

# **Exploring opportunities for transboundary water cooperation through basin development planning**

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# 1. Introduction

- Overall efforts of international rivers in addressing the transboundary issues
- Aim of this paper: Share ideas and experiences on transboundary from the MRC

## **2. Transboundary experience at the MRC context**

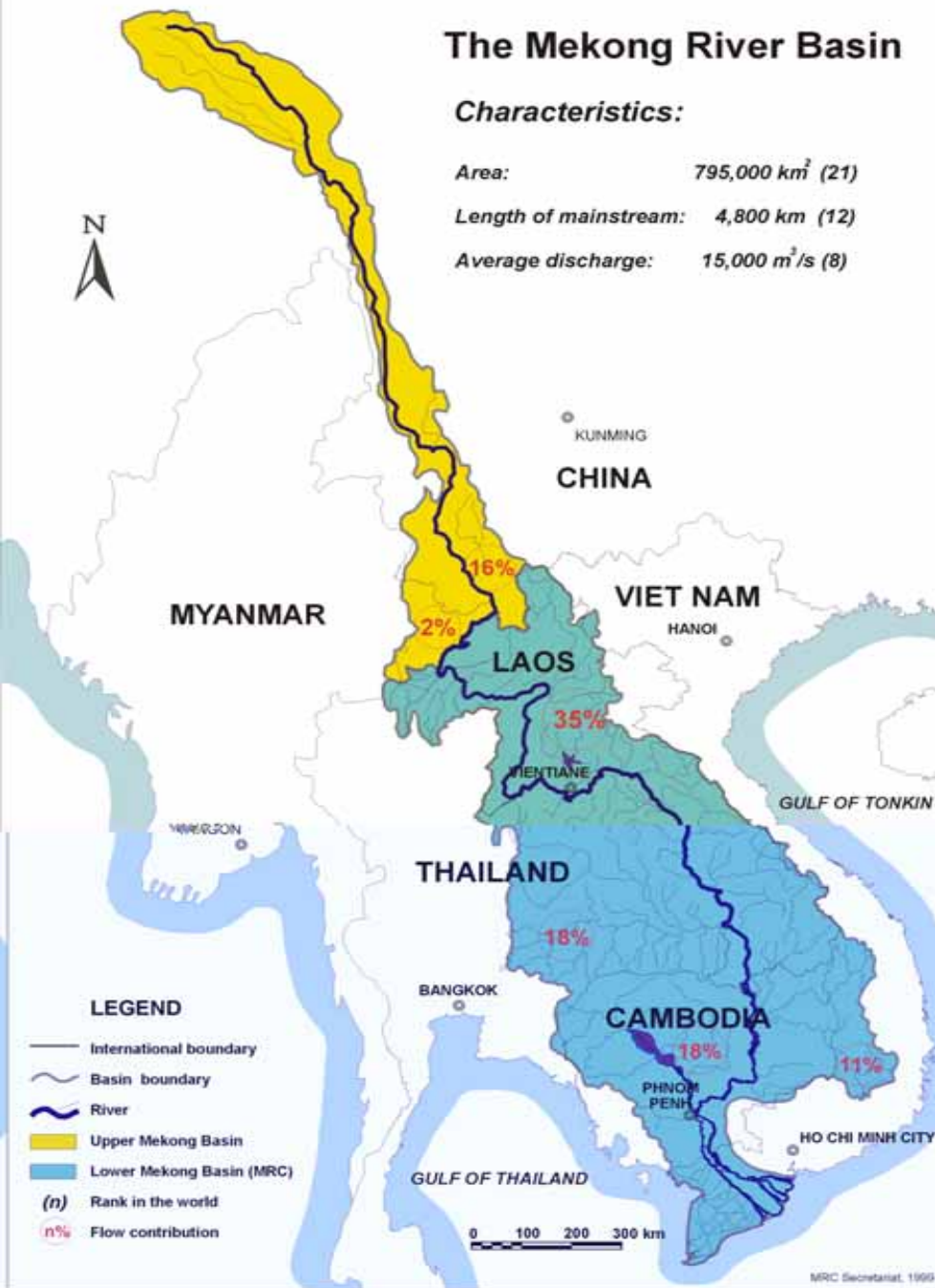
## The Mekong River Basin

### Characteristics:

Area: 795,000 km<sup>2</sup> (21)

Length of mainstream: 4,800 km (12)

Average discharge: 15,000 m<sup>3</sup>/s (8)



## The Mekong River Commission

- 6 countries shared rich resources of a great river
- China and Myanmar = Observers
- Challenge to application of IRBM to the whole basin.

