

Greater Mekong Forum on Water, Food and Energy - Day 1

Session 1: Ayeyarwady State of the Basin Assessment (SOBA): Taking stock of what is known about the environmental, social and economic systems of the Ayeyarwady River - Theme 2 - *The Ayeyarwady Integrated River Basin Management Project & Hydro-Informatics Centre; the Australian Water Partnership*

The objective of the session is to bring into discussion new scientific evidence and findings on the status and trends of biophysical and socio-economic characteristics, processes and functions of the Ayeyarwady basin. The session is structured as an interactive roundtable centred around a 7m X 3m 3D physical relief model of the Ayeyarwady basin. Session participants will be encouraged to stand around the 3D model. Using the model as an instructive template, the SOBA specialists will have 5 mins to describe to plenary key processes, characteristics and trends for their relevant thematic area, prioritising new findings arising from the SOBA process. To support their commentary, each SOBA package leader will also have 1 slide to summarise key statistics and numbers related to their findings. After each speed presentation by SOBA package leaders, the facilitator will open discussion to plenary for 10 minutes of comments and questions from the floor on that thematic area, before moving to a new theme.

Session 2: Water diplomacy - Theme 5 - *IHE-Delft; the Stockholm International Water Institute*

IHE and SIWI will engage with stakeholders on principles and practices of water diplomacy and water conflict management and facilitate a discussion on how Myanmar can develop its expertise in water diplomacy. Given the important implications of water resources use, the use of facilitating platforms such as for water allocation provide an opportunity to involve relevant stakeholders into a neutral, informed discussion. Currently within Myanmar, different projects and instances are promoting decision support systems (DSS) to guide future water development. Capacity is needed for a broad range of stakeholders in order to be able to effectively understand and use DSS, specifically when there is competition over water and the DSS results can be contentious. DSS developers also need capacity to create DSS platforms that allow dealing with contentious issues. The objective of the joint IHE-SIWI session is to experience stakeholders with a serious game that explicitly deals with negotiation and cooperation. The experience gained through the facilitated negotiation processes and discussions on its institutionalisation, will provide building blocks for broader water diplomacy activities in the Greater Mekong region.

Session 3: Water, Dams and People: The Case of the Lower Sesan 2 Dam on the Sesan and Srepok rivers in Cambodia - Theme 1 - *The Cambodia Development Research Institute; the NGO Forum on Cambodia; the Institute of Water Policy of the National University of Singapore*

The Sekong, Sesan and Srepok (3S) Rivers - all Mekong River tributaries - provide livelihoods to many people, particularly ethnic minorities, and contribute to shaping their culture and society. These rivers have, however, also been viewed as a source of hydropower. One recently completed dam is the Lower Sesan 2 dam (LS2). This session will explore recent research work that has focussed on how the LS2 has affected the lives and livelihoods of people living close to the dam and its inundation area. The session will seek feedback, comments and suggests from session participants.

Session 4: Mapping the footprint of reservoirs in the Mekong Region - Theme 4 - *SERVIR - Mekong; Asia Disaster Preparedness Center*

Dam construction along the Mekong and neighboring river systems is impacting communities and ecosystems throughout the region. Hundreds of additional dams have been proposed which will further impact communities and ecosystems in the region. To better understand these impacts, and based on feedback from stakeholders at last year's forum, SERVIR-Mekong has refined an online tool for modeling the inundation of proposed dams. The tool has also been used to compile a dataset of the extent of all existing and planned dams along the region's large, transboundary rivers. The tool, which requires no proprietary software to access and use, can also model the inundation area of hypothetical dams at any location along the region's rivers in the region. This session will present the latest version of the online tool and the reservoir data set for the Mekong river followed by participatory discussions to identify how these and related resources can best address such topics as impacts on river hydrology, flood and drought mitigation, and large scale forest conversion.

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Session 5: MRC and Transboundary Mekong Cooperation Challenges - Theme 1 - *The Mekong River Commission*

In the follow up to the MRC session at the 2016 Greater Mekong Forum Bangkok, the MRC will engage with Mekong stakeholders on pressing issues on its agenda, including the outcomes of the Prior Consultation process for the Pak Beng mainstream hydropower project, subsequent joint action plan preparation to support the implementation of MRC recommendations, progress of cooperation with the Mekong-Lancang Cooperation, and preparation and deliverables for the 3rd MRC Summit of Prime Ministers in April 2018.

