited	Khon Kaen
21	Pranhod	Sertwicha	MRC 5T	Roi Et
22	Eaychai	Watha	Chairman of Esarn Environmental Assembly	Mahasarakam
23	Bumrung	Kayotha	Chairman of Esarn Alternative Agriculture Network	Kalasin
24	Yanyong	IntaMuang	Natural Resource and Environment Faculty, Mahasarakam University	Mahasarakam
25	Bandith	Akarapacha		Roi Et
26	Pitak	Chompoochan	Director of Water Resources Regional Office No. 3	Udon Thani
27	Prasart	Tongsiri		Sakolnakorn
28	Paijitara	Silaraksa		Srisaket
29	Yongyut	Nawaniyom		Ubon Ratchathani
30	Somkiat	Phonphai		Ubon Ratchathani
31	Boonmee	Khumruang		Ubon Ratchathani

32	Laohthai	Nilnual	Mekong Sustainable Agriculture Extension Association	Sakolnakorn
33	Niphon	Moonmuangsan	Mekong Sustainable Agriculture Extension Association, President	Sakolnakorn
34	Suriya	Kotamee	Water User Network	Nakorn Phanom
35	Bunpot	Srichannit		Sakolnakorn
36	Sopsant	Petchkam	Sakolnakorn University	Sakolnakorn
37	Chaipandhu	Prapasawat	Community Right Association 3	Chiangmai
38	Phaitoon	Pongnara	Chairman, Rehabilitation of Local Community Working Group	Loei
39	Phakphoom	Buphamas	Chairman, Udonthani Natural Resources and Environment Volunteers	Udon Thani
40	Somkiat	Sriphaddha	Ratchapat Udonthani University	Udon Thani
41	Narong	Khaidum		NongKhai
42	Chaloah	Suktho	Community Network Development Association	Surin
43	Chalerm	Chompoothong	Chi River Basin Farmer	Roi Et
44	Narong	Pholyiem	Roi-Et River Sub-basin	Roi Et
45	Khajornsak	Khenchaiwong	Songkram River Sub-basin	Nakorn Phanom
46	Jaisawan	Kotamee	Songkram River Sub-basin	Nakorn Phanom
47	Surachai	Narongsilpa	Songkram River Sub-basin	Nakorn Phanom
48	Niwet	Sanekate	Songkram River Sub-basin	Nakorn Phanom
49	Chokthawee	Nagajerd	Songkram River Sub-basin	Nakorn Phanom
50	Rathaphon	Pitakthepsombat	Chi River Basin Project, WWF Thailand	Khon Kaen
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54	Voradeth	Phonekeo	Manager, Hydropower Programme	MRCS
55	Hang	Pham Thi Thanh	BDP Program Coordinator	MRCS
56	Thanapon	Piman	Planning Division	MRCS
57	Lawrence	Haas	ISEI	MRCS
58	Jeremy	Carew-Reid	SEA Team Leader	ICEM
59	Tarek	Ketelsen	SEA Project Coordinator	ICEM
60	Apichart	Anukularmphai	SEA Thai Team	ICEM
61	Peter-John	Meynell	SEA Thai Team	ICEM
62	Piyathip	Eawpanich	SEA Thai Team	ICEM

MRC SEA of HYDROPOWER ON THE MEKONG MAINSTREAM

A summary of the Vietnamese Civil Society Organisations (CSO) meeting

An input to the SEA scoping process

ICEM – International Centre for Environmental Management

7/22/2009

Disclaimer

This document was prepared for the Mekong River Commission Secretariat (MRCS) by a consultant team engaged to facilitate preparation of a Strategic Environment Assessment (SEA) of proposals for mainstream dams in the Lower Mekong Basin.

While the SEA is undertaken in a collaborative process involving the MRC Secretariat, National Mekong Committees of the four countries as well as civil society, private sector and other stakeholders, this document was prepared by the SEA Consultant team to assist the Secretariat as part of the information gathering activity. The views, conclusions, and recommendations contained in the document are not to be taken to represent the views of the MRC. Any and all of the MRC views, conclusions, and recommendations will be set forth solely in the MRC reports.

This document is a record of stakeholder consultations and subsequent analysis. Whether they attended meetings or not all stakeholders have been invited to submit written contributions to the SEA exercise via the MRC website.

