Session 1: Designing effective participatory research processes
Led by: Mekong Region Futures Institute (Thailand)
Where/when: Session Room 1, October 21, 10.30-12.30
This session will be held as a role-playing game. Attendees will take on the role of the science advisory committee (SAC), which advises the 'Mekong Council' in research-related matters. The Council has pledged $60m for research, deciding to fund only participatory research due to the minimal impact of traditional approaches. The Council has not had access to a framework to systematically evaluate the highly diverse expressions of interest received during the call. Today the SAC will meet to specify criteria for participatory research evaluation.

Session 2: Enhancing capacities for river basin management in Myanmar
Led by: UNESCO – IHE (Netherlands)
Where/when: Session Room 2, October 21, 10.30-12.30
This session will introduce one of WLE Greater Mekong’s fellowships projects, MK30, in a broader context of capacity development in the Ayeyarwady river basin. We will start with an introduction of the fellowship and the research topics developed by fellows from different stakeholder groups while being guided by a series of international and Myanmar coaches. Primary results from the programme will be presented. This will be followed by a presentation and discussion on institutionalising capacity development through a certification program. Finally the experiences with cross-sectoral policy engagement will be discussed. The main questions for discussion with the audience are: a) how can we improve the ongoing fellowship research as well as future training programs? b) are stakeholder dialogues sufficient for policy engagement? c) what is an enabling environment for Myanmar Ayeyarwady cross-sectoral integration?

Session 3: Conserving Fish Amidst Hydropower Development
Led by: EcoFish Research Ltd. (Canada)
Where/when: Session Room 1, October 21, 13.30-15.00
This session will discuss whether fish conservation measures (fishways, hatcheries, habitat compensation) can really mitigate, or compensate for, the impacts of hydropower development and how these efforts can be strengthened by technical and management efforts. Key topics for discussion include: (1) Can fish mitigation/compensation measures effectively mitigate/compensate for the adverse impacts of hydropower projects? (2) International good practices of fish conservation in hydropower development. (3) Fish conservation requirements for hydropower development in the Mekong River Basin. (4) What are critical components for fish conservation in hydropower development with respect to technical and regulatory efforts in the Mekong River Basin?
Session 4: Community-driven River Health Monitoring Systems
Led by: Asian Institute of Technology (Thailand)
Where/when: Session Room 2, October 21, 13.30-15.00
This session will introduce the concept of Community-driven River Health Monitoring Systems (CRHMS), and engage participants in deliberative discussions on the modalities of implementing these. Key questions for discussion will be: (a) How can an enabling environment for CRHMS be created? (b) How can the CRHMS be linked to official (goverment) monitoring systems? (c) What is needed to ensure sustainability of CRHMS?

Session 5: Improving Landscape Governance under Conflict – the Upper Ayeyarwady
Led by: School of International Development, University of East Anglia
Where/when: Session Room 1, October 21, 15.30-17.00
What sorts of approaches can help improve weak natural resource governance under conflict conditions? We will explore this question for the case of Kachin state, northern Myanmar where resource conflict has undermined planning and governance across a range of issues. Can an integrated ‘landscape’ approach help?

Session 6: Launching the 2015 Regional WLE Fellowship Program in the Mekong, Salween and Red River basins
Led by: Greater Mekong Sub-region Social Research Center, Faculty of Liberal Arts, Ubon Ratchathani University (Thailand); Center for Social Development Studies, Faculty of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University (Thailand); Vietnam Academy of Water Resources (Viet Nam)
Where/when: Session Room 2, October 21, 15.30-17.00
This session will introduce the three Naga 2015 Fellowship projects in the Mekong (MK32), Red (MK33) and Salween (MK31) basins, the fellows themselves and their research areas. The session will begin with short presentations by the project teams on the fellowship design and some of the specifics about each river basin. This will be followed by an interactive exercise where the fellows will introduce themselves and their research area to participants. During this session, we encourage anyone interested in a particular fellows’ research to approach them for coffee afterwards.