Session 6: River Health and Hydropower on the Lancang River - Theme 2 - *EcoFish; Asian International Rivers Center*

After three years works of implementing the WLE project on 'Balancing River Health and Hydropower Requirements in the Lancang River Basin', we have made progress in balancing river health and hydropower requirements in the Lancang River Basin. This Session will present results from the project. The impacts of hydropower on river health, environmental management of hydropower with a perspective on river health, and transboundary environmental effects of Chinese dams will be summarized and discussed at the session. In addition to presenting research findings and development advances, the session will also share experience and lessons learned in China with Mekong countries that are seeking hydropower to propel economic and social development.

Session 7: Bringing the village to the conference: Salween Local Research - Theme 1 - *York University Center for Asian Research; Center for Social Development Studies, Chulalongkorn University; Weaving Bonds Across Borders; Green Watershed*

We will share our local research findings on local water governance of the Salween River across three key sites: Yunnan, China; Shan State, Myanmar; and Karen State, Myanmar. This will include showing of three short films (one from each site) to "bring the village to the conference participants" followed by small group discussion around a set of findings (on posters or other methods) and artefacts from the village presented by local researchers and their NGO collaborators.

Session 8: Dolphins and deltas, sediment and sand - How are they all connected in the Ayeyarwady? -Theme 1 - *World Wildlife Fund*

The Ayeyarwady River, the largest remaining free flowing river in Southeast Asia, is the engine of the Myanmar economy. The basin hosts 66% of Myanmar's population, key industrial hubs and half of the country's planned additional 50 GW+ hydropower projects; its delta alone produces half of the country's rice. Pressures on the River will increase as Myanmar continues on a path of steep economic growth. One obvious outcome of the growing economy is the growing construction sector. The construction sector and associated extraction of sand and gravel, compounded with dams upstream, are already denting its sediment budget; affecting the structural equilibrium of the delta with major social, economic and environmental impacts. This session will build on the theme of sediment management to explore the best path for the Ayeyarwady to generate equitable benefits across society, without compromising environmental integrity. We will discuss lessons learned related to trade-offs between economic development decisions across sectors. The panel session will be a facilitated discussion regarding emerging tools & approaches that can assist decision-makers to choose optimal solutions for both the economy and healthy rivers. We will also engage the audience in a group work to identify best practices and innovation in the area of trade-offs and how to understand rivers through an economic lens better.

Session 9: WLE Learning Experiences applied on Salween River -Theme 5 - *The Directorate of Water Resources and Improvement of River Systems*

Existing studies on Salween generate rare data and evidence on the situation and the efforts of people living along the Salween River. Professionals from Thailand and China also provide facts to have a holistic policy developed along the river collectively. Focusing on the quality of life of the people living in the NuJiang-Salween River Basin, a policy directing sustainable development of this region and nurtured by the three governments concerned and the various stakeholders including international partners is the desired outcome of this session.

Session 10: The Voice of the Next Generation of Mekong Water Leaders -Theme 1 - *The Water Agency*

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As today's water professionals, we have an important responsibility to engage the next generation of water professionals. Not only because we need them to continue our work and care for rivers in the future, but also because there is a great deal for us to learn from the next generation. In a rapidly changing world, the youth have adopted many new ways of communicating, socializing, working, etc. Embracing their ideas can truly enrich our work today – and provide inspiration for the future. In this session, we invite you to consider the role of the “next generation of Mekong water leaders”. We will develop concrete ideas to ensure that their voices are heard throughout the region. To inspire our discussions, we will hear about the Holland Water Challenge, a young water talent program initiated by the Dutch water sector, which has, since 2011, engaged hundreds of students and young water professionals across Asia Pacific.