For further information on the MRC initiative on Sustainable Hydropower (ISH) and the implementation of the SEA of proposed mainstream developments can be found on the MRC website: http://www.mrcmekong.org/ish/ish.htm and http://www.mrcmekong.org/ish/SEA.htm

The following position on mainstream dams is provided on the MRC website in 2009.

MRC position on the proposed mainstream hydropower dams in the Lower Mekong Basin

More than eleven hydropower dams are currently being studied by private sector developers for the mainstream of the Mekong. The 1995 Mekong Agreement requires that such projects are discussed extensively among all four countries prior to any decision being taken. That discussion, facilitated by MRC, will consider the full range of social, environmental and cross-sector development impacts within the Lower Mekong Basin. So far, none of the prospective developers have reached the stage of notification and prior consultation required under the Mekong Agreement. MRC has already carried out extensive studies on the consequences for fisheries and peoples livelihoods and this information is widely available, see for example report of an expert group meeting on dams and fisheries. MRC is undertaking a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the proposed mainstream dams to provide a broader understanding of the opportunities and risks of such development. Dialogue on these planned projects with governments, civil society and the private sector is being facilitated by MRC and all comments received will be considered.

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About the MRC SEA of Hydropower on the Mekong mainstream

The Mekong River Commission (MRC) is an inter-governmental river basin organisation that provides the institutional framework to implement the 1995 Mekong Agreement. The Governments of Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Viet Nam signed the Agreement on the Cooperation for the Sustainable Development of the Mekong River Basin. They agreed on joint management of their shared water resources by cooperating in a constructive and mutually beneficial manner for sustainable development, utilization, conservation and management of the Mekong River Basin water and related resources and for poverty alleviation as a contribution to the UN Millennium Development Goals. The two upper states of the Mekong River Basin, the People's Republic of China and the Union of Myanmar, are dialogue partners to the MRC.

In a region undergoing rapid change and economic growth, the MRC considers the development of hydropower on the Mekong mainstream as one of the most important strategic issues facing the Lower Mekong region. Through the knowledge embedded in all MRC programs, the MRC is conducting this Strategic Environment Assessment (SEA) to assist Member states to work together and make the best decisions for the basin.

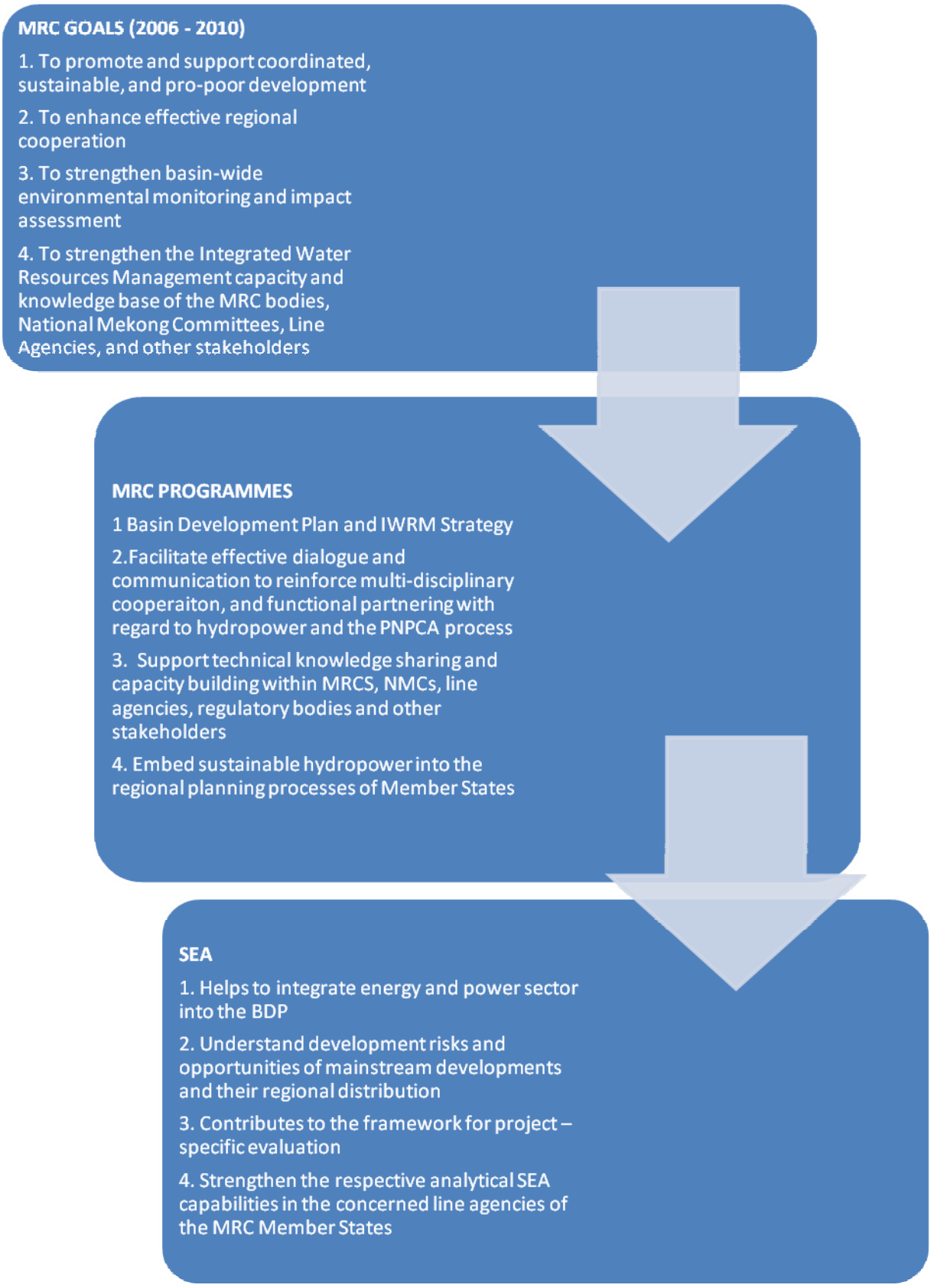
Twelve hydropower schemes have been proposed for the Lao, Lao-Thai and Cambodian reaches of the Mekong mainstream. Implementation of any or all of the proposed mainstream projects in the Lower Mekong Basin (LMB) could have profound and wide-ranging socio-economic and environmental impacts in all four riparian countries.

