

Member's Annual Report 2007

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Name of the editor: Aiden Glendinning

1. About the organization

(1) Name of the organization and postal address of the office

Mekong River Commission

PO Box 6101, 184 Fa Ngoum Road, Ban Sithane Neua, Vientiane, Lao PDR

(2) The representative of the organization

Mr Jeremy Bird, Chief Executive Officer

(3) Purposes and roles of your organization

a) Historical background of the organization

The Mekong River Commission (MRC) was formed on 5 April 1995 by an agreement between the governments of Cambodia, the Lao PDR, Thailand and Viet Nam. The four countries signed The Agreement on Cooperation for the Sustainable Development of the Mekong River Basin and agreed on joint management of their shared water resources and development of the economic potential of the river. The MRC has a foundation of over 50 years of knowledge and experience in the region starting from 1957, when it began life as the UN-founded Mekong Committee. In 2002 China and Myanmar became Dialogue Partners of the MRC.

b) Purposes and roles of the organization

The MRC is an international river basin organisation that provides the institutional framework to promote regional cooperation in order to implement the 1995 Agreement. The MRC is owned by and serves its Member States by supporting decisions and promoting action on sustainable development and poverty alleviation as a contribution to the UN Millennium Development Goals. The MRC supports the Mekong Programme, a Regional Cooperation Programme for the Sustainable Development of Water and Related Resources in the Mekong Basin. The overall goal of the MRC is to support its Member Countries for: "More Effective Use of the Mekong's Water and Related Resources to Alleviate Poverty While Protecting the Environment"

The 2006-2010 Strategic Plan sets forth the following four goals:

- Goal 1: To promote and support coordinated, sustainable, and pro-poor development;
- Goal 2: To enhance effective regional cooperation;
- Goal 3: To strengthen basin-wide environmental monitoring and impact assessment;
- Goal 4: To strengthen the Integrated Water Resources Management capacity and knowledge base of the MRC bodies, National Mekong Committees, line agencies, and other stakeholders.

(4) Outline of the organization

1) Number of staff

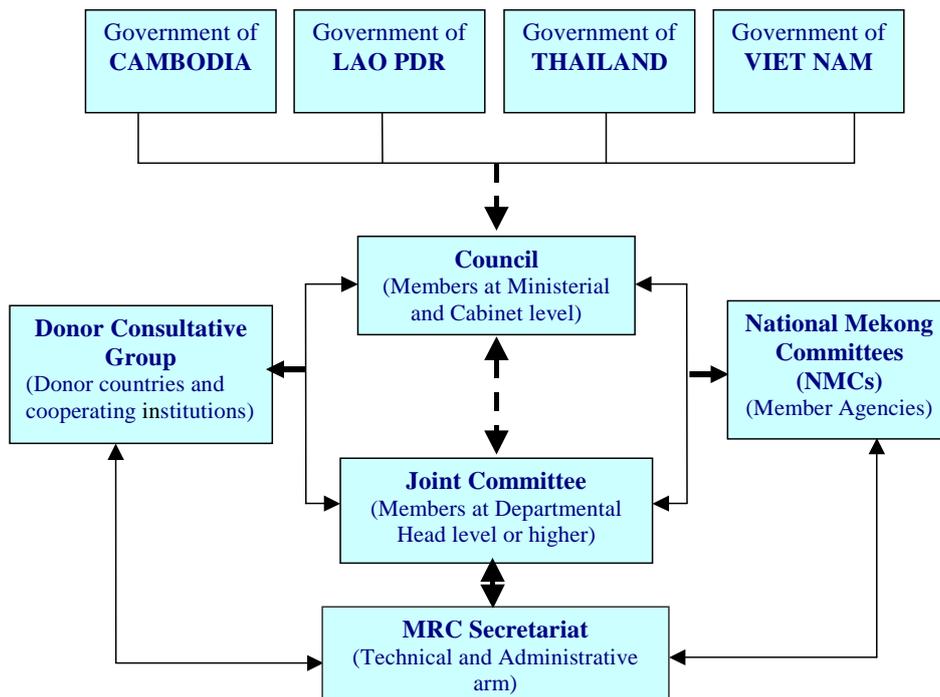
131 at the MRCS headquarters in Vientiane and around 30 at the Regional Flood Management and Mitigation Centre in Phnom Penh.