Session 11: Acting it out! Gender and Free Prior and Informed Consent - Theme 1 - *Oxfam; Kalyana Mitta Foundation; Karen Environmental and Social Action Network*

We will use the ‘forum theatre’ tool to explore a common problem in relation to water governance. The tool supports group brainstorming to explore solutions to these problems, and we will invite session participants to be part of the play. Participants in this session are asked to stay from start till finish and not leave in the middle of play. The session is in both Burmese and English. The rapidly shifting development paradigm foresees an expanded role for companies, but we see that local communities do not have a say about projects that affect them. Often, they are not even part of the dialogue. What is more, decision-making has gender biases - higher administrative structures are usually dominated by men, and there is limited space for women in the consultation processes. Even when they participate, their inputs tend to fall on deaf ears. Using forum theatre, we will highlight issues related to Free Prior and Informed Consent and gender, and explore how to have more inclusive decision making in water governance.

Session 12: Displacement, Resettlement and Livelihoods Reconstruction: Policies and Practice in the Mekong - Theme 1 - *The National Research Center for Resettlement, Hohai University; National University of Laos; Myanmar Environment Institute*

This session will focus on displacement, resettlement and livelihoods reconstruction arising from large and middle scale hydropower development in Mekong countries. It will consider experience and lessons from policy, planning, implementation, monitoring, management and governance in the Mekong countries (China, Laos, Myanmar, Viet Nam and Cambodia etc). Policy analysis, practical experiences and case studies will be presented and discussed.

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Session 13: Deltas under pressure: challenges in managing water, land and ecosystems in the Mekong Region - Theme 3 - *Stockholm Environment Institute; Myanmar Environment Institute; Dragon Institute; Sustainable Mekong Research Network*

The penultimate Asia-Pacific Human Development Report identified deltas as critical to food systems in their respective countries and the region. As complex systems, policy makers need to acknowledge the diversity of socio-economic and environmental processes they encompass. We investigate the current state of food systems in the Ayeyarwady and Mekong Deltas, threats and changes experienced by communities, water users and industries, and explore policies and measures for sustainable deltaic food systems.

Session 14: Freshwater Health Index - Theme 2 - *Conservation International*

The Freshwater Health Index (FHI; www.freshwaterhealthindex.org) measures a range of indicators that assess three aspects of river health: ecosystem vitality, ecosystem services and governance & stakeholders. Ecosystem vitality measures the basins underlying environmental health; ecosystem services, the ability of the system to provide the services people need; and governance & stakeholders, the maturity and functioning of the water management system and people's involvement in decision making. This session will provide a brief overview of the FHI and participants will complete the governance & stakeholders survey and a weighting exercise which determines the relative importance of ecosystem services and governance & stakeholders indicators. A discussion will follow each exercise where participants will share similarities and differences in ecosystem service provision and management systems between river basins.

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Session 15: Ensuring Standards and Safeguards for Outbound Hydropower Investment in the Mekong and Salween Basins -

Theme 1 - Earth Rights; International Rivers

The purpose of this session is to examine the standards and safeguards that apply to outbound investments in hydropower projects in the Mekong and Salween Basins, and their implementation in practice, with a focus on Chinese and Thai investments. The session will outline key existing investment standards and recent policy developments in China and Thailand that aim to strengthen the standards that apply to investors. It will examine the gap between policy and practice through case studies of hydropower development in the Mekong and Salween basins, and challenges for implementation. This includes issues such as recognition of community and indigenous people's rights, determinations of fair and just compensation, militarization of dam sites and investment in conflict zones, grievance procedures and ensuring meaningful participation and involvement of affected communities. In this session we hope to stimulate dialogue and insights from participants, including company representatives, government officials, researchers, CSOs and financial agencies. The session aims to promote recommendations to strengthen the implementation of investment standards and safeguards, through measures such as due diligence, investor monitoring and reporting, and communications and dialogue platforms with local communities and other stakeholders.

Session 17: How do banks operating in the Greater Mekong region perceive water risks? - Theme 1 - World Wildlife Fund

The economy of Greater Mekong has been doing well over the past two decades, greatly contributing to GDP growth and poverty alleviation. Poor management of natural resources, and changing climate are starting to impact the balance sheets and income statements of the companies and SPVs managing infrastructure projects. Investors understand that environmental issues are most likely to impact their future products in Asia. In this session, representatives from the finance industry, investors, lenders and insurers, will share their experiences on how they integrate environmental considerations in their decision process; explore past mistakes from the region that domestic investors can learn from, so protecting balance sheets against ESG risks. At the same time, the session focusses on what ESG learnings regional investors can bring to the table as key value propositions when investing in countries such as Myanmar. They will also share ideas how they can unlock new opportunities for investments by closely working with their clients and responsible government agencies to improve river management and hence reduce financial risk.

