COUNCIL STUDY

Study on Sustainable Management and Development of the Mekong River

Progress Brief, August 2017

"A comprehensive state-of-the-art, integrated and cross-sectoral study on sustainable management and development of the Mekong River; for the environment, people, and economy."

INTRODUCTION

This second brief provides a snapshot on the progress of the *Study on Sustainable Management and Development of the Mekong River* or in short, the 'Council Study' (CS), and will be updated bi-monthly.

The study will provide reliable scientific environmental, social, and economic impacts of water resources development in the Mekong River encompassing cross-cutting sectors and impacts.

The CS will also fill major knowledge gaps on the environmental, social, and economic impacts of major development in the Lower Mekong Basin (LMB) in the short, medium and long term. The CS will enhance the ability of the MRC to advise member countries (MCs) on the potential benefits and impacts of water resource development of the basin based on sound scientific evidence; optimise the Basin Development process; and ultimately contribute to sound decision making by the MCs in the development of the LMB. A spillover effect of the CS is to promote capacity building and ensure technology transfer to MCs during the entire study process.

The Council Study team has achieved deliverables in June and July 2017, including a draft of the results and findings from the main development scenarios which was tabled at the small group meeting on main development scenarios, a *National consultation workshop*, and a *National training on the Bio-Resources Assessment (BioRA)* model and assessment tools for member countries.

Phase 1: March 2016

- Developed the inception report and TOR of study
- Collected data and information for the study
- Fomulated the scope of the study
- Deployed the impact assessment tools (DSF, WUP-Fin, eWater Source model)

Phase 2: Impacts Assessment

- Formulated and finalised the development scenarios
- 22 Nov 2016: JC endorsed CS phase 2 implementation
- Finalised the impact assesment approaches and indicators
- Completed the CS impact assessment report

Post CS completion: Knowledge transfer - beyond 2017

- Information and knowledge transfer to MCs
- Improvement of some assessment tools, results and reporting
- Dissemination of knowledge to planning and public domain

PROGRESS (June – July 2017)

Major Reports/Deliverables

- Completed draft of the results and findings from the main development scenarios (2007, 2020, 2040 and 2040 with climate change) for discipline and thematic teams.
- Completed version 6 of final impact assessment report for thematic and discipline teams.
- Produced the first batch of modelling outputs for the 2040 sub-development scenarios.

Technical Meetings

- 29-30 June 2017: **Small group meeting** with member countries to review the main development scenarios for thematic and discipline teams.

  Key outcome: member countries took note on the progress of the Council Study and provided a number of technical comments to improve the report including quality of the assessment and consistency of the information presented by different council study teams.

- June – July 2017: **National consultation workshop** on results of the main scenarios and Socioeconomic Assessment (SEA) and Macroeconomic Impact Assessment (MEA).

  Key outcome: member countries appreciated the proposed SEA, MEA, CIA (Cumulative Impact Assessment) and its assessment tools. The member countries acknowledged the progress of the Council Study. However, it was recommended that some of the findings need to be further reviewed, modified, and updated.

- July 2017: **National training on BioRA** model and assessment tools.

  Key outcome: participants learned about all the BioRA model setup, calibration, and scenarios assessment results of the main development scenarios; and had a hands-on practice on the Downstream Response to Imposed Flow Transformation (DRIFT) model.

"Development Partners look forward to the finalization of the Council Study, and believe that it would serve as a basis for effectively and pro-actively addressing the issue of cumulative long-term transboundary impacts".

Development Partners Statement for the Development Partner Meeting, 29 July 2017.

Upcoming tasks (August – September 2017)

- Finalise results of the 2040 sub-development scenarios for all thematic and discipline teams.
- Organise a small group meeting on results of the 2040 sub-development scenarios.
- Organise the 9th Regional Technical Working Group meeting on the Council Study.
- Produce first draft report of the thematic and discipline teams, consisting results of the main and sub-development scenarios.
- Produce first draft of the CIA report, consisting full assessment results and findings.
- Organise Modelling Working Session on results of the main and sub-development scenarios results.
- Organise training on Water Utilisation Program – Finland (WUP-Fin) model for member countries.
- Organise national consultation workshop on results and findings of the Council Study.

Regional small technical group meetings on results of the main development scenarios held on 29-30 June at MRC Secretariat, Vientiane, Lao PDR.

Scan this code or
Read previous brief [June 2017 issue] at URL:

http://www.mrcmekong.org/assets/Uploads/CS-brief-1June2017.pdf

What
is the Council Study?