Session 7: Cross Basin Learning in Practice: Bringing lessons learned from West Africa, East Africa and the Ganges into the Mekong
Led by: CGIAR Program on Water, Land and Ecosystems (Global)
Where/when: Session Room 1, October 22, 08.00-10.00
The CGIAR Program on Water, Land and Ecosystems has over 100 projects across four focal regions: the Greater Mekong, the Nile and East Africa, the Volta/Niger and the Ganges. These regions all have distinct geographies, cultures and political economies. Despite the myriad differences between the regions they each are experiencing environmental degradation of their land and water resources and their environment. Although the drivers and enablers of this degradation vary between the regions, this session aims to draw out important lessons from across the four regions that may be applicable across them all. These lessons include ideas for moving science into policy, communication and engagement strategies and valuable tools and research methods.
Session 8: Mekong water governance: challenges and opportunities for responsive and accountable dialogue spaces

Led by: Cambodia Development Resource Institute (Cambodia)

Where/when: Session Room 2, October 22, 08.00-10.00

This session will focus on how Mekong water governance can be improved by exploring local perceptions of ‘good governance’ drawing on the diverse perspectives of the Mekong Water Governance Framework and existing platforms. Generally, the need for governance is understood to arise any time a group of people come together to accomplish an overall organizational and societal end. In our Mekong case, it is related to how the quality of institutions, organizations, and processes can be improved to enable diverse stakeholders/actors cope with the impacts of natural and human system changes and to ensure efficiency, equity, and sustainability of water security and livelihoods.

Session 9: A Tale of Two Rivers

Led by: International Center for Environmental Management (Viet Nam) and International Water Management Institute (Lao PDR)

Where/when: Session Room 1, October 22, 10.30-12.30

This session will introduce the diversity of ecosystems and services of Myanmar’s two major rivers – the Ayeyarwady and the Thanlwin. It will present profiles of six communities from the rivers, highlighting the connections between the ecosystems and community livelihoods and ranking the development pressures on these linked human-ecosystems. Participants from other Greater Mekong countries are invited to work with Myanmar stakeholders through interactive exercises, designed to share experiences and establish analogue ecosystems and cooperation between communities of the GMS relying on similar ecosystems under similar threats.

Session 10: The Art of weaving: combining local knowledge and academic research

Led by: Centre for Water Resources Conservation and Development (Vietnam)

Where/when: Session Room 2, October 22, 10.30-12.30

Integrating local knowledge with academic research is a wicked challenge. Come experience how others are artfully weaving the two together. In this roll-up-your-sleeves session, we will gain hands-on experience applying the Thaibaan methodology and explore how to combine it with conventional academic research efforts.

Session 11: Understanding Salween-Than Lwin-Nu Water Governance: Making links between ‘local’ and ‘non-local’ research strategies

Led by: York Center for Asian Research, York University (Canada), and Center for Social Development Studies, Faculty of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University (Thailand)

Where/when: Session Room 1, October 22, 13.30-15.00

This panel will focus on the links, gaps, and challenges between research carried out at multiple scales (i.e., local community, national, and regional/cross-border analysis). Panel discussion will highlight key findings, a discussion on key policy issues, gender analysis, and how to link the research being carried out across multiple scales.
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This session will explore how Mekong countries can work together to manage and share the benefits of transboundary water resources. It seeks to: (1) improve knowledge, skills and practice on sustainable utilization of transboundary water resources, basin-wide; and (2) strengthen dialog and communication of transboundary water resources management. Key guiding questions for discussion include: (1) who are the key actors? (2) What are the potential benefits to share? (3) How can benefits be shared?

Session 13: Stumbling on Surprise: The Network for Sustainable Hydropower Development in Mekong region (NSHD-M): Highlights and best practices across six countries
Led by: Network for Sustainable Hydropower Development for Mekong Region with the support of MRC-GIZ Cooperation Programme
Where/when: Session Room 1, October 22, 15.30-17.00
NSHD-M is a professional network of academics, lecturers and researchers in the field of Sustainable Hydropower Development in South-East Asia. This session is designed with a poster walk through highlights/best practices of the Network activities through six countries, and followed by a panel discussion. It will give the audience a general overview of the Network as well as its products: training manuals, case studies, integration of sustainable Hydropower development into curriculums and the stories of each in the six network member countries.

Session 14: Legal Framework for Chinese Hydropower Investment in the GMS
Led by: University of International Business and Economics and Yunnan University of Finance and Economics
Where/when: Session Room 2, October 22, 15.30-17.00
This session will examine the legal aspects of hydropower development in the GMS. The discussion will explore the current legal frameworks for hydropower development in the GMS at a national and international level and draw on the experiences of Chinese lawyers, developers, and financiers that negotiate risk management within this legal context.

