

Support to the Mekong River Commission

Working together for the sustainable development of the Mekong Basin

Context

Over 70 million people from Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Thailand and Viet Nam depend on the Lower Mekong Basin to sustain their livelihoods through fishing and agriculture. However, rapid economic growth is increasingly stressing water-related and natural resources. The only way to balance economic, social and environmental interests is for neighbouring states to cooperate. To this end, the Mekong River Commission (MRC) was established in 1995. Since then, the MRC has been developing as a key international organisation for the management of water resources. Nevertheless, its work must be improved at both regional and national levels to face the challenges facing the Lower Mekong Basin. This requires strengthening the work of the national line agencies and stronger regional coordination. The Transboundary Water Cooperation project aims to enforce the coordinating and management capabilities of the MRC, supporting river monitoring and the implementation of transboundary projects for flood and drought management.

Objective

The Mekong River Commission is becoming more relevant and efficient, especially in dealing effectively with development challenges in the Lower Mekong Basin in the face of climate change.

Project name	Transboundary Water Cooperation in the Lower Mekong Basin II
Commissioned by	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
Project region	Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Viet Nam
Leading executing agency	Mekong River Commission (MRC)
Duration	2022 - 2024

Approach

The project carries out the following activities:

- Advising the MRC as part of its river basin monitoring in the decentralisation of responsibilities and key functions to the member countries.
- Supporting proposals in the transboundary water development and management of a sub-basin between Cambodia and Thailand to gain funding to implement a flood and drought master plan, including a joint early-warning system.
- Fostering the organisational development of the MRC Secretariat by supporting the implementation of the MRC Strategic Plan 2021-2025. This includes advice on compliance mechanisms, for example, internal controls and efficient use of the funds from bilateral and international donors and member countries.



Handover of scientific equipment

Photo: © GIZ/Transboundary Water Cooperation in the Lower Mekong Basin

Impact

With support from Germany, the MRC has contributed to improving the knowledge-based of member countries on water resources, developing a shared vision for the basin, and improving the cooperation mechanisms between member countries. With this contribution, it makes the MRC a more efficient organization and now on its way to becoming a world leading organization in the field of transboundary water cooperation, receiving increasing political and financial support.

More recently, the project has achieved and is progressing the following:

- Piloting results from the Joint Environmental Monitoring Program are being integrated into the MRC Core River Monitoring Network covering not only the Mekong main river but also tributaries, as well as socio-economic monitoring with decentralized key functions being transferred to the member countries.
- Development of a Master Plan for the Tonle Sap sub-basin, approved by the Regional Steering Committees of Cambodia and Thailand.
- A Digital Basin Atlas for the Tonle Sap sub-basin is developed and operational for early-warning systems.



The first time Lao Female surgeons working in fish passage monitoring under JEM program
Photo: © GIZ/Transboundary Water Cooperation in the Lower Mekong Basin



Water Reservoir in Cambodia
Photo: © GIZ/Transboundary Water Cooperation in the Lower Mekong Basin

- Promoting the usage of MRC M&E system for reporting, budgeting and planning.

Gender and water management

Gender Sensitive Development Strategy for Core River Monitoring Network is under preparation and expected to be ready in 2023. The Gender and Vulnerability Assessment in the 9C-9T Tonle Sap sub-basin will be conducted and the project will also support the implementation of the MRC Gender Action Plan.

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