This SEA seeks to identify the potential opportunities and risks, as well as contribution of these proposed projects to regional development, by assessing alternative mainstream Mekong hydropower development strategies. In particular the SEA focuses on regional distribution of costs and benefits with respect to economic development, social equity and environmental protection. As such, the SEA supports the wider Basin Development Planning (BDP) process by complementing the MRC Basin Development Plan (BDP) assessment of basin-wide development scenarios with more in-depth analysis of power related and cross-sector development opportunities and risks of the proposed mainstream projects in the lower Basin.

The SEA is being coordinated by MRC's cross-cutting MRC Initiative for Sustainable Hydropower (ISH) working with all MRC programmes. The SEA will directly enhance the baseline information and assessment framework for subsequent government review of project-specific EIAs prepared by developers. It will also inform how the MRC can best enhance its support to Member Countries when the formal process under the 1995 Mekong Agreement for prior consultation on any individual mainstream proposal is triggered (i.e. the Procedures for Notification, Prior Consultation and Agreement or PNPCA). The SEA findings will also inform steps that MRC programmes may consider in the next MRC Strategic Plan Cycle (2011-2015) to help address the knowledge gaps and the key areas of uncertainty and risk concerning proposed mainstream developments.

The SEA began in May 2009 and is scheduled to complete the final report and recommendations by mid-2010. This document is one of a series of documents arising from an intensive program of consultations in the Lower Mekong Basin and detailed expert analysis of the issues associated with developing hydropower on the Mekong mainstream. The intention is to consolidate SEA activities and progressively make conclusions and outputs available for public and critical review, so that stakeholder engagement can contribute to the SEA in a meaningful way. A full list of documents is available on the MRC SEA website.

The context and aims of the MRC SEA of Proposed Hydropower Schemes on the lower Mekong mainstream



CONTENTS

NATIONAL SCOPING MISSION

This report provides a summary of discussion at the Vietnam Civil Society scoping meeting undertaken with a cross-section of international and national NGOs working in Vietnam. The SEA team recognises that civil society plays an important role in socio-economic development and environmental management in the LMB and that there is a wealth of experience and knowledge embedded in non-government institutions. For the SEA to be effective it must forge effective working relationships with civil society in the LMB. The series of CSO scoping meetings, the later regional workshops, together with the SEA website, provide opportunities for building that relationship with CSOs and for facilitating their involvement in the SEA.

