

Decentralization of Core River Monitoring Network

(CRMN) in 2030

Monitoring the Mekong River is crucial for the countries along its banks. The Mekong River Commission Secretariat (MRCS) is working to decentralize monitoring to its member countries in the future. In 2016, MRCS and its member countries developed a decentralization roadmap with the aim of gradually transferring monitoring responsibilities to member countries, ultimately achieving self-sufficiency by 2030. In 2018, the MRC and a consultant team carried out a mid-term review (MTR) of the progress of the Decentralization Road Map implementation. The review identified some challenges. These challenges include:

1. Competing national budget priorities in some member countries,
2. Limited utilization of monitoring data,
3. Redundancies in monitoring networks,
4. Human and technical capability gaps in Member Countries, and outdate monitoring equipment,
5. Ineffective alignment and integration of monitoring stations, activities, and data.

To address the identified challenges, a key recommendation from the 2018 review was to conduct an audit of the existing monitoring stations and sampling locations for key environmental disciplines and socio-economic datasets in the Mekong basin, supported by cost-benefit analysis. This review report guided the redesign of the Mekong Core River Monitoring Network (CRMN) to meet the river's changing needs and maintain the sustainability and reliability of the MRC's monitoring efforts, including JEM approaches.

Throughout the process, national and regional workshops gathered input from Member Countries and their implementing agencies. The redesign CRMN with JEM

Implementation of the CRMN: The push before decentralization

To kick start of the CRMN, followings are jointly funders:

1. **Agence Française de Développement (AFD)** supported the procurement, inspections, construction, and installation of Hydrology stations, along with annual maintenance and monitoring standard operation procedure development for sediment and hydrology discipline. The approximate amount is USD 600,000 (to be confirmed).
2. **Japan supports equipment procurement** for discharge and sediment monitoring, as well as monitoring in other disciplines, with a budget of USD 2.9 million.
3. **BMZ, through MRCGIZ's technical cooperation project**, enhances MRCS and Member Countries' capacity for CRMN sustainability and procured some water quality monitoring equipment, totaling Eur 1.3 million.
4. **The MRC basket fund** finances field monitoring activities with an annual budget of approximately USD 1.3 million.

By the end of 2023, the MRC Gender-Sensitive Capacity Development Action Plan (CDAP) supported by BMZ will be ready for implementation. The immediate needs capacity development program aims to provide training to a minimum of 120 staff members or experts from line agencies in MRC Member Countries. Once trained, they will be qualified to collect and analyse data using standard methods. The results of the CRMN network implementation will be incorporated into the next State of Basin Report in 2028.