Session 18: Lessons from the riverbank: engaging communities in river health in Myanmar - Theme 2 - International Water Management Institute; International Centre for Environmental Management; Myanmar Institute for Integrated Development; Ecosystem Conservation and Community Development Initiative

Involving communities to gather information about river health in the absence of scientific data is an appealing idea - but the reality in the villages is not so simple. Village communities have valuable knowledge about their rivers, but collecting, reporting and storing systematic data may not be a priority for rural people who are struggling to make a living in difficult conditions. This session will examine different approaches used to engage communities in the Myanmar River Health Initiative (MHRI), including surveys and interviews; participatory mapping and event calendars; other monitoring activities; and training related to river health issues. We will examine impediments and incentives to citizen science at village levels, what worked and what did not in MHRI, leading into a discussion of broader questions of the role of communities in monitoring.

Session 19: Water policies for a sustainable and inclusive future: Research insights from the Salween, Mekong and Red River fellowship program - Chulalongkorn University; Ubon Ratchathani University; Vietnam Academy of Water Resources

The Capacity Building and Professional Development of Water Governance and Regional Development Practitioners in the Mekong, Salween and Red river basins (MK31, 32 and 33) project has worked to strengthen the capacity for undertaking research and policy engagement of scholars and practitioners of water, land and energy use, management and governance. A total of 38 fellows have participated in the program from 2014-2017. A particular cross-cutting focus of the project is research on gender and other forms of social marginalization. It has also sought to build a learning community amongst these scholars and practitioners. In this session, representatives of each basin's fellowship cohort will first share a synthesis of their group's research insights and policy recommendations in a roundtable format. Following responding to questions from the floor, all participants are then invited to meet the fellows individually at poster presentations that summarize their main findings and policy recommendations. Policy briefs by

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each fellow will be available, and we encourage feedback and exchange. Overall, the session will reveal the range of contemporary water policy challenges and solutions across the Salween, Mekong and Red River basins.

Session 21: Land tenure security and state transformation processes in Asia - Theme 5 - *International Water Management Institute; Kyoto University; International Food Policy Research Institute/Policies, Institutions and Markets*

This session will look at land tenure security, within the broader context of land governance, and how it is shaped and reshaped by state transformation processes. Viewing planning as a function of power, it highlights the political nature in land use planning processes in Laos and Myanmar, and how these are driven by powerful and less powerful actors' interests, strategies, and access to resources. Positioning land use planning central in the ongoing discourse and policy debates on land governance, it highlights potential roles of planning processes as an imaginary platform and entry points towards more deliberative decision-making processes in land governance.

Session 22: Training Myanmar water professionals - experiences from the Ayeyarwaddy

IHE-Delft

This session will present features and experiences from 2 batches of MK30 trainees on "Inclusive governance of water and ecosystem services in the Ayeyarwady river basin". Based on the experiences of fellows coming from different government departments, NGOs, private companies and research organizations in Myanmar, we will discuss how professional training can contribute to ongoing developments in Myanmar's water landscape. The interdisciplinary approach followed by this programme will be illustrated by examples of project proposals that have been prepared by the fellows. We want to show how training can result into impact and discuss how future professional training programmes can build on that success.

Session 23: Inland fisheries and the sustainable development goals: A roadmap for the future - Theme 3 - *Conservation International; Arizona State University; University of Washington; University of Guelph; Ohio State University; Boston University; Cambodian Fisheries Administration*

Taking the sustainable development goals as a central organizing theme, this session provides an opportunity to share newly available information and dialogue on regional impacts of hydropower, land conversion and aquaculture on fisheries resources. The session will take the format of facilitated discussions, interactive think-tanks and gameplay to identify the policy opportunities, dialogues and planning needs that would help address the challenges. The session will ask participants to discuss: What can we do to protect inland fisheries and make them sustainable in the face of development: what can communities do and what policy opportunities are there to support communities? The session will result in an outline for a white paper with session participants as co-authors that will provide an overview of the challenges and the opportunities for protecting regional inland fisheries.

