



LOWER MEKONG CASCADE HYDROPOWER MANAGEMENT DIALOGUE

September 26, 2019

Venue: Grand Centre Point Ratchadamri Hotel, Bangkok, Thailand

Why do we need this Dialogue?

The operation of cascade hydropower projects in the Mekong Basin is seen to be causing environmental and social impacts, including vegetation changes, irregular flow patterns, and decline in water quality, affecting riparian communities. In particular, the decline in levels of dissolved oxygen, necessary to sustain aquatic life and the Mekong's rich fishery, tourism industry, and clean water supply, has been raised as a shared concern for the Lower Mekong region. Examples of such impacts have already been reported to Lower Mekong Initiative (LMI) – Sustainable Infrastructure Partnership (SIP) from the Nam Pong Basin in northeast Thailand, the Sesan Basin spanning Viet Nam and Cambodia, and the Nam Ngum Basin in central Lao PDR.

There is evidence that the cumulative effects of cascading hydropower dams are more complex than those of single dams, with implications for habitat fragmentation, changes to river flows, and loss of vegetation types and their distribution in the whole watershed. While eight hydropower dams have been constructed to date in the upper Mekong Basin in China, additional hydropower projects are planned for construction on the Lower Mekong; thus, the cumulative impacts of dam operation are likely to increase.

Scientific studies have recommended that the harmful impacts of hydropower projects could be mitigated through joint action by dam operators, for example, by coordinating flow releases, flushing, and sluicing activities during critical periods, and water quality mitigations technologies and techniques. However, coordinating such activities will not happen without transboundary dialogue among Lower Mekong government agencies, hydropower operators, stakeholders and experts to agree on appropriate actions.

Dialogue objectives:

Lower Mekong Initiative (LMI)-Sustainable Infrastructure Development (SIP) implemented by Pact, collaboration with US Department of Energy (DOE), US National Laboratories, and partners are organizing the Lower Mekong Cascade Hydropower Management Dialogue on September 26, 2019, in Bangkok, Thailand to explore the possibilities for basin-wide cooperation among hydropower dam operators. The meeting will facilitate discussion among Lower Mekong water and energy agencies, hydropower dam operators and investors, experts, and local community representatives, inviting them to share their experiences and address shared concerns around the development and management of Lower Mekong cascade hydropower projects.

We anticipate that the meeting will develop policy recommendations for mitigating the potential negative impacts of dam development, including proposals for dam design, investment, operation and coordination with other dam operators on the Lower Mekong cascade. The meeting will consider the possibility of developing joint technical guidelines on Cascading Hydropower Management that are tailored specifically for the Lower Mekong Basin, as a useful addition to existing guidelines, tools and studies.

The dialogue will:

1. Review case studies of impacts, analyses and lessons learnt
2. Share stakeholder and dam operator experiences
3. Discuss international experiences of cascade hydropower management and environmental mitigation techniques and results
4. Identify knowledge and capacity gaps; and
5. Propose mitigation measures, development of guidelines, and other key actions.



Tentative agenda

Time	Program	Responsible persons
8:30 - 9:00	Registration	Pact Thailand
9:00 - 9:30	Welcome remarks	Mr. John Choi, US Embassy Representative
	Introduction and objectives of the workshop	Mr. Suparek Janprasart, LMI-SIP
Session 1: Case studies and experiences of stakeholders and hydropower dam operators		
Moderator: Dr. Nguyen Huong Thuy Phan, Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Switzerland		
9:30 - 10:00	Addressing needs in building technical capacity of Lower Mekong Cascade Hydropower Management and potential roles of the MRC <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assess impacts - Building technical capacity of national/regional agencies and dam operators - Data sharing and coordination of cascade hydropower operation - Development of regional agreements and protocols 	Dr. Winai Wangpimool, MRCS
10:00 - 10:30	Experience from Nam Ngum Cascade Hydropower Projects	National University of Laos
10:30 - 10:45	Coffee break	
10:45 - 11:15	Cascade hydropower management and capacity building plan, Lao PDR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Capacity needs - Current planning - Mitigation measures 	Ministry of Energy and Mines (MEM), Lao PDR <i>(TBC)</i>
11:15 – 12:00	International experiences in managing hydropower cascade projects, and environmental mitigation techniques and results	Dr. Boualem Hadjeriouab, Oak Ridge National Laboratory/ US Department of Energy
12:00– 12:30	Plenary discussion	
12:30 - 13:30	Lunch	
Session 2: Shared knowledge and capacity gaps		
Moderator: Dr. John Dore, Australia Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)		
13:30 - 14:30	Panel discussion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Current regional and national capacity and existing technical guidelines - Cascade hydropower in Laos, dam design to mitigate impacts - Hydropower Energy Import/Export and Investment Plan, and Cascade Hydropower Management Capacity - Cumulative Impacts Assessment in Hydropower investment in Myanmar - Sharing of experience from civil society perspectives 	Mr. Palakorn Chanbanyong, MRCS Ministry of Energy and Mines (MEM), Lao PDR Mr. Cherid Kalayanamitr, Electricity Authority of Thailand (EGAT) Ms. Kate Lazarus, International Finance Corporation Dr. Worawan Sukararak, Earth Rights International
14:30 – 15:00	Questions and answers	
15:00 - 16:00	Group discussions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Addressing capacity - Shared experiences - What tools and guidelines should look like? - Additional mechanisms and transboundary cooperation - How to promote cooperation from dam operators 	Participants/Dr. Pinida Leelapanang Kamphaengthong, LMI-SIP
15:45 - 16:00	Coffee break	
Session 3: Proposed actions and next steps		
16:00 - 16:45	Report-backs to plenary	Participants/Dr. Pinida Leelapanang Kamphaengthong
	Discussion	
16:45 - 17:00	Next steps and Closing	Mr. Suparek Janprasart