# ***From lower Mekong to whole Mekong***



In 1995, Agreement on *Cooperation for Sustainable Development* of Mekong River Basin was signed and MRC was established as the successor of the previous Mekong Committee.

Mekong Committee

Interim Mekong Committee

MRC

1957 - 1977

1978 - 1994

Since 1995

# ***Goals of the Mekong Agreement***

Balanced development, based on  
understanding of the resource –  
challenges!!!!



# ***Transboundary impacts: Definition & efforts by WUP and EP***

- *A measurable impact originating from a place in another country. It is important to note that not all transboundary impacts are necessary negative.*

(Water Utilization Program, 2002)

- Efforts and outcomes:
  - Identifying major issues,
  - approaches for transboundary analysis and conflict prevention, and
  - Policy Making Mediation in the Mekong River Basin



## **2.1. What is Basin Development Plan?**

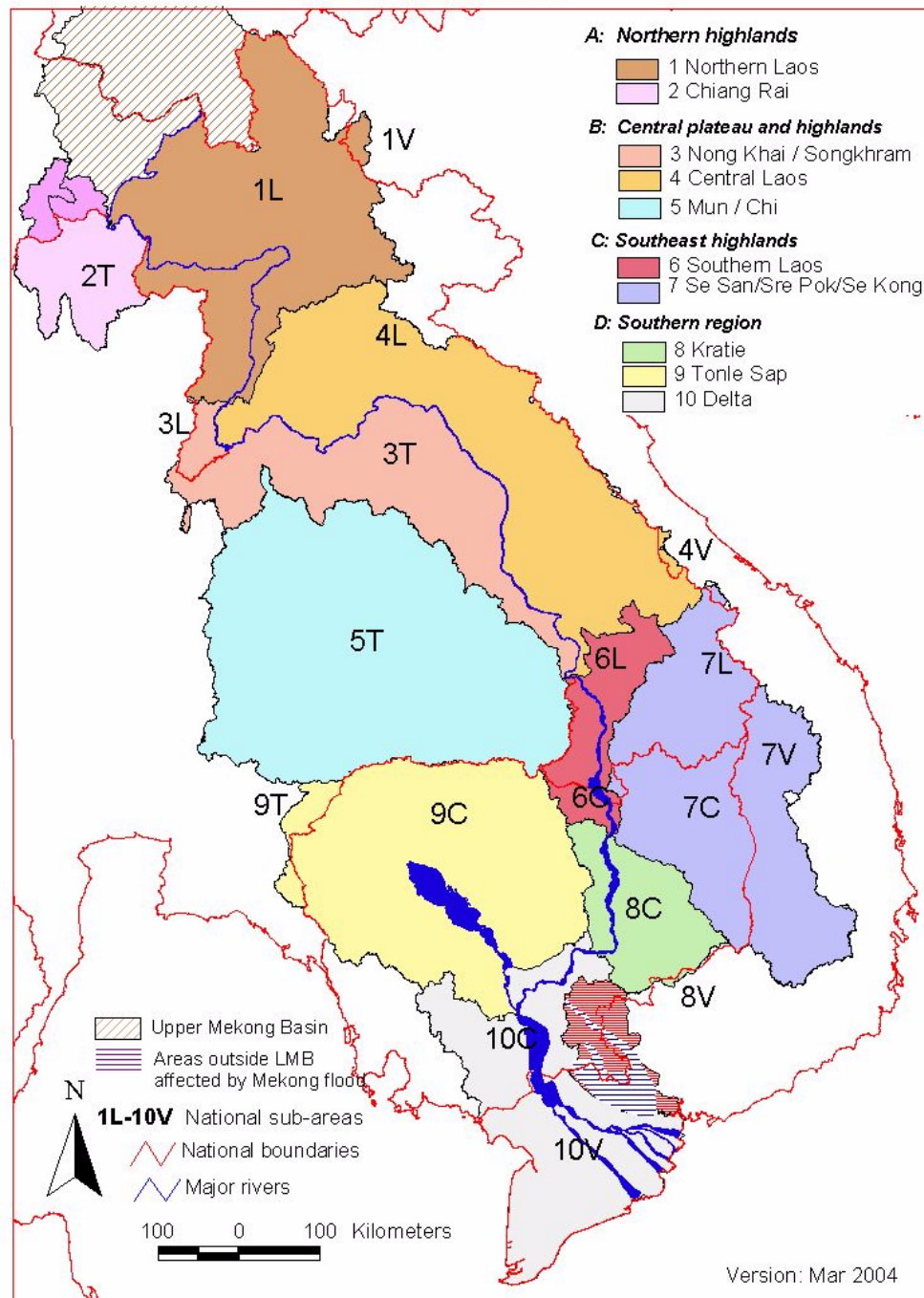
A planning process and tools designed to categorize and prioritize projects and programs.