2) Amount of the annual budget in 2007

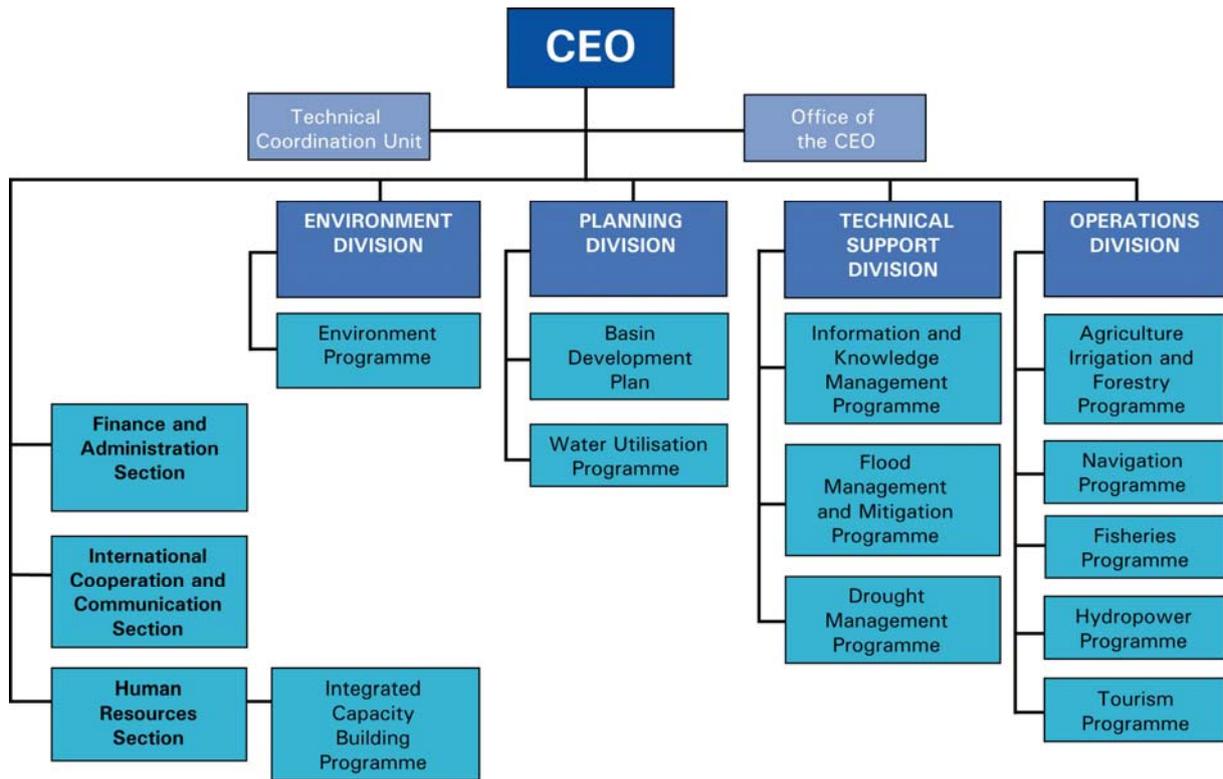
Total expenditure in 2007 was US\$14,225,403