Session 15: Water, food and energy projections for the lower Mekong Basin
Led by: Fenner School of Environment and Society, Australian National University
Where/when: Session Room 1, October 23, 08.00-10.00
This session will share decision-making tools designed to produce replicable methods for identifying ‘actionable’ indicators that reflect the connections between natural systems, economic systems and human well-being. We will have participants test their validity, and seek advice on the benefits and costs of the different policy options, and potential interventions. Three case studies will be presented to illustrate these issues and tools, namely the: (a) Energy – water – food nexus in the Siphadone-Stung Treng-Kratie landscape of Cambodia. (b) Benefits and costs of flood regulation and more intensive rice production in the Mekong delta. (c) Energy – water – food nexus in the lower Mekong Basin.
Sessions 16 & 18: Towards accountable decision-making for land and water resources: quantifiable indicators for Ecosystem Services

Led by: TU Delft (Netherlands); UNESCO IHE (Netherlands); Hanoi University of Natural Resources and the Environment (Viet Nam); Institute of Water Resources Planning (Viet Nam); Vietnam - Netherlands Center for Water and Environment (Viet Nam); National Center for Water Resources Planning and Investigation, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development; FutureWater (Netherlands); GreenID (Viet Nam); International Water Management Institute (Laos); and the Water Resources University (Viet Nam).

Where/when: Session Room 2, October 23, 08.00-12.30

In MK27, a WLE Greater Mekong project, the water accounting framework (WA+) of IWMI, UNESCO IHE and FAO was chosen as the basis for reporting on water resources conditions and Ecosystem Services (ESS). Some of the key provisioning and regulating ecosystem services required for food production are currently recognized in WA+; however, other water related Ecosystem Services fundamental for human livelihoods and wellbeing are not. The challenge for MK27 is to develop quantifiable indicators for ESS in WA+ that are representative of the value of these services. In this session we would like to share the results so far with the WLE community and use their collective brainpower to develop the framework further.

Session 17: Ecosystem Based Management of Reservoirs

Led by: International Water Management Institute (Lao PDR); WorldFish (Cambodia); and CGIAR Research Program on Water, Land and Ecosystems (Global)

Where/when: Session Room 1, October 23, 10.30-12.30

This session will discuss the proposition that by considering reservoirs as “novel ecosystems” and adopting principals of ecosystem management, there is potential to ensure reservoir ecosystems mature in ways that contribute positively to sustainability and the livelihoods and resilience of local communities.

Session 19: The Power of the Crowd – Obstacles and opportunities in crowdsourced data for Agent-Based Modeling

Led by: International Food Policy Research Institute and University of Massachusetts-Amherst

Where/when: Session Room 1, October 23, 13.30-16.00

This session will host a participants-involved role-playing game/discussion to address different technical, cultural and political challenges that might exist in crowdsourcing data collection for agent-based modeling to inform policy-making. Participants will play different roles (as agents) in a river basin management game and try to handle different challenges in such practice. They will also gain some understanding how their action might affect others. Outputs of this game/discussion will be extremely valuable for the research team in their modeling setting and validation process.

Session 20: Uncertain Rivers: Planning for Ambiguous Futures in the Greater Mekong

Led by: WLE Greater Mekong (Lao PDR)

Where/when: Session Room 21, October 23, 13.30-16.00

Together, we will dive deep into four possible future scenarios and develop adaptive strategies, collaborative actions and evolutionary tactics for responding productively to whatever unfolds. Quickly, we will evaluate the portfolio of options and move forward those robust or anti-fragile strategies that help us survive in any scenario.
Special Session Descriptions

Special Session 1: Study on the Impacts of Mainstream Hydropower on the Mekong River
Led by: Vietnam National Mekong Committee (Vie Nam)
Where/when: Tonle Mekong, October 21, 10.30-12.30
The primary objective of the Study on the Impacts of Mainstream Hydropower on the Mekong River (Mekong Delta Study – MDS) is to define and evaluate changes in hydrological processes that are anticipated to occur in the Lower Mekong Basin (LMB) due to the construction and operation of the proposed LMB mainstream hydropower Cascade and assess how these changes will likely impact the human and natural environment in the downstream floodplains of Cambodia and Viet Nam. The MDS is due to be finalised in December 2015. This session will explore the preliminary results and recommendations arising from the study so far. It will also provide an opportunity to discuss and agree on ways to avoid and mitigate associated impacts as well as enhance benefits.

