



Lao People's Democratic Republic  
Peace Independence Democracy Unity Prosperity  
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# Report

## Scientific Seminar on “International Year of Water Cooperation” on 29 March 2013, at Water Resources Engineering Department, Faculty of Engineering, The National University of Laos

“Under the Occasion of World Water Day Celebration for the Year 2013 in Lao PDR”



By: Department of Water Resources  
Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment

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## **Report**

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### **1. Background**

The World Water Day is celebrated every year on 22 March or during the end of the month in order to promote the importance of water resources for people's livelihoods, environment and country's development. This provides an opportunity to disseminate scientific and useful information to the local public to educate them on sustainable water resources management. The Department of Water Resources (DWR) – Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE) will lead eight activities in Vientiane Capital and provinces for this year activity: an Official Address by the Prime Minister on television and radio nationwide; public banner announcement with the theme of World Water Day 2013; T-Shirt printing with World Water Day 2013 slogan and donor logos; raising awareness through songs related to water resource management; a scientific seminar and student debate; a water resources protection drawing competition; golf tournament; and public awareness raising on the value of water resources through mass media.

The scientific seminar on IWRM is one of the important activities which conducted in coordination with the Water Resources Engineering Department (WRED, at Tadthong Campus), Faculty of Engineering, The National University of Lao (NUoL) and other line agencies, offices and development partners to campaign and promote IWRM to academic staff, students in various faculties related to water issues, water users, private sectors, senior government decision makers, technical water resource agencies, water service managers and other water sector stakeholders. The seminar serves as forum and knowledge hub for exchange of ideas and knowledge on scientific and technical issues related to water resources management, socio-economic values, human needs, nexus of water and other aspects, environment and economic growth through cooperation of the different water sector actors.

## 2. Highlights of the Event

For the year 2013 marked the important year for water cooperation internationally addressing the issues of water resources management both local and global contexts. Of this remarkable day celebration, the seminar highlighted as summary below:

- The seminar co-hosted by the Department of Water Resources, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment and Water Resources Engineering Department under the Faculty of Engineering, The National University of Laos. The seminar officially welcomed and chaired by Associate Professor Ouanma Thammavong, Head of Water Resources Engineering Department, NUoL. He highlighted the importance of world water day for 2013 which all parties and stakeholders should closely cooperate and coordinate for water resources protection. This event boosted the water resource sector collaboration and create wider awareness and knowledge spreadout for better water resource management. In addition to Associate Professor Ouanma Thammavong's remarks, Mr. Chanthanet Boualapha, Director General of Department of Water Resources, MONRE also emphasized the better cooperation between public, private and community in terms of integrated water resources management (IWRM) signal an importance, policy and strategy have to be clear and coordinated-plan need to be developed in order to advocate the IWRM implementation in basin/sub-basin levels in the country. In pararell, the IWRM capacity building and awareness for all agencies of all levels need to be stregntened.
- The seminar participated by representatives from various ministries, agencies such as line department of MONRE, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Planning and Investment, Ministry of Education and Sports, Ministry of Public Works and Transport, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Ministry of Industry and Commerce, Ministry of Energy and Mines including Electricity du Laos, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Public Security, Ministry of National Defense, Ministry of Science and Technology, Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism, Ministry of Public Health, Department of National Geographic, Mass Organisation : Lao Front Construction, Women's Union, Youth's Union and Worker's Union. Development Partners and other international organisations attended namely Asian Development Bank (ADB), International Water Management Institute (IWMI), European Union (EU), Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID), Challenge Program on Water and Food (CPWF), International Office for Water, French Water Agencies (Loire-Bretagne and Rhine-Meuse), World Wildlife Fund (WWF), International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), students from the National University of Laos as well as some companies – Nam Theun 2 Hydropower

Company, Theun-Hinboun Hydropower Company, Phubia Mining Company, Nam Ngum 1 Dam, Xaiyaburi Power Company, Beer Lao Company, Lao Shareholder Enterprise, Banks (Bank of Lao PDR, Lao International Commercial Bank, ST Bank, ACELIDA, Lao-Viet Bank), CP Lao Company, etc. The total participants are 438 representatives, of these 161 are women representatives or about 36.75 %.

- The seminar agenda highlighted the presentation on national water resources strategy towards 2020 and its action plan for 2011-2015 which presented by Director General of DWR, MONRE. This presentation envisaged the major water resources policy statements, IWRM principles, 12 major programmes of actions focused on water resource coordination and institutional development, legislation and plan, river basin/sub-basin management, groundwater management, data and information, water allocation, water quality monitoring and management, wetland management, flood and drought management, water resources management and climate change adaptation, water resources financing and capacity building, awareness and stakeholder participation (The presentation is shown in Annex 1).
- The agenda of the seminar followed by the presentation on Strategies and Action Plan for Water Management and IWRM Education. This oriented by Associate Prof. Ouanma Thammavong, Head of Water Resources Engineering Department, NUoL. The presentation emphasised on the needs for human resources development on IWRM, development of IWRM curriculum and teaching capability enhancement. Within the general goals of improving water resources management education, 9 objectives were identified such as: well-qualified and capable staff at WRED, high qualities of teaching and learning, water management curriculum developed and advanced, Adequate teaching and learning resources and equipment, More effective national and international cooperation, Post graduate study program prepared and initiated, Effective promotion of water resources management education, Preparation for research capacity, Improved gender balances in IWRM education system (The presentation is shown in Annex 2).