3) Organizational chart

MRC Organisational Structure



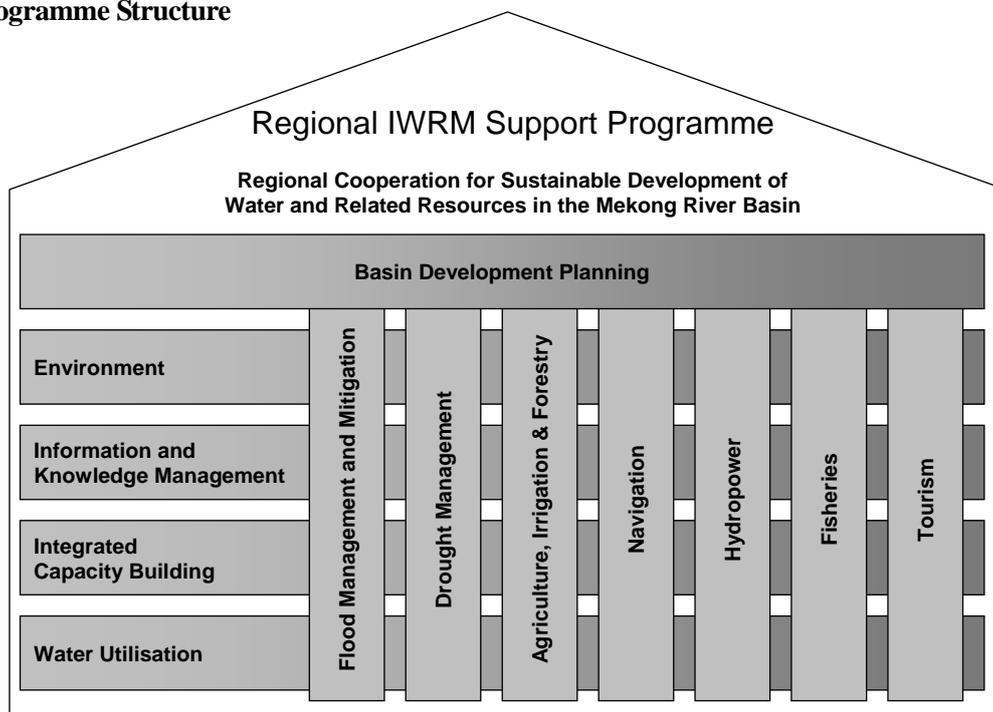
MRC Secretariat Structure



4) Ongoing projects

The MRC is engaged in a Regional IWRM Support Programme, and maintains an integrated approach to its programme work.. MRC programmes are structured in a way that emphasises their complementarities and their importance as a whole. Within the programme structure (see below) the Basin Development Plan plays a pivotal role, using knowledge acquired from the programmes to build an overall perspective of development needs and ‘pertinent knowledge gaps’. This will eventually set the agenda for the MRC programmes.

MRC Programme Structure



Basin Development Planning

Objective: To formulate a basin-wide plan for water resources development; to identify, categorise and prioritise projects, programmes and investment opportunities, to assist and support countries in implementing them at basin level. **Components:** Planning Capacity and Tools; Development Strategy and Investment Plan; Support to National IWRM; Project Portfolio Identification and Promotion

Integrated Capacity Building

Objective: To strengthen the capacity of the MRC, the National Mekong Committees and the line agencies in all fields leading to more effective integrated water resources development and river basin management. **Components:** Training in Project Management; Training in Information Management and Communication; Training in Environmental Governance; Junior Riparian Professional Programme; Strengthening Core Activities of MRC; Research Coordination; Gender Mainstreaming.

Information and Knowledge Management

Objective: To provide database, IT infrastructure, expertise and services to support planning and decision-making.

Components: Hydro-meteorological data collection and analysis Information gathering and integration; Database management; Mekong Basin GIS; Remote Sensing Simulation and Decision Support Systems; Data Exchange Policy and Procedures.

Environment

Objective: To strengthen the framework for transboundary environmental management by the four Lower Mekong Basin countries. To generate data, information and knowledge for decision-making. To balance economic development and environmental conservation that will benefit the Basin's inhabitants.

Components: Environmental Monitoring & Assessment; Environmental Decision Support; Environmental Knowledge; People and Aquatic Ecosystems; Environmental Flow Management.

Flood Management and Mitigation

Objective: To prevent, minimise or mitigate people's suffering and economic losses due to floods, while preserving environmental benefits. To maintain an accurate flood forecasting system and establish an effective warning mechanism. To act as a facilitator on transboundary issues and to build capacity in member countries. **Components:** Regional Flood Management and Mitigation Centre; Structural and Flood Proofing Measures; Mediation of Transboundary Flood Issues; Flood Emergency Management Strengthening; Land Use Management.

Agriculture, Irrigation and Forestry

Objective: To preserve the integrity of the watersheds of the four countries through monitoring land use changes, identifying problems and management training. To implement technical surveys of irrigation practices to improve efficiency. **Components:** Irrigation water use efficiency and productivity; Watershed Management, Challenge Programme on Water and Food.

Navigation

Objective: To promote freedom of navigation on the Mekong, and to increase social development and international trade opportunities using the navigation potential of the river system.

Components: Socio-economic Analysis and Regional Transport Planning; Legal Framework for Cross-border Navigation; Traffic Safety and Environmental Sustainability; Information, Promotion and Coordination; Institutional Development.