BACKGROUND

Though no mainstream dams are proposed in Vietnam, the country has a complex involvement with hydropower development on the Mekong mainstream. National per capita power demand is second only to Thailand for the LMB region, with projected grid power demand expected to double by 2020 (ADB, 2008). In the regional context, this means that Vietnam is one of the key strategic markets for potential power produced by mainstream dams, with two dams being tailored explicitly for the Vietnamese market. The country is also one of the leading regional proponents of hydropower and the National Electricity Law (2004) provides the mandate to maximize the use of hydropower for power generation. Further, Vietnam-based developers are some of the most active proponents for development of hydropower throughout the region, with one mainstream dam – Luong Prabang – under exploration by a Vietnamese developer. Last, the Mekong Delta, home to 18million people and the most important agricultural region in Vietnam contributing 60% of the national rice yield and 50% of Vietnamese agricultural exports, is highly susceptible to the risks and opportunities presented by mainstream hydropower development.

Cognizant of the multiple and sometimes conflicting national and local interests, participants at the CSO Scoping workshop elected to focus discussion on the Mekong Delta but also considered the possible futures of regional energy security and trade, and the strategic direction the SEA should take.

The Vietnam national scoping mission was conducted over five days (29 June – 02 July 2009), with the CSO meeting on the 03 August. Activities included:

vi. An intensive program of individual meetings with key government line agencies
vii. A National Scoping Workshop involving government line agencies and some NGOs to define the spatial, temporal and thematic coverage of the SEA
viii. A Vietnamese Civil Society Organisations Roundtable to define the development context and opportunities for cooperation with between the SEA and civil-society

The civil society component was conducted to complement the national governmental consultations covered in a separate summary report. The Scoping mission consultations were an important start in integrating the concerns and views of Vietnamese civil society into the SEA process, as well as exploring avenues for collaboration and civil society involvement in the SEA process. Together the national workshop and CSO roundtable reports provide a summary of the Vietnam perspective on the scope and approach for the SEA.

1. CIVIL SOCIETY SCOPING WORKSHOP

OVERVIEW

The workshop was organised and chaired by the SEA team with support from the Vietnam National Mekong Committee. 28 representatives of 13 organisations participated in the meeting which was held on the 03 August 2009 at the Press Club – Hanoi. A full list of participants together with the workshop agenda appears as Appendix B.

There were two main components to the workshop: introductory presentations, and plenary discussions. Their function and time allocation is set out in Table 1.

Table 10 Main components of the Vietnam Civil Society Scoping Meeting

ITEM	WORKSHOP COMPONENT	FUNCTION	PROPORTION OF THE WORKSHOP
1	Presentations	▪ Stimulate discussion ▪ Share understanding of the sectoral focus and priorities of the Government of Vietnam ▪ Build understanding of the SEA	25%
2	Plenary Discussions & Question time	▪ Discuss the strategic development issues related to the SEA ▪ Explore opportunities for collaboration and for the SEA team to draw on the wealth of experience and knowledge of the non-government community	75%

1.1 PRESENTATIONS

The SEA team gave a brief presentation on the objectives, the mainstream hydropower projects under assessment, and the SEA approach. They are available from the MRC website.[5]

1.2 PLENARY DISCUSSIONS

[5] http://www.mrcmekong.org/ish/SEA.htm

The plenary session focussed discussion around three key areas:

A. The SEA process and methods
B. The key strategic issues which should define the scope of the SEA; and
C. Opportunities for collaboration

A. SEA PROCESS

CSO participants provided some strategic comments on the SEA process itself:

- ***Information packaging***: SEAs should aim to improve the availability of information and analysis throughout the stakeholder and decision-making groups. The stakeholder mix for this SEA is complex (regional, national, local and government, INGOs, NGOs) and the success of the SEA will depend on how information is packaged and communicated. The SEA team and the MRC needs to explore packaging the SEA analysis and outcomes for each stakeholder – ie different reports and communications products for government and for INGOs;

- ***Information access:*** The information must be made available to all stakeholders not just top decision makers. A free and open policy towards information will improve the impact and influence of the SEA on future decision making;

- ***Integration of SEA into decision making:*** Often SEA reports end up not being used. Effort should be spent exploring how to best integrate results into the decision making process (in terms of products, timing, government involvement and follow up);

- ***NGO involvement:*** A challenge for the SEA in Vietnam is how to engage NGOs effectively in the process. INGOs may not be the best focus for continued CSO involvement – as experience with the bauxite mining issue has shown, local NGOs can have more success than INGOs in influencing key development decisions;

- ***Local community involvement:*** 18 million people in MD dependent on riparian resources – communities are increasingly worried about influence from upstream activities on sediment, river flow and impacts on forestry / biodiversity. The SEA needs to work out how to include these people in the stakeholder mix, and to involve southern local government agencies in the process.