It has remit to 'integrate', 'co-operate', and 'promote' but not 'manage' in basin-wide planning; and overall, it is a strategy

# ***BDP strategy***

- provides a *framework* for a level of information and analysis upon which to plan for the development of the LMB as a whole (it thus adds value to the existing levels of planning),
- provides a *process* for national-level planning and its outputs to become more integrated and consistent with one another, and which – collectively – encourage the pursuit of optimal water and resource use at the basin level, and
- identifies *transboundary/cross-border issues* of concern to all 4 countries, and addresses them through the design and promotion of agreed high priority interventions.

## BDP subareas



## Transboundary sub-areas

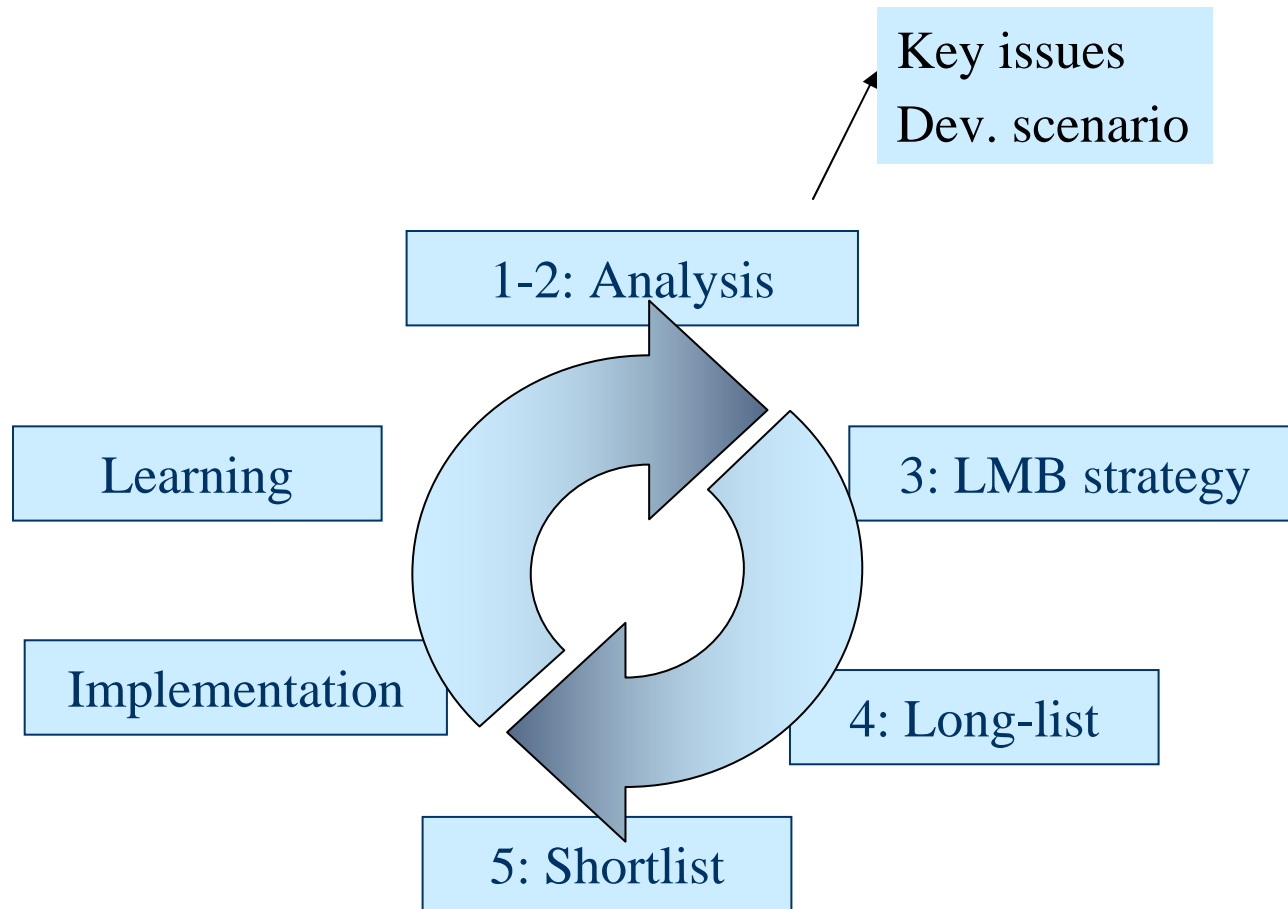
### *SA that share the catchment:*

- SA Southern Laos/Northern Cambodia (6LC),
- SA Se San/Sre Pok/Se Kong (7CLV), and
- SA Delta (10CV).