Special Session 2: Recognising the excluded: strengthening social safeguard systems ir hydropower implementation
Led by: National University of Laos (Lao PDR) and WLE Greater Mekong (Lao PDR)
Where/when: Orchid Rooms, October 21, 10.30-12.30
Contemporary safeguards systems do pay lip service to discrete population groups; and frequently highlight livelihoods restoration. In practice, however, the interests of certain population groups are inadequately addressed, and resettlement approaches more about livelihoods re-creation. In this session, we will highlight several case studies of how the implementation of safeguards systems often stumbles, and seek to generate a clear set of recommendations for how safeguards systems can better address the interests of excluded population groups, and the restoration of existing livelihoods systems.

Special Sessions 3 & 5: MRC: Twenty Years of Transboundary Cooperation - Achievements in Water, Food and Energy Policy Support
Led by: Mekong River Commission (Regional)
Where/when: Tonle Mekong, October 21, 13.30-17.00
This session will examine the Mekong River Commission’s approach and achievements in addressing a number of emerging issues on water and their development in the Lower Mekong Basin. It will be an opportunity to exchange information and receive feedback from the forum participants on the MRC’s mandate and activities including sustainable hydropower, climate change and its impacts on water and water-related resources. Discussion will not be limited to the milestones and the achievements of MRC, but will also relate to the current challenges and the changing role and structure of the MRC in the years ahead. In this context, the session places special emphasis on a constructive dialogue with a broad range of stakeholders with the aim of challenging as well as shaping their perceptions and activating their involvement.

Special Sessions 4 & 6: Gender Impact Assessment and Forum Theatre
Led by: OXFAM Australia (Cambodia)
Where/when: Orchid Rooms, October 21, 13.30-17.00
This session explores impacts of hydropower through theatre. It focuses on gender impacts at all stages of the project cycle and steps through the theory of Gender Impact Assessment (GIA) – an essential component of comprehensive EIA / SIA and an important tool for private sector engagement and assessment and mitigation of impacts. Participants will learn a theoretical application of GIA before exploring impacts and potential solutions through forum theatre exercises. Forum theatre is an interactive, participatory form of community theatre where a community conflict or issue of contention is performed, with audience members encouraged to enter the action.
Special Session 7: Green infrastructure – nature based solutions to resilience and sustainability in development of Mekong countries

Led by: International Centre for Environmental Management

Where/when: Tonle Mekong, October 22, 08.00-10.00

Green infrastructure uses vegetation, soils and natural processes to manage water, temperature and air quality to create healthier, resilient and beautiful urban environments. In this session, we will be presenting a film on our work in this field, followed by discussions that aim to address three questions: (a) can infrastructure requirements be met with a completely natural approach? (b) If not, how can natural elements be used to strengthen conventional infrastructure? (c) How can the life and effectiveness of conventional infrastructure be reinforced by introducing natural elements in the surroundings? This session also includes case study presentations and discussions on how to promote green infrastructure as an essential development strategy in the Mekong region.

Special Session 8: The Nexus in the GMS: Consolidating a status quo

Led by: Mekong Region Futures Institute (Thailand)

Where/when: Orchid Rooms, October 22, 08.00-10.00

You are invited to debate the present and future state of the Nexus in the Mekong region. The debate will be documented and published to specify the relevant dimensions of Nexus-related management and decision-making. This information will guide ongoing WLE-funded activities and research in the Mekong region.

Special Session 9: Is Meaningful Public Participation in EIA Possible in the Mekong Region?

Led by: PACT - Mekong Partnership for the Environment

Where/when: Tonle Mekong, October 22, 10.30-12.30

In this session, we will explore the concept of public participation in project development decisions. When should stakeholders be “informed”? When should they be “consulted”? Session organizers will lead participants through an interactive/role playing element based on case studies to help participants explore the complexities of public participation in various countries.