The study will provide reliable scientific environmental, social, and economic impacts of water resources development in the Mekong River encompassing cross-cutting sectors and impacts.

Why
is the Council Study important and relevant?

The CS will fill major knowledge gaps on the environmental, social, and economic impacts of major development in the Mekong basin in the short, medium and long term. The CS will enhance the ability of MRC to advise MCs on the potential benefits and impacts of water resource development of the basin based on sound scientific evidence; optimise the Basin Development process; and ultimately contribute to sound decision making by the MCs in the development of the Mekong basin. A spillover effect of the CS is to promote capacity building and ensure technology transfer to MCs during the entire study process.

Who
is involved in the Council Study?

The Council Study is led by a regional coordinator with the support from a core technical group comprising regional and international experts broken down into:

> ***Six thematic teams*** formulate water-resource development scenarios surrounding six areas: irrigation, agriculture and land use, hydropower, flood protection, domestic and industrial water use, and navigation.
>
> ***Five discipline teams*** who conduct *hydrologic, biological, socio-economic, macro-economic, and climate change* assessments. This team assess the baseline status of the Mekong Basin and impacts of formulated scenarios.

The ***regional coordinator*** *and* ***technical advisors*** lead the thematic and discipline teams, and are overseen by senior management of the MRC Secretariat. Together a regional coordinator and technical advisors and CS core team are also serving as the advisory group of the study.

MC representatives and development partners who make up the ***Regional Technical Working Group,*** manage, supervise and provide guidance on the technical work of the Council Study.

How

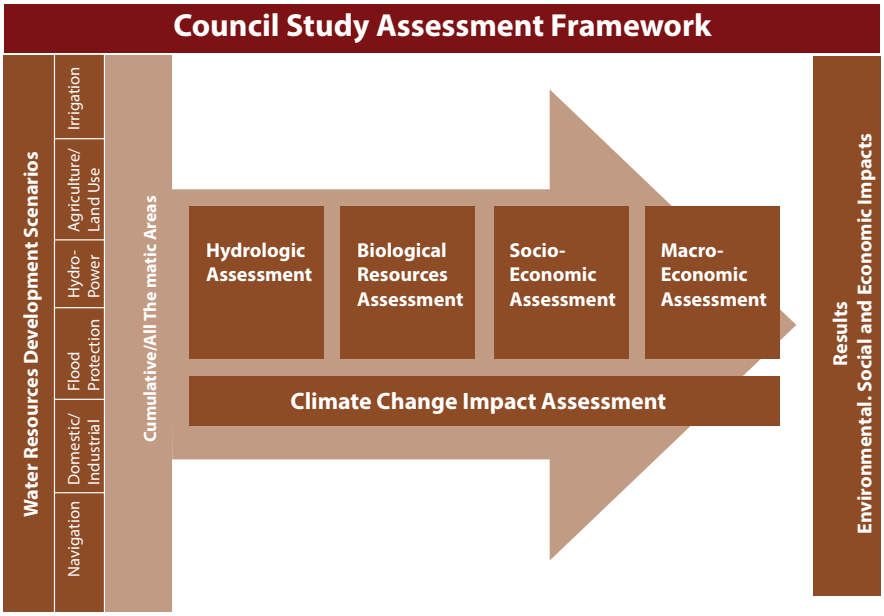
is the Council Study implemented?

The Council Study is broken down in three main phases: (i) formulation of water resource development scenarios, (ii) cumulative impact assessment, and (iii) knowledge transfer (See figure 1)

1. **Water Resource Development Scenarios:** The **six thematic teams** formulate development scenarios in the Mekong Basin covering a timeframe from 2020 – 2040. The twenty-year span scenarios will be irrigation, hydropower, flood control, navigation, agriculture and land use, and domestic and industrial water use. The **five discipline teams** assess the baseline status of the Mekong and the impacts of formulated scenarios on hydrology, sediments, bio-resources, coastal, socio-economy, and climate change.

2. **Cumulative impact assessment:** integrates and builds on the results of the first phase (thematic and disciplinary assessments). *Resource sustainability, cross-sectoral synergies, and transboundary balance* underlies the cumulative assessment. *Resource sustainability* aims to achieve optimal socio-economic benefits at minimal cost to the environment. *Cross-sectoral synergies* intends to measure the extent of trade-offs among sectors. *Transboundary balance* intends to measure how impacts and benefits are equitably distributed among countries. [Insert info box 4 on Stakeholder Consultation]

3. **Knowledge transfer:** Results from the Council Study will be shared and disseminated via various channels to member countries and stakeholders of the Mekong River Basin.



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