

Inputs provided by: Mekong River Commission

1. General description of mandates and objective(s) of your organization / associated network with institutional structure

The 1995 Mekong Agreement which was signed by Governments of its four Member Countries: Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Viet Nam established the Mekong River Commission (MRC). Its focus is on the sustainable development and management of the Mekong River Basin's water and related resources. Preparation of a long term Basin Development Plan and Strategy is a key part of the 1995 Agreement along with procedures for data sharing, water use monitoring, maintenance of flows and water quality.

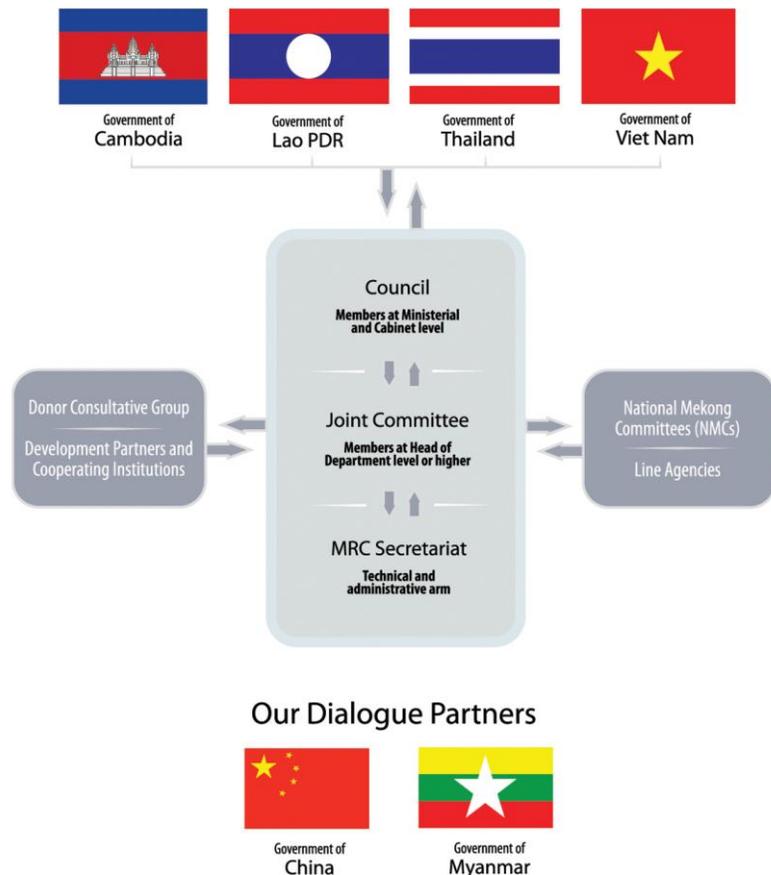
Every year, environment and water ministers of Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Viet Nam meet to discuss emerging issues related to the Lower Mekong Basin. As Council Members of the Mekong River Commission, the ministers convene to review and come to mutual conclusions on the management and development of water and related resources within the framework of the 1995 Mekong Agreement.

The MRC Joint Committee, which comprises senior officials at no less than Head of Department level of the four countries, and supported by national line agencies including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, takes these decisions and policies forward by putting them into action.

Technical and administrative functions fall under an operational arm, the MRC Secretariat, managed by a Chief Executive Officer. Currently, there are about 150 staff members based in two Secretariat offices—one in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, and the other in Vientiane, Lao PDR.

The Secretariat facilitates regional meetings of the Member Countries and provides technical advice on joint planning, coordination and cooperation. It also works closely with the four countries' coordinating bodies, the National Mekong Committees (NMCs), and other state agencies. Currently, the People's Republic of China and the Union of Myanmar are engaged as MRC Dialogue Partners.

Organisation of the Mekong River Commission



2. Relevant operational framework(s)

The Council or Joint Committee may ask its Secretariat to formulate work plans to address specific issues. At the Council meeting in 2007 the Secretariat was asked to look into the likely effects of climate change on the livelihoods of people in the Mekong Basin. The MRC Secretariat formulated a Climate Change and Adaptation Initiative (CCAI) running over four phases ending in 2025. An Intermediate Phase of 18 months to December 2010 set up institutional arrangements, conducted priority studies and settled partnership agreements. Currently the CCAI is in its first five-year phase 2011-2015. The following two five-year phases will be developed based on implementation experiences. The CCAI is synchronised with the MRC strategic planning cycles commencing with the MRC Strategic plan 2011-2015.

The CCAI is responsible for preparation of a Basin-wide Adaptation Strategy that will be part of the Basin Development Plan and Strategy for 2016-2020.

3. Focus areas of risk management for loss and damage associated with climate change impacts

For the MRC countries the aim is to assist national planning bodies to understand and assess the expected impacts of climate change, the interactions with rapid development and the adaptation needs/scopes suited for the Mekong River Basin. The approach to loss and damage estimation and tools developed are prioritised for issues that are of a transboundary nature and those affecting the most vulnerable groups.

