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Mekong water security:
causes, challenges and implications

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Mekong water security: challenges, promises
and experience-sharing for journalism

1. Mekong Water Security Issues

1.1. What is Water Security?



Water security is not merely the “access to **adequate water**” – but **sustainable access to adequate quantities of acceptable quality water** that meets sustaining livelihoods, human well-being, and socio-economic development, and for preserving ecosystems (UN-Water, 2013)

- **Water security is a “nexus”** of human rights, food and energy production, biodiversity conservation and social and political stability
- Water security is central to achieving a larger sense of security, sustainability, development and human well-being.
- Many factors contribute to water security

1. Mekong Water Security Issues

1.1. What is Water Security?

1.2. Water Security and Mekong River

Sustaining water security has to account for its multiple dimensions:



GOOD GOVERNANCE

Adequate legal regimes, institutions, infrastructure and capacity



TRANSBOUNDARY COOPERATION

Discuss and coordinate their actions to meet different and competing interests for mutual benefits



PEACE AND POLITICAL STABILITY

The negative effects of water conflicts are avoided



TRANS-BORDER IMPACTS

Trans-border environmental and socio-economic impact assessment must be conducted and consulted by affected communities

1. Mekong Water Security Issues

1.1. What is Water Security?

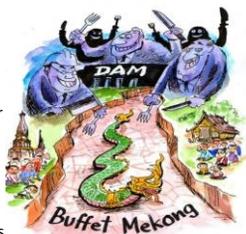
1.2. Water Security and Mekong River

1.3. Mekong Water Security is at Stake

Immediate causes:

- Mekong mainstream dams and water transfer projects: water flows, water temperature, fish migration patterns and trapping of silt.

→ Mekong dams destroy the “quality water” necessary to sustain livelihoods, socio-economic development, and preserving ecosystems



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1.1. What is Water Security?

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Immediate causes:

- Mekong mainstream dams and water transfer projects
- Climate change: droughts and sea level rise → inland saline contamination

→ “**Double**” impact/disaster: Mekong dams in connection with climate hazards (droughts)



1. Mekong Water Security Issues

1.3. Mekong Water Security is at Stake

Immediate causes:

- Mekong mainstream dams and water transfer projects
- Climate change: droughts and sea level rise → inland saline contamination



Sand mining → heavily affect local subsistence and ecosystems



Groundwater over-extraction by factories and households

1. Mekong Water Security Issues

1.3. Mekong Water Security is at Stake

Mekong water security risks in the Mekong Delta

- Inadequate basic quality water for sustaining people's livelihoods, food security, and biodiversity conservation
- Declined water flows in downstream deltas caused by Mekong dams have led to increased water pollution and contamination
- Downstream victim of upstream mismanagement: disintegration due to land subsidence caused by Mekong dams and groundwater overexploitation



→ Intra-state and interstate migration, social & political disorder

1. Mekong Water Security Issues

1.3. Mekong Water Security is at Stake

Mekong water security risks in the Mekong Delta:

- Inadequate basic quality water for sustaining people's livelihoods, food security, and biodiversity conservation



2006: Hau River full of silt and nutrient elements – "living" waterway



2016: Hau River is clear – "dying" waterway

1. Mekong Water Security Issues

2. Mekong Delta before the Flood: the Last Way out

Self-help approach for water security resilience:

- Reconsider what tradeoffs are we able to accept to balance more water security?
- Restore regional forest cover area and farmers' orchard density



1. Mekong Water Security Issues

2. Mekong Delta before the Flood: the Last Way out

Self-help approach for water security resilience:

- Reconsider what tradeoffs are we able to accept to balance more water security?
- Restore regional forest cover area and farmers' orchard density
- Smart urbanization and develop climate resilient cities



1. Mekong Water Security Issues

2. Mekong Delta before the Flood: the Last Way out

Self-help approach for water security resilience:

- Reconsider what tradeoffs are we able to accept to balance more water security?
- Restore regional forest cover area and farmers' orchard density
- Smart urbanization and develop climate resilient cities
- Bolster and promote high-end agricultural production
- "Socialization" of water security: empower various stakeholders to engage in freshwater protection and sustainable exploitation
- Stop sand mining and uncontrolled groundwater extraction

Locate the role and position of media outlets and journalists in Mekong water crisis?



Environmental journalism/info: challenges



Adam Hunt – MPE / Mekong Matters / Earth Journalism Network / Internews



And some opportunities



Adam Hunt – Mekong Matters / Earth Journalism Network / Internews

We cover it because:

- We love good stories
- We believe in the public interest: nature, justice, peace, accountability
- We are curious, love learning
- We love the truth
- We secretly want to save the planet



We create impacts:

- Stop projects (e.g. Myitsone)
- Make govts consider env/communities (e.g. Tak/Chiang Khong SEZ)
- Get global attention (e.g. dolphins)
- Help activists, gov, business improve (e.g. Digest)
- Provide a steady drumbeat of critical info
- Bring TRUTH, ACCOUNTABILITY, CHANGE



In a crowded info world, we need to be newsworthy



Environment stories?

Don't get trapped. These issues relate to many topics!



Worried about relevance?
Make it about YOUR audience
(and make it social media ready!)

Lao's Xayaburi Dam A Threat To Fishers, Farmers

Infographic shows Bangkok's luxury malls use more energy than some provinces





You have allies and resources!



- Networks
- Workshops / field trips
- Grants, Fellowships
- Journalist allies
- Regional, NGO & social media
- NGOs, free expression advocates

Thank you! ahunt@internews.org

CONCLUDING REMARKS

I plan to use this slide to conclude some key points summarized from Dr. Tuan's keynote remarks, yours and mine so that the audience and journalists could understand the major contents of the opening session.
What do you think?