Special Session 10: Risk-based decision-making

Led by: Food, Energy, Environment, Water (FE²W) Network (Australia)

Where/when: Orchid Rooms, October 22, 10.30-12.30

Participants in this workshop will work in small groups on a simulated application of the Risks and Options Assessment for Decision-Making (ROAD) process to a food-energy-environment-water issue in the Mekong. Groups will develop a causal model of specific risks and use it select options to control and mitigate risks. Participants will contribute their feedback on the process and how it could be used in decision-making at different scales (i.e. from farmer to government official). Participation is restricted to 24 participants to ensure active engagement.
Special Session 11 & 13: Applying Lessons Learned to Ensure SEA Success in Myanmar

Led by: International Finance Corporation (Lao PDR)

Where/when: Tonle Mekong, October 22, 13:30-17.00

This interactive session invites environmental, social and technical experts to discuss and share experiences on developing Strategic Environmental Assessments from elsewhere in the region. Participants will have the opportunity to discuss hydropower plans in Myanmar with officials and regional experts. Discussion will focus on how lessons learned could help the SEA process for Myanmar and how to engage stakeholders in the process. Additionally, representatives from the Hydropower Developers’ Working Group – a platform for hydropower companies to channel their concerns to the government and tackle business challenges - will present at this panel for environmental and social experts to exchange ideas. This dynamic session aims for social, environmental and technical experts to dialogue with representatives from the private sector to ensure all perspectives are considered.

Special Session 12 & 14: Robust Decision Support (RDS) for Addressing the Complexity and Uncertainty in Planning for Water, Food and Energy Nexus

Led by: Stockholm Environment Institute (Thailand); Sustainable Mekong Research Network (Regional); and Lower Mekong Public Policy Initiative (Vietnam)

Where/when: Orchid Rooms, October 22, 13:30-17.00

The session aims at introducing Robust Decision Support (RDS) for addressing complexity and uncertainty in planning for the water, food and energy nexus. The first part of the session will focus on introducing the concept of the RDS and its application in the Greater Mekong Sub-region to participants. The second part of the session will delve more deeply into the RDS process and XLRM’s framework. In addition, participants will be able to learn how the process works through group exercises. A panel discussion is organized at the end of the session to explore opportunities for applying RDS for nexus planning.

Special Session 15 & 17: A Short Training on Sustainable Hydropower Development with selective modules

Led by: Network for Sustainable Hydropower Development for Mekong Region with the support of MRC-GIZ Cooperation Programme

Where/when: Tonle Mekong, October 23, 08.00-12.30

The Training (4 hours) with the interactive methodology of adult participatory learning and interesting case studies will give participants insights into hot topics of Dealing with social aspects and sustaining river basin ecosystems in the scope of Mekong region and through the view of the Network. The training will also use the Training manuals developed by the Network.

Special Session 16: Bridging the Gap between IWRM Modelling and Policy – challenges and opportunities

Led by: eWater (Australia)

Where/when: Orchid Rooms, October 23, 08.00-10.00

This session will bring IWRM modellers and policy makers together in an interactive session which explores the meaning of policy in a modelling context and how it is (or not) represented in IWRM modelling systems. Focussed presentations by modellers and ‘consumers’ of modelling products will each present their views and a moderated discussion will explore how to bridge the gap.
Special Session 18: Debating Water Governance in Southeast Asia: The perspective of the 2015 WLE Fellows
Led by: Greater Mekong Sub-region Social Research Center, Faculty of Liberal Arts, Ubon Ratchathani University (Thailand); Center for Social Development Studies, Faculty of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University (Thailand); Vietnam Academy of Water Resources (Viet Nam)
Where/when: Orchid Rooms, October 23, 10.30-12.30
In this session, the fellows from the 2015 Naga Fellowships for the Mekong (MK32), Red (MK33), and Salween (MK31) will reflect on their learning experience from their participation at the forum, and how it will shape their research. The session will involve a series of facilitated interactions mostly in small group work. We welcome the participation of other forum participants who would like to interact, network, learn from or offer advice to the fellows in what will be a dynamic and reflexive session.

Special Session 19: Enhancing Climate Resilience of Food Production in the Greater Mekong
Led by: CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security; Environmental Change Institute, University of Oxford
Where/when: Tonle Mekong, October 23, 13.30-16.00
This session will examine different climate change scenarios and their potential impacts on agriculture in the Mekong Basin. It will also examine ‘climate smart agricultural’ technologies and practices that have the potential to adapt to these scenarios and/or reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the agricultural sector. Finally, the session will explore climate smart agricultural practices and innovations, and consider their feasibility and robustness into the future, at a variety of scales.

Special Session 20: To Be Announced
Led by: TBA
Where/when: Orchid Rooms, October 23, 13.30-16.00