



The MRC Joint Efforts in Sustainable Hydropower Development

Rapid economic development in the Mekong River region has put increasing pressure on the Mekong Basin's natural resources. In line with the 1995 Mekong agreement, the MRC Member Countries (MCs) have been cooperating in the sustainable development of the Basin's resources to achieve its vision of an economically prosperous, socially just and environmentally sound Mekong River Basin.

Over the past 20 years, the MRC has developed a strategic framework and guidance for sustainable hydropower development in the Basin consisting of the five MRC hydropower principles from 1998, the 2001 MRC Hydropower Development Strategy (HDS2001), the Preliminary Design Guidance for Proposed Mainstream Dams in the Lower Mekong Basin (PDG) from 2009 and other studies and tools developed under the 2009 -2015 Initiative on Sustainable Hydropower (ISH).

To date the PDG has formed the basis for submissions and assessments under the Procedures on Notification, Prior Consultation and Agreement (PNPCA) of three mainstream dams. However, it has become clear that there are gaps in the PDG that may need to be filled and also areas of ambiguity that need to be clarified.

In addition, nowadays the rapid development of hydropower and other sectors continues to put pressure on the natural resources of the basin, making integrated water and power planning even more vital. It is essential that MCs find more optimal and sustainable hydropower development pathways – taking into account opportunities to enhance benefits beyond national borders and minimise adverse transboundary impacts while supporting water, food and energy security.

To respond to these challenges on emerging hydropower development and facilitate cooperation within the MRC framework, the MRC has initiated a number of key activities, including the Council Study (see separate fact sheet), the review and update of the Design Guidance for Proposed Mainstream Dams, and the review and update of the Sustainable Hydropower Development Strategy.

Review and Update of the Design Guidance for Proposed Mainstream (and Tributary) Dams (DG2018)

WHAT & WHY

Under Outcome 3 of the MRC Strategic Plan 2016-2020 (SP), Member Countries commit themselves to “Guidance for the development and management of water and related projects and resources being shared and applied by national planning and implementing agencies”.

According to SP Output 3.1, the updated Design Guidance for Proposed Mainstream (and Tributary) Dams on the Lower Mekong Basin aims to provide contemporary, research-based performance standards, design and operating principles for mitigation measures, as well as compliance monitoring and adaptive management. This updated PDG will provide developers and MRC Member Countries with a technical review framework for proposed dams that undergo the Prior Consultation Process as defined by the PNPCA.



HOW

All sections of the document will be reviewed and additional sections proposed. The review will draw on lessons learned from past PNPCA and inputs from MRC Member Countries and stakeholders. The intention is that the DG2018 standards remain appropriate for development that may take place in the next five to ten years.

WHEN

- March 2018:** Gather inputs from stakeholders, regional and national experts, and experienced developers
- April 2018:** First draft of the DG2018 is made available
- August 2018:** The DG2018 is approved by the MRC Joint Committee

Review and Update of the MRC Sustainable Hydropower Development Strategy (SHDS2018)

WHAT & WHY

Under Outcome 2 of the MRC Strategic Plan 2016-2020 (SP), Member Countries commit themselves to “Environmental management and sustainable water resources development being optimized for Basin-wide benefits by national sector planning agencies”.

According to SP Output 2.1, the objective of the SHDS2018 is that more optimal and sustainable hydropower development alternative pathways are explored, proposed and discussed with Member Countries – taking into account opportunities to enhance benefits beyond national borders and minimise adverse transboundary impacts while supporting water, food and energy security. This strategy will feed into strategies of other sectors to benefit the Basin Planning process for 2021 to 2025.



HOW

The MRC technical team will propose alternative development pathways in consultation with Member Countries and stakeholders. This approach aims to provide an interactive planning process that takes into account alternative cross-sectoral plans that may serve the strategic objectives of all Member Countries.

WHEN

- December 2018:** Draft of SHDS 2018 is made available, and input provided to the Basin Development Strategy Process
- March 2019:** The Final SHDS is endorsed by the MRC Joint Committee and approved by the Council

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