B. KEY STRATEGIC ISSUES SUMMARY

A record of the discussion follows in Table 2. However below are highlighted four issues which arose consistently during the meeting.

- ***Community representation:*** A number of CSOs expressed concern that there is a disparity in influence between the stakeholders who make or benefit from decisions on mainstream hydropower and those who are likely to be most negatively affected by mainstream development. This imbalance in input to development decisions is likely to manifest at the inter-national level, but also at the local level. There was a strong view – expressed in the context of a

number of issues (eg resettlement, flooding, poverty, water quality, fisheries) – that the SEA must connect with a wide range of stakeholders so that decision making can be fully informed of the burden of risks.

- ***Mitigation:*** Participants considered that the effectiveness of mitigation measures is often exaggerated. At the conceptual phase, this can increase support for project feasibility by down-playing the ramifications of negative impacts. The plenary urged the SEA team and LMB governments to be realistic about what physical (eg fish ladders) and process (eg flow and sediment management) mitigation measures can actually achieve, before endorsing or rejecting a project. Mitigation can appear feasible but there may not be the monitoring and institutional framework, nor the proven track record in the Mekong region to make them effective in practice.

- ***Connectivity:*** The strategic issues of concern to the mainstream development decisions are related to connectivity in the basin between sectors; environmental and social health; natural resources and livelihoods; flooding and agriculture. Those relationships need to be fully explored and assessed in the SEA – because actions in one sector concerning the uses of a shared resource will have repercussions and involve trade-offs which must be well understood.

- ***Benefits sharing:*** The plenary noted that there is considerable experience with benefit sharing form hydropower in Vietnam. The critical lesson is that benefits sharing cannot be a one-off event and must be a continuous, systematic process over many years. The notion of a "trickle-down" of benefits to local communities from hydropower is yet to be successfully demonstrated in Vietnam.

C. RECORD OF PLENARY DISCUSSION

Plenary discussion has been summarized in Table 2, with comments and questions divided by theme.

Table 11 Summary of plenary discussions

Vietnam Civil Society National Workshop, Scoping Phase, SEA	
No.	Key Themes
	1. Metrology, Climate Change, Hydrology, Water Quality & Sediment
1	Change in water flows directly effects livelihoods in many ways which need to be assessed and documented
2	Sediment is poorly understood but very important for river ecology and morphology – and changes due to dams may even effect the delta
3	The flooding regime is an important factor for local communities livelihoods (eg for agricultural productivity, for food foraging, for fisheries, reducing acid sulphate soils, controlling saline intrusion). Changes in the regime will affect other sectors and local communities in a wide variety of ways.
4	The effects of sea level rise in the Delta could be exacerbated by changes to the flow regime especially during extreme storm situations in the monsoon
	2. Aquatic Biodiversity & Fisheries
1	Fisheries – effects on migration patterns will be significant and potential for local species extinction (esp. catfish and other threatened species)
2	Some aquatic systems are highly vulnerable to changing water levels (eg U Minh national park and Tonle Sap flooded forests)
3	Environmental and social health and well-being are intricately linked – need to recognize these connectivity