The main elements for implementation are:

- *Monitoring of the changing climate in the Lower Mekong Basin and the impacts on the river regime including sea level rise and salinity intrusion*
- *Monitoring on the state of adaptation and damages*
- *Development of Shared Predictive Tools for hydrological changes in river regime due to climate and development scenarios*
- *Development of short and long term forecast information for flood and drought*
- *Collection and collation of Impact tools and data including flood/drought damages, fisheries, social and environmental impacts*
- *Carry out basin-wide studies to address the issues of Food Security and Ecological Change that can be expected with climate change.*
- *Build capacity in member countries to assess climate change impacts and vulnerabilities, use the available tools and to support and pilot adaptation options.*
- *Foster cooperation and provide high quality information to allow climate change adaptation to be integrated into development policies*
- *Engagement and information exchange with Stakeholders*
- *Preparation and agreement of Climate Change Adaptation strategy and associated analysis in support of IWRM based Basin Development planning.*

4. Geographic coverage

The Lower Mekong Basin of Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Viet Nam

5. Key stakeholders

In each of the four member countries of the MRC:

- National Mekong Committees (NMCs)
- National climate change focal agencies and national line agencies of key MRC sectors
- National and international NGOs
- Private sector
- Local authorities and communities
- Organisations with competences and climate change adaptation programmes in the Mekong region
- The development partners who support the CCAI through financing and technical cooperation.

6. Implementation modality / delivery mechanisms

Work relating to Climate Change and Adaptation within the MRC Secretariat is led by the CCAI with support from coordination units within each **National Mekong Committee**. Specifically, each of the National Mekong Committee plays a critical role in facilitating the implementation of the CCAI. Each NMC coordinates, through its Secretariat, the work of the CCAI at the national level and provides links between the MRCS and the relevant line agencies in implementing CCAI activities. The NMCs have an active role in leading the formulation of national positions on certain climate change adaptation policy issues with close collaboration with relevant line agencies.

In each of the member countries, there are **climate change offices, focal agencies and committees** who are key national partners for the implementation of CCAI activities. They have an important role in up-scaling and replicating of the CCAI demonstration activities and in their integration with development planning in which CCAI support, build on and strengthen existing mechanisms and structures at national and local levels.

CCAI also works with other MRC programmes such as flood and fisheries and external partners such as CSRIO. Within the MRC, cooperation allows the respective MRC programmes to provide technical services and sectoral viewpoints.

In relation to CCAI's Development Partners, they are closely involved in defining the financing strategy for sustainability of the CCAI and its setting on a harmonised monitoring and reporting system. They are invited to the CCAI Steering Committee and consider technical aspects of the CCAI along with the MRC programmes and technical partners.

The CCAI also works to an agreed Work Programme and specific work items are consulted on in each member country at national and regional meetings.

As for the organisation and management of the CCAI, this includes a high level Steering Committee, a Regional Technical Working Group, Regional Coordination Meetings, and Coordination Meetings within the MRCS.

The Steering Committee, consisting of high level representatives from the MRC governance system, the riparian entities responsible for climate change, the MRC Environment Division Director and relevant development partners, meets once a year to oversee the strategic direction of the CCAI implementation and to maximise the national uptake and benefits of the CCAI.

The CCAI Regional Technical Working Group comprises of representative of the Climate Change Offices of the member countries, the National CCAI Coordinators, and relevant national experts. The CCAI Regional Technical Working Group is convened to facilitate the implementation of the CCAI and provide linkages with the national activities and expertise among CCAI governance. The Group focuses on the design of activities to achieve the CCAI outputs, evaluate progress and work plans, and propose adjustments to improve implementation performance.

CCAI Regional Coordination Meeting is held regularly tentatively once every quarter to ensure an effective coordination on implementation, in which the MRC Environment Division Director, MRC CCAI Coordinator and National Coordinators participate.

At the MRCS Senior Management Meeting, the CEO and the four MRC Division Directors convene to discuss and provide the overall direction and oversight for the CCAI at the MRCS level. Similar to this meeting, the MRCS Programme Coordination Meetings are institutionalised through the Technical Coordination Advisor in the Office of the CEO, responsible for regular meetings on aspects of coordination and rolling out of specific organisational policies. The CCAI Coordinator will raise the agenda item on the CCAI at this Meeting and arrange bilateral meetings with the other MRC programmes as needed.

7. Key activities / outputs to date

Key Activities:

- Climate, Hydrology and Adaptation Monitoring
- Regular Reporting on the Status of Climate Change and Adaptation in the Mekong Basin
- Climate Change Adaptation data, impact modelling and decision support system
- Basin-wide studies on Climate Impacts on flood and drought and adaptation strategies
- Basin-wide studies on Climate Change impact on Food Security and Ecosystems
- Capacity Building in Line Agencies
- Demonstration Projects
- Preparation of adaptation strategy

Some of the outputs to date: see <http://www.mrcmekong.org/about-the-mrc/programmes/climate-change-and-adaptation-initiative/>

8. Any additional information and contact details

The Mekong River Basin is undergoing a rapid change due to development and the risks of climate related damage is increasing. The development of shared predictive tools has been very successful though there is still significant capacity building needed in the less developed countries.

The use of the modelling and assessment tools for climate predictions needs to be streamlined to take advantage of the developments in climate science and to maintain the confidence of decision makers in light of a plethora of predictions and increased understanding of uncertainties for the future by experts that is harder to convey to non-specialists.

The changes expected in the river regime include not only the changes in flow from climate, land use and development (including hydropower) but also changes in the sediment and nutrient regime that will impact on the critically important fisheries sector. More work is therefore needed to understand the changes expected and complex linkages including the true economic impacts, possible adaptations and residual loss and damage.

Contact: Dr. Nguyen Huong Thuy Phan, CCAI Coordinator, Mekong River Commission, Office of the Secretariat Vientiane Lao PDR (thuyphan@mrcmekong.org)