Session 24: Interactive visualization in Mekong-Irrawaddy-Salween/Thanlwin Water Resources Management - Theme 1 - *Digital Conservation Facility Laos; Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Northern Illinois University; Center for Burma/Myanmar Studies, Northern Illinois University*

George Orwell's novel *Nineteen Eighty Four* (1949) is the definitive treatment of the "politics of memory": presenting a dystopian vision where breadth of vocabulary, moral scope, intimate personal relations and political hierarchies are all subordinated to and warped by information under the total control of a self-serving elite without qualms against irrevocably deleting empirical truth. Now, widely-accessible technologies allow independent evaluation of politics-of-memory vulnerable schemes for infrastructure mega-developments within the energy, agricultural intensification, mining and transportation sectors. Transparently archiving their pre and post-project situations --in terms of ecology, geography, culture and aesthetics-- is essential to environmental assessment, cost/benefit analysis, and institutional memory: not least so for hydropower dams touted as environmentally and socially responsible sustainable and fish-friendly. Yet such challenging research and documentation is generally left to players with pro-implementation agendas: rendering impact assessment and mitigation planning as conflicts-of-interest which professional societies for EIA consultants won't discuss. From our work in mainland Southeast Asian river basins we'll be demonstrating unorthodox visualization and learning tools, and emerging presentation and publication formats.

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Session 25: Energy for Peace in Myanmar - Theme 5 - *Policy Alternatives Research Institute, University of Tokyo; Renewable and Appropriate Energy Laboratory, UC Berkeley*

Energy and peace maintain a complex relationship in the case of Myanmar. Using the recent controversy over the Myitsone hydropower development as a highlighted example and the recent conflict flaring up nationwide, rising tensions surrounding many new projects are reaching a critical point. Still, Yangon faces frequent urban blackouts and rural populations lack access to electricity despite government promises to remedy the situation. Energy and peace-building are a mutually reinforcing change agent. An alternative sustainable energy strategy should incorporate the national reconciliation process. First, long-term planning and short-term implementation strategies can work together to incorporate stakeholder voices. Secondly, creating an authorized task-force for project implementation to improve electric reliability could ease tensions regarding urban blackouts. Thirdly, by engaging diverse stakeholder groups in a deliberation process could achieve fairer benefit-sharing outcomes when crafting long-term energy development strategies that impact energy, environment, and livelihoods. With this thinking, this session would facilitate a diverse dialogue between civil society groups, academics, NLD, and foreign investors under the concept of the “Energy for Peace” initiative.

Session 27: Saving healthy landscapes and ecosystems in Chindwin river basin -Theme 4 - *Myanmar Environment Institute; Stockholm Environment Institute; Sustainable Mekong Research Network*

The Chindwin River, the largest tributary of the Ayeyarwady River, is an important river ecosystem for multiple uses, providing a range of ecological services that support six million people in Myanmar and beyond. The basin is also rich in biodiversity, hosting 11 IUCN biodiversity hotspots. The Chindwin catchment is presently facing an unprecedented range of challenges associated with development including mining, logging, agriculture, navigation and transportation as well as impacts from climate change affecting communities, livelihoods and biodiversity within the basin. During this session, participants will exchange knowledge and experience on how best to support stakeholders including governmental agencies, universities, NGOs, and media, in monitoring, raising public awareness and promoting the sustainable management of the river basin to support healthy ecosystem using evidence based multi-stakeholder participatory approaches and the establishment of Chindwin River Basin Organization (RBO). Participants will engage in the games to save the Chindwin (e.g. water quality monitoring, biodiversity inventory, living with a dancing river) and panel discussions to help plan attainable activities for an emerging Chindwin RBO.

Session 28: Regional power trade cooperation in the Greater Mekong - Theme 5 - *Legal Research Center for Regional Energy Cooperation, Yunnan University of Finance and Economics; WLE*

As the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS) cooperation, it was well recognized that full scale regional electricity trade represents an unprecedented opportunity for economic and environmental benefits for individual countries and the entire Greater Mekong Sub-region. After decades of insignificant volumes of cross-country electricity trade, GMS countries have not reached a consensus on several important issues for building a regional power trade market. Recently, Yunnan Province has moved from power deficit to power surplus. The provincial government and the power companies are seeking ways to export excess electricity to the neighboring countries where power demands are high. This may lead to new rounds of discussions. This session is designed to discuss the potential and prospects of GMS regional power trading, the benefits and challenges of such a trade, and proposals for further cooperation from legal, economic and technical perspectives with the aim to promoting the trade.