After the presentations on national water resources policy and IWRM human resources development in the academia, the panel discussions were carried out inviting panelists from the DWR of MONRE, WRED of NUoL, IWMI, and ADB. The discussions remarked the given ideas on IWRM in Lao PDR with link to the regional and global cooperation. The main outcomes of the panel discussion summarized as following:

- Associate Prof. Ouanma Thammavong from the WRED of NUoL addressed the significant of human resource development and support in the areas of IWRM since these related human resources is very limited comparing to the actual need for water resources management countrywide. The WRED of NUoL is the key sources of IWRM human resources service in the country in the recent years including doing some researches and analysis related to water.

- The DWR of MONRE (Director General Mr. Chanthanet Boualapha) stated the water cooperation is really critical element of national water resource management in Lao PDR. This has to be collaborated among the stakeholders and all parties concerned namely public, private and community participations. In addition, external partners, INGOs, civil society is also essential contribution for water resource management as well as the national, regional and international cooperation is strongly needed to strengthened in all aspects related to water resources. Moreover, we have to create platform of capacity building and awareness for all users to realize and protect water resources in the sustainable manner. To do this, we have to develop a mechanism and strategy and action plan to guide the management of water by bottom-up and top-down mixture (ministry, province, district, village cluster and individual community, etc.).
- Dr. Paul Pavelic from IWMI identified the cooperation and coordination with all agencies/entities in the society is a great opportunity for all academic institutions for improving the skills and knowledge in particular. IWMI is one of the lead agencies on water management and development research and studies in the world and region. This can advocate the region and Lao PDR for strengthening cooperation with all related entities for better water management and studies in country specifically.
- Professor Torkil Jonch Clausen, representing ADB share the valuable thoughts on experience in integrated water resources management across the Asia-Pacific region and in the world. He addressed the cooperation is most important part of water resources management and development. The cooperation should be enhanced in all areas creating a forum for thoughts exchange in the theme of mutual understanding and trade-off basis. In related to ADB support, there is set of fundamental advocacies to countries in the region for water resource management and development including Lao PDR.
- Lao PDR is richest country of water resources in the region contributing about 35 percent to the Mekong flow annually and about 55,000 cubic meters per capita per year. Therefore, water is critically significant for Lao livelihoods and socio-economic development against poverty. However, the water resource problems have been occurred in some areas such as problems of flood, drought, climate change impact, water quantity and quality degradation, aquatic biodiversity degradation, so on.
- The requirements for water resources management in Lao PDR are needs for human resource and capacity development (at all levels) which is the key success of IWRM implementation in the country, financial support for IWRM strategy and plans is needed to fulfill, the management should focus on both quantity and quality assurance, water resource education should be strongly supported by all levels and stakeholders and link with regional and international universities/entities for regular IWRM networking.

- Participation and experience sharing with other agencies and countries is very important for Lao PDR in order to gain better understanding and clearer picture of IWRM approach implementation and application in the Lao context. Therefore, the DWR of MONRE has to active participation and builds capacity of all staff to communicate with the outside world communities as well as all stakeholders in the country by its mandates.
- The IWRM education is really important in Lao PDR since the water resource development in the country is fast-tracked growth in various sectors. The needs for higher education and external support are vital. IWMI also shared very good information on opportunity fund for higher education scholarship available in water management fields which has fund available around 100,000 USD annually for water resource education, studies and researches, there is still limited access of this fund though and hope the interest will be increasing.
- The vision for water resource management in Lao PDR is coordinated, optimized and sustainable development and use of water resources, protection of the environment and improvement of social well-being.
- In addition to the seminar, the side-event activities have been arranged. These comprised of exhibitions from Department of Water Resources, Centre for Natural Resources and Environment Data-Information, Lao National Mekong Committee Secretariat, IWMI, CPWF, and Nam Theun 2 Company. The university students debates conducted on the topic of implication of land, water and forest. This provided a great opportunity for all students to debate the ideas and created suitable platforms of thinking and better cooperation in the education system in the country for water and natural resources management in the long-run.

### **3. Summary**

Through the event organization, the participants have gained more knowledge and experience on integrated water resources management policy, strategy towards 2020 and its 12 major programmes of actions to be carried out. The human resource development and local capacity building is really critical for all levels-central, provincial, district and village and other cross-cutting issues. The participants perceived a concrete vision of the IWRM education strategy and its high intention on human resource development service to the Lao society and needs for natural resources management. The seminar marked the important day of world water day celebration and boosted cooperation among the stakeholders for integration and sustainable of water resources use in Lao PDR for generation to come.

**Annex 1 : National Water Resources Strategy 2020 and Action Plan 2011-2015.**

**(See Presentation in separate sheet)**

**Annex 2 : Strategies and Action Plan for Water Management and IWRM Education in Lao PDR.**

**(See Presentation in separate sheet)**

Annex 3 : Photos

