



USACE SUPPORT TO USAID FOR LOWER MEKONG BASIN STRATEGIC SCENARIO PLANNING

OVERVIEW USACE is supporting USG efforts in Southeast Asia and the Mekong Basin through technical assistance to the Mekong River Commission funded by and at the request of USAID. This assistance was solicited by USAID to USACE through POD/PACOM to provide the MeRC with perspectives and techniques for strategic scenario planning. The Corp's Institute for Water Resources (IWR) was asked by POD to provide the technical planning expertise through a regional strategic scenario planning workshop and any subsequent country or sub-national level workshops. IWR used Shared Vision Planning, a technique that integrates systems analysis, planning, and collaboration for informed negotiations and decision making, to facilitate strategic scenario planning. To date, USACE has facilitated two successful workshops in support of this effort, the first a regional workshop in June 2012 and the second a sub-basin pilot in November 2012. The regional workshop was conducted by a USACE team including IWR, HEC, ERDC, and POD. The pilot workshop was designed and executed by IWR in a learn-by-doing format with support of the watershed working group.



REGIONAL WORKSHOP The goal of the initial regional workshop in Bangkok, conducted in June 2012, was to support the implementation of the IWRM based Basin Development Strategy and the subsequent update and broadening of the existing basin development scenarios. More than fifty participants from the four Lower Mekong countries of Lao PDR, Cambodia, Vietnam, and Thailand were present, representing National Mekong Committees, academia, other government agencies, and the MeRC secretariat. Over four days the USACE team described the concept of strategic scenario



planning and how Shared Vision Planning can serve as the process by which it can be facilitated. Presentations and facilitated discussions centered on the various steps of the planning process provided an opportunity for participants to discuss their perceptions of the problems and opportunities with the BDP and the Lower Mekong basin planning process. The workshop was well received and multiple countries indicated a desire for follow up work in their countries.



PILOT WORKSHOP The sub-basin pilot workshop was conducted for the Nam Kam watershed in Sakon Nakhon, Thailand in early November 2012 to assist a local basin working group to improve their future scenario planning and management efforts. The workshop was requested and co-sponsored by the Thai National Mekong Committee, and involved participants representing a diverse array of local and national stakeholders and the MeRC. One full week before the workshop were spent meeting with local stakeholders to understand the perspective of



the many sectors, as well as to collect data to inform the model. The objectives for the pilot workshop were to introduce Shared Vision Planning as a method to conduct scenario planning in the Nam Kam basin and explore the potential scenarios, alternatives, and their effects through collaborative planning processes. A series of focused presentations followed by extensive, locally facilitated exercises provided the group of thirty stakeholders with a firm grasp of Shared Vision Planning and its utility in the Nam Kam basin. The local facilitation, led by representatives from TNMC and the basin working group, was key to the successful outcome of the workshop as it allowed all participants a greater degree of comfort working in Thai and it allowed the workshop team to begin “training the trainer.” Outcomes from each day of the workshop were used to adjust and further develop the ‘trade-offs simulation model.’ A final meeting was held on the last day with core members of the Nam Kam Working Group to investigate next modeling needs and a planning road map for decision making.

KEYS FOR SUCCESS: USAID was extremely pleased and cited this as an excellent example of cooperation between our two agencies. USAID noted: the right audience was identified; scoping missions allowed understanding; a good mix of lectures and hands-on work existed; translation efforts were simultaneous; and professionalism, energy, friendliness and cultural sensitivity were exceptional.

NEXT STEPS 1) Continue TA to the Nam Kam working group to finalize collaborative development of the ‘trade-offs’ model for decision sessions with local authorities and support application of these strategic scenario planning principles with USAID for climate change adaptation in the pilot basin. 2) From a regional perspective, the Cambodia National Mekong Committee (CNMC) has requested a pilot basin workshop with USAID funds and CNMC logistical support. 3) Lao PDR and Vietnam have tentatively indicated a desire to host pilot basin workshops as well. These will develop through country, MeRC, and USAID discussions and USACE is ready and able to assist as necessary. 4) Support for the next Phase of the MeRC Basin Development Plan.

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