Fisheries

Objective: To manage the productive Mekong fisheries so as to sustain their high yield and economic output well into the future. To undertake research and training and to disseminate information to policy makers and planners in the four Lower Mekong countries. **Components:** Assessment of Mekong Capture Fisheries; Institutional Support; Aquaculture of Indigenous Mekong Fish Species; Management of River and Reservoir Fisheries.

Programmes under Development

Hydropower

Objective: To develop hydropower in order to meet the need for economic development in a way that fully recognises the requirement to safeguard ecosystems and social interests.

Various MRC programmes are developing new projects or components, including a climate change initiative within the Environment Programme

(5) Main events in 2007

Third South East Asia Water Forum

One of the most important events on the 2007 calendar was the third South East Asia Water Forum, held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in October. The conference theme was “Consolidating Actions towards Effective Implementation of Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM): What Have We Done? What More Shall We Do?” Two sessions at the forum were chaired by the MRC, on the subjects of Flood Mitigation in a Development Context - Examples and Lessons from the Mekong, and on Sustainable Development Challenges: Climate, Drought and Water Management. The climax of the forum was the Putrajaya Ministerial Declaration recognising the importance of water in social and economic development and the role of IWRM approaches in responding to the challenges presented by climate change.

Nile Basin countries learn from MRC experience

In October the MRC hosted a six-day study tour from 26 members of the Nile Basin Initiative (NBI), which represents nine African nations. The delegates from Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Kenya, Rwanda, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda came from the Initiative’s Water Resources Planning and Management Project, which aims to enhance technical and analytical capacity to support the development, management and protection of the Nile Basin’s water resources.

One of the three technical components of the visitors' project is a decision support system, and as the MRC has good experience of such systems through its own Decision Support Framework, the African delegates were especially interested in learning how MRC goes about achieving basin-wide communication, information management and analysis of river basin resources. In an intensive two days of presentations and demonstrations from MRC programme staff, the NBI delegation had the opportunity to learn more about how the programme work is implemented in a basin-wide framework. They also presented their work in the Nile Basin to interested MRCS and National Mekong Committee participants.

WUP nears its natural end

The long-running Water Utilisation Programme (WUP) moved to the brink of final completion in 2007 and in May an independent evaluation team established that it had been successfully implemented. One of the WUP's final achievements was completion of the Decision Support Framework, a suite of modelling tools capable of describing changes in river flow and assessing impacts that can occur as a result of infrastructure development – mainly irrigation and hydropower – and climatic variations within the basin. An important conclusion of the Decision Support Framework is that we now understand the Mekong flow regime is highly robust: with good planning and management, there is much room for water resource developments that can help reduce poverty in the Member States.

About NARBO activity

(1) The contact person and organization's web-site

1) The name, position, phone & fax number, e-mail address of the contact person

Wolfgang Schiefer, Chief, International Cooperation and Communications Section

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Fax. (856 21) 263 264

schiefer@mrcmekong.org

2) The organization's web-site URL (English and local language respectively)

www.mrcmekong.org

(2) Activities your organization implemented in 2007 as the member

Events to mark World Water Day, World Wetlands Day

(3) Resolutions and expectations for NARBO activities in 2008

NARBO Action Plan not available on website <http://www.narbo.jp/narbo/activities/plan.htm>

1) Your organization's resolutions

MRC representative from Cambodia National Mekong Committee to attend NARBO 3rd Annual General Meeting.

As the MRC's plans, programmes and policies are based on IWRM, all our activities are compatible with those of NARBO, and may be seen as an extension of the same ideal.

2) Expectations of NARBO activities

That NARBO continues to promote international cooperation based on IWRM principles.

2. Questions to RBO members

(1) Areas which your organization has improved the performance in 2007

Results-based Monitoring & Evaluation system development initiated.

(2) The way in which your organization was able to do so

The MRC Strategic Plan 2006-2010 calls for the development and implementation of an M&E system as an essential component of the plan's implementation. In addition, the independent organisational, financial and institutional review of the MRC Secretariat and the National Mekong Committees recommended in January 2007 that "a monitoring and evaluation strategy, including a framework for country reporting against measurable performance indicators, should be developed and implemented as a priority". As a preparatory step a unified output monitoring system was introduced throughout MRC programmes during the first and second quarters of 2007. The output monitoring system helped harmonise delivery structures throughout all programmes and align programme outputs towards the goals of the Strategic Plan.

(3) In what way NARBO has helped your organization

Through global and Asian promotion of the ideals of cooperation and IWRM.