	issues
4	Development can open up pathways for increased environmental and biodiversity degradation – resettlement can exacerbate this impact. The experience with roads in the region for example, has shown a direct relationship with biodiversity loss.
	3. Terrestrial Ecology, Forestry and land use/change
1	The impacts on biodiversity in the Delta could be very significant (e.g. *melaluca* forest could be lost in UMT and Tran Chim), including the direct impacts of reservoirs (forest and aquatic system losses)
	4. Agriculture, Irrigation & Water Supply
1	Saline intrusion is becoming a very significant factor in agricultural productivity – will the dams make this trend worse or improve it?
	5. Transport & Navigation
1	Extensive road and canal networks are sensitive to flooding and sedimentation regime
	6. Power Development
1	SEA needs to capture the debate, but focus on the risks (especially in other sectors)
2	Contested energy demand analysis for the region – the SEA should look at the range of demand predictions and let policy makers know that there is substantial uncertainty in this field
3	Not just dam sites, but surrounding infrastructure (especially transmission lines) will have significant effects – the SEA needs to look at the cumulative and multiplier effects of those developments
4	Must look at the impact of the complete dam life cycle: i) construction (e.g. roads), ii) running / operations (e.g. transmission lines) and iii) decommissioning (including costs)
5	Dam safety and catastrophic failures: recognized as a problem in China, and concerned it will also be a problem for the LMB mainstream projects especially in the cascade system where failure in one dam could have flow on impacts.
	7. Tourism
1	Tourism in the Delta is rapidly expanding – for its cultural and natural system assets – how will the mainstream dams effect Delta tourism?
	8. Poverty, ethnic groups & livelihoods
1	Consultation with displaced people is poorly managed at present in the power sector – and follow up during the project life time is inconsistent and inadequate – often poorly managed by government. Overall the experience has not been good in Vietnam with hydropower projects and local communities.
2	Major projects typically have not considered long term affects on community livelihoods
3	Benefit sharing must be a long term commitment – not a one off. The experience with hydropower in Vietnam demonstrates that the benefit do not 'trickle down' to poor people – and that compensations packages are short lived and leave affected families worse off.
4	Focus on 'big topics' like climate change could see other localized issues to do with livelihoods of specific communities forgotten – need to ensure a balance in the SEA
5	Power development in this region is skewed with benefits going to urban communities and wealthy interests - how will the mainstream projects be any different?
	9. Health & Nutrition
1	There have been significant local health impacts following hydropower development in Vietnam – these need to be assessed for lessons learned
	10 Resettlement, migration, population growth, human trafficking & urban development
1	Human trafficking is an issues for the LMB and may be aggravated by increasing and unmanaged access to poor communities
2	Impacts on communities are complex – communities can be ill-informed by developers so that they make inappropriate decisions (that jeopardize their livelihood) or they stall major decisions because of an uncertain future (like building new or improving their existing houses) also to the detriment of their livelihoods
3	Resettlement (need to look alternatives): E.g. In Son La Province – very little attention given to resettlement locations, resulting in greater forest loss (timber from forest), as GoV does not address this impact and local people which no sense of resource ownership or stewardship seize the opportunity to take as much timber / resources as possible.

	Other Issues Raised
1	Jeopardizes the opportunities for sustainable development in the region based on the precautionary principle
2	Weaknesses of SEA is that the scope appears to be limited – eg does it cover the thorough consideration of energy alternatives
3	Regional cooperation is an important issue in making mainstream development plans – how to build this?
4	Advocacy – is an important issue. How to represent the interests of poor people and affected communities
5	Consultation: concerned about the adequacy of resources given to facilitating participation in these big assessments. How is this SEA to facilitate a convincing consultation process?
6	Institutional and capacity issues for undertaking SEA and EIA in Vietnam. Especially how the government defines and addresses trade-offs
7	There are serious untested assumptions about the effectiveness of mitigation and design measures relating to the dam projects – especially those relating to fish ladders and treatment of sediments
8	At present local people have little information on the projects which might affect them to be involved in the decision making process

C. OPPORTUNITIES FOR COLLABORATION

The two way flow of information is critical for effective collaboration with the CSO community. The plenary saw communication support and information transfer as one of the key areas where CSOs could contribute to the SEA.

Specifically, the following potential points of collaboration were identified:

1. ***SEA CSO Working Group:*** It was suggested the SEA team establish a CSO working group, to including many more NGO's (including those in the south). The NGO Resource Centre could help facilitate this and coordinate logistics. The Centre has climate change, ethnic minorities & disaster management working groups, and hundreds of NGOs in its network – although it was pointed out that this Centre only has international NGO members. Also, there are only 4 staff at the NGO resource centre so limits to the time which could be given to SEA related activities.

2. ***INGO Regional coordination:*** WWF, Action Aid, World Vision, Birdlife and Oxfam work in several or all of the LMB nations and could ensure regional coordination of communications to CSO through their networks. Also, Oxfam Cambodia is a member of: (i) the Rivers Coalition, (ii) Save the Mekong, and (iii) Hydropower Assessment Forum, and can offer coordination with these networks. Action Aid offered to help facilitate CSO involvement in the countries where it had offices.

3. ***Hydropower case studies & experience:*** Oxfam Vietnam, WWF, Birdlife International can offer experience and lessons learned with Hydropower in Vietnam. The WWF GMS Program has an energy consultant based in Vientiane, whose expertise could be beneficial to the SEA.