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Session 29: At the confluence of learning & development - A curriculum for sustainable hydropower - Theme 1 - *Network for Sustainable Hydropower Development in the Mekong Countries; Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit/GIZ; Mekong River Commission*

Human capacity is a central determinant in sustainable development, especially in developing countries. An holistic approach of integrating environmental, social and economic interests is considered essential to achieving sustainability. This session highlights the efforts of a university and researcher network in six Greater Mekong countries in guiding a regional platform for human capacity

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development. This as included the development of training manuals, case studies, training workshops and, in particular, the development of curricula for both undergraduate and graduate programmes focussing on sustainable hydropower development and climate change. The session will briefly introduce the context of the network, followed by an interactive session, offering participants with opportunities to explore best practices, discuss and consider the ways in which hydropower sustainability can be improved, and climate change can become an integral focus in the design and delivery of academic courses at regional universities.

Session 30: Community Renewable Energy (CORE) Mini-grids: using renewable energy to catalyse community development in Myanmar's off-grid communities - *Australia Mekong Partnership for Environmental Resources & Energy Systems, Aalto University; Pyoepin, Renewable Energy Association Myanmar; Royal Htoo Linn Manufacturing Company; Sai HtunHla Brothers Co.*

All over Myanmar, thousands of small mini-grids have appeared over the past decade, supplied by bio-gasifiers and mini/micro hydropower units. Designed, built and developed by local entrepreneurs over the past three decades, these local mini-grids are a community-oriented private sector response to fill a void in public electricity provision. The mini-grids are commercially viable and are typically coupled with village co-management resulting in strong community buy-in and management. Evolving organically through discussions with villagers, the grids are typically good at addressing community-level interests and conditions. In the meantime, foreign investors and international finance institutions are promoting grid expansion as the best way of electrifying Myanmar's rural population. This session brings together Myanmar's mini-grid practitioners, international researchers and energy specialists to stimulate discussion on these issues. Mini-grid developers will showcase examples of their work at community levels, while researchers present new analysis on the renewable energy mini-grid potentials. Mekong energy specialists will also present two case studies from China and Vietnam analyzing two very different outcomes for mini-grids post-grid connection.

Session 31: Measuring, Understanding and Adapting to Nexus Trade-offs in the 3S River Basins - Theme 4 - *International Centre for Environmental Management; International Union for Conservation of Nature; International Water Management Institute*

The Sekong, Sesan and Sre Pok (the '3S' basins) are transboundary tributaries of the Mekong River. These basins are richly endowed with natural resources and make an important contribution to national and regional development while supporting the livelihoods of 3.5 million people living in Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam. However, at a time when sustainability is paramount, there is a critical need to better understand the interaction between different water dependent sectors and the implications of possible future development for people living in the basins and downstream. This session will present, and then open up for discussion, the results of a Nexus assessment of the 3S basins - that compiled and synthesized the wealth of existing data and information on the 3S basins in order to identify trade-offs among decisions and the social and economic risks that accompany these decisions. Results from the assessment will be integrated with key national and regional planning processes and then used to enhance regional diplomatic and economic dialogue.

Session 33: Facilitating change: From stakeholder dialogue to joint action with RSAT - Theme 1 - *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit/GiZ; Mekong River Commission; Oxfam; World Wildlife Fund*

The session aims to bring together a broad range of forum participants with and without prior exposure to the Rapid Basin-Wide Hydropower Sustainability Assessment Tool (RSAT). Newly trained facilitators from different Mekong countries will introduce how RSAT enabled them to conduct a meaningful, action-oriented stakeholder dialogue over hydropower development in a given basin. All participants are invited to join facilitators, trainers, clients etc. in sharing their experience in facilitating change through multi-stakeholder dialogue and to overcome the challenges of generating and sustaining momentum for action in different contexts. We are also keen to listen to participants' ideas and recommendations for next steps - who else should be trained? Who is interested to support/initiate RSAT dialogues, support follow-up measures etc.?

