“Water data” is a broad concept, encompassing multiple dimensions. Substantial resources and expertise are needed to collect, process and analyze the varied types and scales of water data to inform sound decision making. Great progress has been achieved through national agencies and other regional initiatives and programs, but technical and policy barriers persist. Given the scale and complexity of the Mekong Basin ecosystem, coupled with additional challenges from rapid development and climate change, considerable support from stakeholders and experts will be needed to keep building a body of “living knowledge.” There is a need to leverage resources and build synergy among key stakeholders and supporters to contribute to the evolution of collective knowledge and a better understanding of challenges, emerging issues and the new tools and technologies that are available.

SIP and partners are conducting an **On-going Needs Assessment Study** to identify data and capacity gaps in Lower Mekong agencies, regional institutes, and key stakeholders, especially in relation to impact assessment and flood monitoring and forecast, as well as identifying potential tools and technologies to potentially strengthen capacity in this area. Since 2017, the SIP team has conducted extensive reviews of reports and documents, individual interviews and focus group discussions, formal and informal consultations, technical peer review, and dialogue events.

During the current 2018-2022 funding period, findings from the needs assessment will be posted online periodically for discussion and comment. The possibility of live Q&A webinars will be explored to facilitate real-time conversations among those who wish to share their knowledge, and to promote better understanding of specific topics.
Examples of topics and issues that will be explored:

- How can warning systems be strengthened and information be shared about unusual fluctuating flows resulting from upstream development and climate change?

- How can we better collect, analyze and share knowledge that is currently lacking on water resource use at the local and basin-wide scales, especially by the poor and those whose livelihoods depend on water resources?

- How can we provide collective support for managing water data and building a knowledge base on the Irrawaddy and Salween Basins in Myanmar?

- How should we conduct in-depth analysis and promote technical discussions on the different mathematical models and tools available for flood assessment and forecast, hydrological impact assessment, and satellite-based technologies?