4. ***Funding and logistical contributions:*** WWF is willing to contribute one staff member in each LMB country and USD$ 20,000-30,000 for organising awareness raising and information sharing meetings on mainstream dams for both government and nongovernment stakeholders.

5. ***SEA Regional Workshops:*** participants expressed a desire to continue to be involved in other formal SEA consultations – including the four regional workshops

6. ***Written submissions****:* CSOs expressed a desire to submit formal written submissions to the SEA team on issues that were of particular concern to their organisations regarding mainstream dams.

7. ***Baseline information:*** NGO projects could provide information and data to build the 'evidence base' for the SEA (for example GIS data, maps, reports). All CSOs indicated that they have information and some resources which would be useful to the SEA. Particularly, follow-up with Action Aid, WWF, Oxfam, Pan Nature, Birdlife.

2. NEXT STEPS

A similar scoping mission was undertaken in Lao PDR, Cambodia and Thailand during August-November 2009. The results of those missions and the government and CSO consultative workshop reports form the backbone of the MRC SEA Inception Report.

The Inception report determines the SEA scope and methodology based on the outcomes of the scoping process. The scoping mission was of particular importance, because subsequent reporting will use the consolidated list of key strategic themes to define and present the assessment.

Timing for the subsequent steps and future consultation events in the SEA is outlined in Table 3.

Regional consultations will begin with the Baseline Assessment phase, culminating with a workshop in Phnom Penh (scheduled for January 2010). The baseline assessment phase will take each of the themes and associated key issues and analyse the trends and their drivers over the past 10-20years and current status. Government targets and development plans for the theme sectors will be documented. The risks and opportunities assessment phase will overlay futures with and without dams to assess the effects of mainstream hydropower on the issues of key concern for each LMB country. The final step is to explore avoidance, enhancement and mitigation measures to increase opportunities and minimise the risks for each nation.

Table 12 Schedule of the major consultation events

DATE		MEETING	LOCATION	SEA STAGE
		NATIONAL CONSULTATIONS		
	Viet Nam	***Scoping Phase*** ***JUNE – SEPT***		SCOPING What are the key development issues for the Mekong River?
JUNE	29-30	VN Government line agency meetings	Ha Noi	
JULY	02	VN National Workshop		
	03	VN Civil Society meeting		
	Lao PDR			
JULY	06-07	LAO Government line agency meetings	Vientiane	
	08-09	LAO National Workshop		
	09	LAO Civil Society meeting		
	10-11	LAO Field Mission: Xayaburi, Luang Prabang	Luang Prabang	
	Cambodia			
JULY	14-15	KH Government line agency meetings	Phnom	

			Penh	
	16-17	KH National Workshop		
	17	KH Civil Society meeting		
AUG	03	VN Civil Society meeting	Ha Noi	
	Thailand			
AUG	14	THAI National Workshop	Bangkok	
SEP/OCT	29-01	THAI Government line agency meetings	Bangkok	
NOV	03	THAI Civil Society meeting	Bangkok	
		REGIONAL CONSULTATIONS		
	Cambodia	***Baseline Assessment Phase*** ***OCT - DEC***		**BASELINE ASSESSMENT** What are the past & current trends for these issues?
JAN	21,25	Follow Up: KH Government line agency meetings	Phnom Penh	
	22-23	Cambodian Field Mission: Stung Treng, Sambor	Sambor	
	27-28	Regional Baseline Assessment Workshop	Phnom Penh	
	Thailand	***Impacts Assessment Phase*** ***JAN - APR***		**IMPACTS ASSESSMENT** What are the future trends for these issues, with & without mainstream hydropower?
APR	19-20	Follow up: THAI Govt. Line agency meetings		
	22-23	Regional Impacts Assessment Workshop	Bangkok	
	24-25	Thai Field Mission: Ban Koum	Ban Koum	
	Lao PDR			
APR	27-28	Follow up: LAO Govt line agency meetings	Vientiane	
	30	Regional Multistakeholder Workshop	TBD	
MAY	01-02	Lao Field Mission: TBD	TBD	
	Viet Nam	***Avoidance, Enhancement & Mitigation Assessment Phase*** ***MAR - JUN***		**MITIGATION** What measures will be useful in enhancing the benefits and avoiding or mitigating the negative effects of mainstream hydropower?
JUN	18, 21-22	Follow up: Vietnam Government line agency meetings	Hanoi/Ho Chi Minh	
	24-25	Regional Mitigation Workshop	Can Tho	

