

Mekong River Commission

*Meeting the needs
Keeping the balance*



Cambodia



Lao PDR



Thailand



Viet Nam



VISION

A world class, financially secure, international river basin organisation serving the Mekong countries to achieve the vision of an economically prosperous, socially just and environmentally sound Mekong River Basin.

MISSION

To promote and coordinate sustainable management and development of water and related resources for the countries' mutual benefit and the people's well-being.

MOTHER OF WATER

The Mekong River is among the largest and most biodiverse in the world. Its basin covers a massive land area of 795,000 square kilometres, from the Tibetan Plateau to the Mekong Delta. It flows almost 5,000 kilometres through six countries.

The Lower Mekong Basin (LMB), located in Lao PDR, Thailand, Cambodia and Viet Nam, is home to over 65 million people. It provides access to trade, transport, food security and income, and is also the world's largest inland fishery of more than 4 million tonnes of fish and other aquatic animal products annually.

As the region develops rapidly, there is a rise in demand for renewable, clean energy



WHO WE ARE

For more than 20 years, the Mekong River Commission (MRC) has been supporting its member countries – Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Viet Nam – to jointly develop and manage the LMB sustainably.

The intergovernmental river basin organisation was established through the 1995 Mekong Agreement, when the four signatory countries agreed to cooperate in developing, managing, using and conserving water resources in areas such as fisheries, flood control, irrigation, hydropower, and navigation.

generated from hydropower to meet unprecedented population growth.

The main challenges in the basin are environmental degradation, effects of dams and other development projects on fisheries and sedimentation, climate change, and poverty. Intensive irrigation for agriculture, population growth, and less predictable climate patterns that result in frequent floods and droughts are putting pressure on the Mekong River's resources. Governing the river basin across borders has been a great challenge for the Mekong countries but also brings opportunities for greater collaboration.

The MRC acts as a platform for water diplomacy and regional cooperation in which member countries share the benefits of common water resources, despite different national interests, and address transboundary pressures in the basin. It also serves as a knowledge hub that promotes regional cooperation and policy-making based on scientific evidence.

The MRC provides technical assistance and develops practical tools to help its member countries make informed decisions about their development.

MRC Governance Structure



WHAT WE DO

Meeting the needs, keeping the balance

Since its establishment, the MRC adopted five procedures on water quality, data sharing, water use monitoring, water flow maintenance, and water use consultation to support implementation of the 1995 *Mekong Agreement*.

to help member countries promote fisheries' sustainability, opportunities for agriculture, freedom of navigation, sustainable hydropower, flood management, and preservation and conservation of important ecosystems.

The MRC supports a basin-wide planning process based on principles of Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM), recognised for maximising economic and social welfare without compromising the sustainability of vital ecosystems of the LMB. Its first IWRM-based *Basin Development Strategy* was implemented from 2011-2015

The MRC also facilitates information sharing, dialogue and negotiation on water resources management among governments, the private sector, and civil society. To reflect and adapt to new trends, needs, and challenges in the basin, the strategy has been updated for 2016-2020.

ACHIEVEMENTS

- Developed the first *Mekong Basin Development Strategy*
- Developed five procedural rules for the use of water resources
- Conducted assessment scenarios of the countries' water development plans as a basis for strategies and guidelines
- Provided preliminary design guidance for the development of dams on the mainstream, setting standards of best practice
- Formulated the *Agreement on Waterway Transport between Cambodia and Viet Nam*.
- Developed basin-wide fisheries management and development strategy
- Provided flood forecasts during each wet season to help authorities reduce the potential effects of flooding
- Produced *State of the Basin* reports on developments and health of the basin
- Convened a number of regional stakeholder forums on basin planning, climate change, hydropower and fisheries issues
- Agreed with China on information sharing, technical exchange and joint assessment

Our other core activities include:

- Monitoring and reporting on environmental conditions of the Mekong River system to help improve management of water flows and protect the ecological balance of the basin
- Forecasting flood levels
- Facilitating management and development activities in fisheries at local and regional levels
- Promoting safe navigation and water-borne trade through navigation aids and master plans
- Helping communities develop irrigation and agricultural techniques that protect watersheds and sustain local income-generation
- Providing guidelines and facilitating dialogue on sustainable hydropower development to ensure it is in the joint interests of member countries
- Helping member countries adapt to climate change

NEW FOCUS AREAS: 2016 - 2020

Addressing the challenges

From 2016-2020, the MRC's *Strategic Plan* focuses on achieving seven agreed outcomes that will promote greater integration and

alignment of efforts, more agility in allocating resources, and efficiency and transparency in the use of water resources.

1 Increased common understanding and application of evidence-based knowledge by policy makers and project planners

2 Environmental management and sustainable water resources development optimised for basin-wide benefits by national sector planning agencies

3 Guidance for the development and management of water and related projects and resources shared and applied by national planning and implementing agencies

4 Effective and coherent implementation of *MRC Procedures* by member countries

5 Effective dialogue and cooperation between member countries and strategic engagement of regional partners and stakeholders on transboundary water management

6 Basin-wide monitoring, forecasting, impact assessment and dissemination of results strengthened for better decision-making by member countries

7 MRC transitioned into a more efficient and effective organisation in line with the decentralisation roadmap and related reform plans

BUDGET

The MRC is funded by its member countries and development partners (governments, development banks and international organisations)

Estimated budget for 2016-2020: US\$65 million