Session 34: Towards more effective river basin management in the Mekong region - Identification of challenges and opportunities - Theme 1 - *Institute of Water Resources Planning; Network for Sustainable Hydropower Development in the Mekong countries; Natural Heritage Institute; Deltares; Mekong River Commission/GiZ*

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The Mekong region is undergoing significant change in water resources development for multiple purposes, including hydropower, agriculture, fisheries production and navigation. This also requires the management of the river and its life- and livelihood-giving ecosystems for long term sustainability. Without coordinated development and effective river basin management, the Mekong Basin is exposed to many risks to water resources and associated ecosystems, including floods and drought, deterioration of water quality, reduction of sedimentation loads and extinction of many aquatic species. This session provide an opportunity to recognize these challenges in river basin management and identify development and management needs to tackle these issues. Insights will be shared and suggestions will be formulated at the end of this discussion to ensure sustainable development pathway in the region.

Session 35: Can Landscape Approaches Achieve Their Promise? Searching for Relevance in the Mekong - Theme 4 - *Center for Development and Environment, University of Bern; The Agrobiodiversity Initiative; World Agroforestry Center; Regional Community Forestry Training Center for Asia and the Pacific*

Landscape-based approaches for integrating multiple social and environmental objectives have become increasingly-attractive to a wide range of development and conservation-related stakeholders. Despite this appeal, a number of problems persist relating to the ways in which integrated landscape approaches are conceptualized and operationalized in practice and the policy-space available to support operationalization. Recently, conceptual and operational approaches have been put forward to address these gaps, but remain limited by a lack of empirical application in the Mekong region. In this session, we bring together diverse stakeholders representing a range of institutions and perspectives to (1) identify and characterize the current status of landscape-based approaches in the Mekong and distill key lessons-learned from these; (2) explore obstacles and opportunities for the operationalization of such approaches, particularly within the context of national development strategies and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); and (3) discuss and propose future directions for novel partnerships between government agencies, civil society and research institutions to achieve healthy, resilient landscapes in the Mekong region.

Session 36: Establishing a River Health Monitoring System in Thailand: the Scientific, Community and Institutional Stories - *Asian Institute of Technology; Thai Water Partnership; Pollution Control Department of Thailand*

The purpose of this session is to share the main findings and experiences of a WLE project called “Developing an operational framework for river health assessment” led by the Asian Institute of Technology in collaboration with the Pollution Control Department of Thailand and the Thai Water Partnership. The project aimed to establish an holistic river health assessment system in the Songkhram catchment of Thailand that would be partly implemented by communities with support from the government. The session is being organized as a story in three parts – the scientific story, the community story, and the institutional story. The organizers will tell each story in terms of specific objectives, key findings, core challenges, support from unexpected fronts, and lessons learnt; using a variety of presentation media. The session will also provide an opportunity for participants to share their own experiences, and contribute their knowledge, in discussions on river health assessment in the Mekong River Basin.)

Session 37: Working together for a better Kachin landscape - Theme 5 - *University of East Anglia; the Shalom Foundation*

Presentation of WLE MK29 findings, screening of films, stakeholder discussion

Session 39: An Inclusive Platform for Water and Flows Data Sharing - Theme 1 - *Sustainable Infrastructure Partnership of the Lower Mekong Initiative; Pact; SERVIR Mekong; Mekong River Commission; Stockholm Environment Institute*

SIP-LMI seeks to facilitate an open dialogue amongst diverse stakeholder groups to explore the idea in developing an inclusive platform upon which to share water and flow data from three of the Greater Mekong's major rivers. During this session, we seek the perspectives and advice of participants on future discussion and action to identify if (a) There is a real and legitimate need for a non-political initiative that can facilitate water and flows knowledge across the Greater Mekong Region? (b) Are there any types of technologies and/or approaches that can provide access to water and flow data, and to share it across the region? (c) Can such platforms, technologies and/or approaches provide reliable and inclusive information on the potential threats and benefits of major man-made developments and climate change impacts? And (d) If this initiative sounds possible, how could all these be started with participation from all key multi-layered stakeholder groups, from up and downstream countries?

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