APPENDIX A – WORKSHOP AGENDA & PARTICIPANTS

A1 CIVIL SOCIETY MEETING- AGENDA

MRC SEA OF HYDROPOWER ON THE MEKONG MAINSTREAM

VIETNAM CIVIL SOCIETY ROUNDTABLE

13:00 – 17:00 | 3 AUGUST 2009

VENUE: PRESS CLUB – 59A LY THAI STREET, HANOI

AGENDA

MRC SEA HYDROPOWER ON THE MEKONG MAINSTREAM		
MRC SEA VIETNAM CIVIL SOCIETY ROUNDTABLE		
Date: 3 August 2009		
Location: Hanoi		
3 August: 13:00 – 17:30		
13:00 – 13:15	*Coffee and Registration*	
13:15 – 13:35	***The planning and decision context for the SEA***	MRCS and SEA Team
THE SEA OBJECTIVES AND CRITICAL ISSUES		
13:35 – 14:05	***The aims of the MRC SEA*** (i) Aims (ii) The proposed Mekong mainstream hydropower projects (iii) The approach in this SEA (iv) SEA timeline & milestones	SEA Team
14:05 – 14:25	***Key Framing issues: energy demand and power trade in the LMB & the GMS*** (i) Overview of the region (ii) Energy Demand/Supply and the contribution of power trade to national economic growth	MRCS and SEA Team
14:25 – 15:10	***Plenary discussions on critical development issues for the Mekong River Delta and implications of hydro development on the mainstream***	All participants
15:10 – 15:20	*Coffee break*	
OPPORTUNITES FOR ENGAGEMENT		
15:20 – 15:30	***The SEA schedule and key consultation events***	SEA Team
15:30 – 16:45	***Plenary discussions on opportunities for civil-society engagement***	All participants
16:45 – 16:55	***Next steps forward***	SEA team
	Closing remarks	MRCS
	Close of workshop	

A2 NATIONAL WORKSHOP - LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

	NAME	POSITION	ORGANISATION
1	Mr. Nguyen Viet Dung	Deputy Director	People and Nature Reconciliation
2	Ms. Do Hai Linh	Head of Communication Division	People and Nature Reconciliation
3	Ms. Dao Thi Viet Nga	Director	Center for Water Resources Conservation and Development (WARECOD)
4	Mr. Vu Ngoc Hieu	representative	Consultancy on development (CODE)
5	Mr. Vu Ngoc Long	Director	Center for Biodiversity & Development
6	Mr. Le Anh Tuan	Manager	Research Institute for Climate Change-Can Tho university
7	Mr Phan Van Ngoc	Country Director	Action Aid International
8	Mr Jonathan Eames	Regional Director	Bird Life International
9	Ms. Nguyen Bich Ha	Vietnam Manager	Fauna & Flora International (FFI)
10	Mark Blackett	Vietnam Country Programme Manager	Oxfam Hong Kong
11	Mr. Huyen Tien Dung	representative	World Wild Fund for Nature
12	Mr. Hoang Viet	representative	World Wild Fund for Nature
13	Mr.J.S.J. Sujeevandas	representative	World Vision International
14	Mr Marko Lovrekovic	Managing Co-Director	NGO Resources Centre
15	Mr. Cao Vu Hoang Chau	representative	East Meets West Foundation
16	Ms. Petrie van Gent	International SEA specialist	
17	Mr. Tran Duc Cuong	Deputy Secretary General	Vietnam National Mekong Committee
18	Dr. Do Manh Hung	Director of OPD	Mekong River Commission Secretariat
19	Dr. Voradeth Phonekeo	ISH/OPD Project Manager	Mekong River Commission Secretariat
20	Dr. Larry Haas	Senior Technical Advisor	Mekong River Commission Secretariat
21	Dr. Jeremy Carew-Reid	Team leader	SEA Team
22	Dr. Benoit Laplante	Senior Economist	SEA Team
23	Mr. Tarek Ketelsen	Water Engineer/ Project Coordinator	SEA Team
24	Mr. Nguyen Van San	Environmental Management Specialist	SEA Team
25	Mr. Nguyen Xuan Nguyen	Energy Sector and Development Planning Expert	SEA Team
26	Ms. Nguyen Thi Nga	Vietnam Program Administrator	SEA Team
27	Mr. Josh Kempinski	Natural system specialist	ICEM
28	Ms. Lilani Goonesana	Climate change and communication specialist	ICEM