### *SA that share the mean stream river:*

- SA Northern Laos and Northern Thailand (1L & 2T), and
- SA Central Laos and Songkram River/Upper Northeast Thailand (4L & 3T).

# ***The planning cycle***



# Concept

In BDP, *transboundary issues* include potential opportunities and basin-wide negative impacts that are raised at the sub-area level for regional water and water-related resources planning.

e.g: issues related to water resource management, environment and ecology, transboundary impacts, interdependencies between catchment, issues of cross-border trading and regional cooperation, basin assets.

## 2.2. Framework to address transboundary issues in BDP

- Concentrate on *cooperation for basin-wide benefits* in terms of economic, environmental and social needs.
- Will be built up by *integrating the planning components of the sub-areas* for identifying transboundary issues, and then identifying framework for cooperation and including 'joint development opportunities.
- The transboundary issues will be analyzed and addressed at the basin-wide level, by *involving the provincial people and other key stakeholders of the sub-areas to provide their views*

## *At the sub-area level*

- Analysis: key development issues, scenario elements, strategies, and projects/programs.
- Key stakeholders: mainly the provincial level
- Process: 3 parallel process of BDP (planning, stakeholder participation, and capacity building), and *mainstreams the analysis of transboundary issues at each step.*

# *Transboundary sub-areas*

- Analysis: integrated planning components, and cooperation agenda for the sub-area & basin-wide
- Key stakeholders: up to 5 participants from each country: representatives of the transbound sub-areas, key institutions and donors/organizations.
- Process: Meeting between transboundary SAs:
  - Common understanding of transboundary issues;
  - Integrating sub-area transboundary issues;
  - Identifying framework for dealing with transboundary issues and exploring opportunities for planning cooperation (through the supporting development initiative).



## *At the regional level*

- Key stakeholders: representatives of the national working group from the 4 countries, key institutions and donors/organizations.
- Process: Regional stakeholders forum:
  - Common understanding of transboundary issues;
  - Integrating sub-area transboundary issues;
  - Identifying framework for dealing with transboundary issues and exploring opportunities for planning cooperation (through the supporting development initiative).
- Analysis: integrated transboundary issues from SAs & transboundary SAs that are of basin-wide significance.

# ***Common understanding of transboundary issues***

**Presentation and discussion on the discussion paper that focuses on the following:**

- key sub-area development issues: assets, needs/priorities, opportunities, concerns, objectives and some sub-area transboundary issues;**
- sub-area scenario elements, strategies and projects/programmes.**

## ***Integrating sub-area transboundary issues***

Will be done by making cross analysis of the sub-area key issues and scenario elements/projects and programmes.

### **Cross analysis consists of:**

- comparison of the sub-area key issues and scenario elements and revision of projects and programmes for commonalities and differences;
- assessing the extent of conflicting issues;
- analysis of transboundary issues will also be done with the assistance of DSF, SEA, RAOM and other tools, (for sub-area scenario & projects/programmes)

## **2.3. Exploring opportunities for transboundary water cooperation**

The process consists of identifying a transboundary development project (between sub-areas), and establishing a framework for cooperation.

**The framework for cooperation will contain:**

- goals and an agenda for cooperation,
- actions and measures for addressing transboundary issues in basin-wide planning, and
- joint development opportunities

### 3. BDP and River Basin Organizations

- Level of participation and collaboration in basin-wide planning, and roles of the BDP stakeholders
- BDP may link to the RBOs in the LMB in the future.

## 4. Summary

- BDP mainstreams the stakeholders participation and capacity building, transboundary issues and opportunity for cooperation in its planning process.
- BDP will be one way of conflict mediation in the Mekong River Basin, because the basin-wide transboundary issues are dealt from the onset of development plan.
- BDP may link to the RBOs in the LMB in the future.

A landscape photograph featuring a vibrant rainbow arching across a cloudy sky. The foreground is a flooded field with green grass and water. A small tree stands on the right, and a fence line runs across the middle ground.

**Thanks for your kind attention!**