

First Mekong Resources Forum
WATER RESOURCES AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT:
PERSPECTIVES FROM LAOS AND VIETNAM

Hanoi, 1-2 December 2011

FORUM RECORD

The Mekong Resources Forum is a new initiative of People and Nature Reconciliation that aims at facilitating meaningful dialogues among regional organizations in the Greater Mekong Sub-region. This non-state platform includes a wide range of dialogues, exchanges, and cooperation activities built upon mutual interests and power of knowledge for bettering natural resource governance in the region.

The first Mekong Resources Forum was held in Hanoi, Vietnam on 1st and 2nd December 2011 with the collaborative participation of 70 participants from Laos and Vietnam (see attached list). The forum was financially supported by International Rivers, CGIAR Challenge Program on Food and Water, Australian Government, Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund, and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

As results of the discussion, forum participants agreed on the following key messages:

1. Laos and Vietnam share common concerns and interests in regard to sustainable water utilization, management and planning. Throughout the decision making process, stakeholders must thoroughly be involved including investigation of all trade-offs between water security and other development activities.
2. Under the pressures of economic development, water resources from in-country and trans-boundary rivers in Laos and Vietnam are under significant pressure from hydropower development, infrastructure construction, and expansion of extractive industries.
3. Development of hydropower dams on both Mekong River mainstream and tributaries in Laos and Vietnam should fully take into account potential negative or uncertain environmental and social impacts before implementation of any project, especially in regard to the displacement of local communities as well as biodiversity and food security losses. Careful investigation of the entire scope of a project should be executed prior to its commencement.
4. Water resource management is closely linked to other sectors for example forestry, fisheries, agriculture, and energy production. From Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) point of view, to ensure the wellbeing of one of these sectors, it is imperative that other sectors are taken into consideration as well.
5. River Basin Organizations (RBOs) are crucial for the management of water systems. Vietnam and Laos have current RBOs that were established for managing river basin management. However, for the most part, these organizations are not permanent and only

play advisory roles in the management processes. In addition, within the framework of RBOs, there are little regulations regarding participation of local communities.

6. We must recognize the important role of forests within water resource management. The Vietnamese Government promotes initiative of payment for forest ecosystem services, as the pilot project was carried out successfully. All downstream parties who benefit from forest ecological services, such as: hydropower, water supply plant etc..., must pay to whoever is protecting the environmental wellbeing of this service upstream. Last year in Vietnam, this initiative was made into an officially recognized policy.

7. Recommendations for the future actions:

- In future dialogues and cooperation activities, we should not look only at water sector itself, we must look at other natural resources, because they are all related;
- There are still many unclear issues within water resources management that require further research and collaboration of Laos, Vietnam and other countries within the Lower Mekong Region. As conditions continue to develop, it is imperative that this research is carried out in a timely manner, and action is taken promptly;
- Participants from Laos wishes to cooperate with its downstream counterparts such as Vietnam in order to ensure sustainable development throughout the entire Mekong watershed;
- Vietnam has exhausted many of its options for hydropower development, whereas Laos still has ample opportunity to take advantage of past examples, and to develop future hydropower projects in a sustainable way;
- It is important to advocate countries in the region to put trans-boundary EIA regulations into the environmental laws and legislations for that some regulations in decree for implementation of EIA in Laos have been stipulated;
- It is important to keep in mind regional companies operating within other countries boundaries (e.g. Vietnamese company with hydropower plant in Laos);
- Representative of relevant Government agencies should participate in next forums;
- Some themes for next Mekong Resources Forums were initially recommended:
 - Wildlife conservation near the border between Laos and Vietnam
 - Forest protection and nature conservation

8. This forum emphasized the importance of building partnership to facilitate joint-research activities and information exchanges in areas of common interest.

9. Participants agreed that there should be more open dialogues among different stakeholders in the Mekong region to share common concerns, understanding, and cooperation for better governance of natural resources for peaceful and sustainable development in the region. Communication between Governments, donors, NGOs, and civil society fortifies international relations.

The records were discussed and agreed by all participants of the forum.

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LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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1	Mr. Bea PHEAXAY	Academic Division Natural Resource Management, National University of Laos
2	Mrs. Somsanith BOUAMANIVONG	Lao Biodiversity Association
3	Mr. Houmphanh RATTANAVONG	Lao Biodiversity Association
4	Ms. Minitta TAOSUVANH	Lao Water Resources Network
5	Mr. Soukhatha VALNALATH	NT2 Water Management and Protection Authority
6	Mrs. Amphay DALASOUK	National University of Laos
7	Mr. Konggeun CHOUNLAMOUNTRY	Department of Water Resource, Prime Minister's Office
8	Mr. Souphasay KOMANY	Nam Ngum River Basin Committee Secretariat, Department of Water Resources, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment
9	Mr. Phouangphanh SOUVANNABOUTH	Green Gold Consultant
10	Mr. Phouvong PHETPHAYVANH	Freelance environmental film-maker
11	Ms. Xoumaitri PANYANOUVONG	Earth Systems Lao
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14	Mr. Thananh KHOTPATHOOM	Faculty of Forestry National University of Laos
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16	Dr. Saykham VOLADET	Policy Research Division National Economic Research Institute (NERI), Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI)
17	Mr. Vanpheng Singharad	Poverty Reduction and Development Association (PORDEA)
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19	Prof. Mai Dinh Yen	Vietnam National University
20	Dr. To Xuan Phuc	Forest Trends

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25	Mr. Tran Hieu Nhue	Vietnam Association for Conservation of Nature and Environment (VACNE)
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27	Mr. Dao Trong Hung	Institute of Ecology and Biological Resources
28	Mr. Dao Bong	Consultant, Vietnam Conservation Fund
29	Mr. Nguyen Duc Loc	Center for Sustainable Energy Development
30	Mr. Nguyen Hong Toan	Center for River Basin Water Resources and Environmental Management
31	Mr. Nguyen Van Phu	Center for Community Support Development Studies
32	Mr. Dinh Xuan Lap	Research Centre for Resources and Rural development (RECERD)
33	Mr. Duong Anh Tuyen	Human Resource Development Program in Rural areas
34	Mrs. Than Thi Hien	Centre for Marinelife Conservation and Community Development (MCD Vietnam)
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43	Mr. Nguyen Duc Tu	International Union for Conservation of Nature (Vietnam)
44	Mr. Dang Dinh Bach	Law & Policy of Sustainable Development
45	Ms. Yumiko Yasuda	Center for Water Law, Policy and Science (University of Dundee)
46	Mr. Hoang Thanh Tam	Center for Development of Community Initiative and Environment(C&E)
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	Mr. Lê Thành Ý	Vietnam Journalist Association

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50	Ms. Nguyen Thi Thanh Tuyen	Sai Gon Tiep Thi Weekly
51	Ms. Thu Hang	Vietnam News Agency (TTXVN)
52	Mr. Do Duc Phan	VnEconomy
53	Lam Bich Ngoc	Dat Viet News
54	Mr. Duong Thanh Tung	ThanhtraNews
55	Ms. Dang Thu Cuc	Vietnam Government Web Portal (VGP News)
56	Mr. Hoang Chien Thang	Mekong News
57	Ms. Pham Hoai Thuong	VTC14
58	Mr. Pham Thanh Hung	VTC16
59	Mr. Nguyen Ngoc Truong	VTC16
60	Mr. Nguyen Duy Phuong	VTC16
61	Ms. Dang Thuy Hang	Natural Resources and Environment News
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