

AUSTRALIA'S

# GREATER MEKONG WATER RESOURCES PROGRAM

2014-2019

Australia's Greater Mekong Water Resources Program (2014-19, \$30 million USD) supports more **transparent, inclusive, informed, and accountable** water resources management in the Greater Mekong region – facilitating **regional cooperation** and contributing to regional economic development through **improved water, food, and energy security**.

**6 COUNTRIES**  
**5 RIVER BASINS**  
**6 SDGS\***



#### SDG 2 ZERO HUNGER

End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture



#### SDG 5 GENDER EQUALITY

Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls



#### SDG 6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION

Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all



#### SDG 7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY

Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all



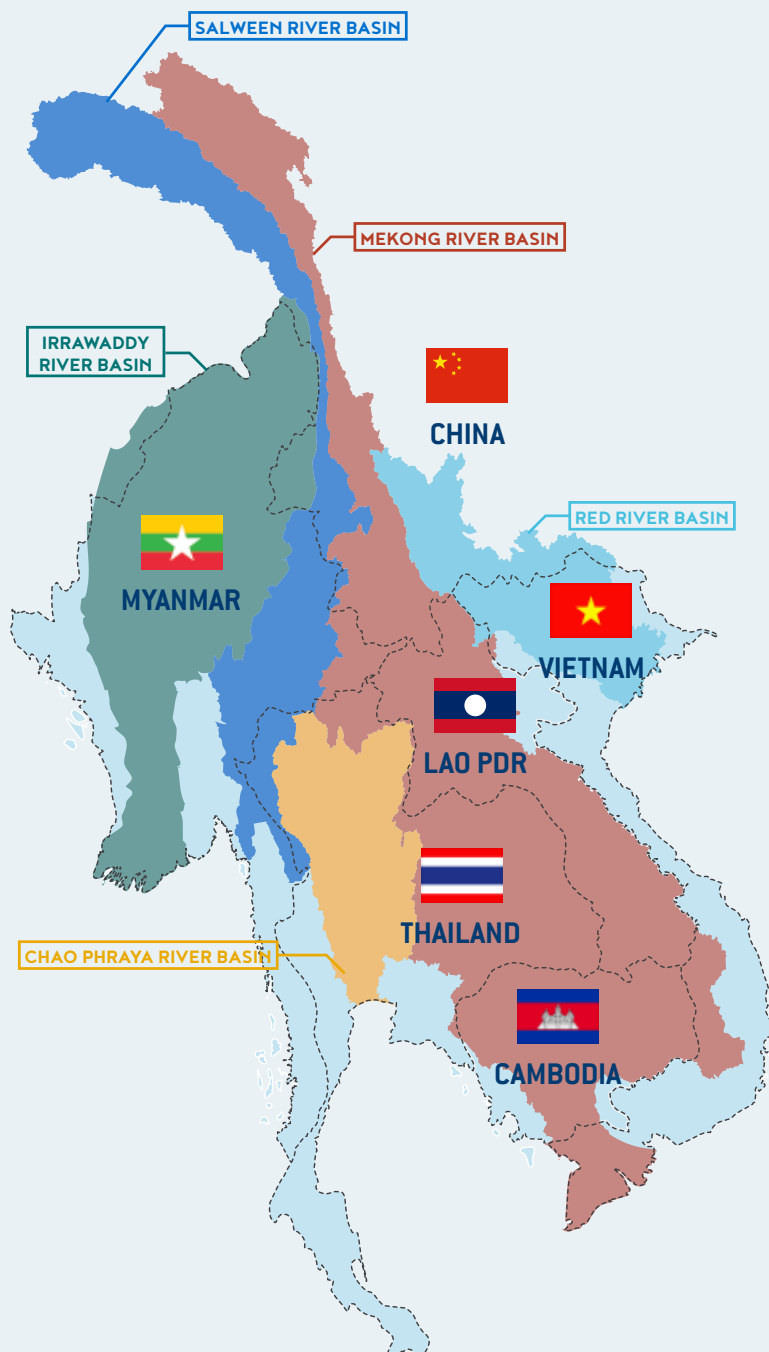
#### SDG 13 CLIMATE ACTION

Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts



#### SDG 17 PARTNERSHIP FOR THE GOALS

Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development



\* Sustainable Development Goals.

# PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS



REGIONAL



## MEKONG RIVER COMMISSION COUNCIL STUDY

The Mekong River Commission (MRC) is the intergovernmental body responsible for establishing norms and behaviours for managing the Mekong's shared water resources in a cooperative manner. It facilitates dialogue on how to sustainably and equitably develop the Mekong River Basin and mitigate the detrimental impacts of water infrastructure projects. In addition to providing core funding to implement the MRC's 2016-2020 Strategic Plan, Australia directly supported the Study on the Sustainable Development and Management of the Mekong River, including impacts by mainstream hydropower projects – known as the 'Council Study', conducted between 2012 and 2017. The study offered a comprehensive assessment of the positive and negative social, environmental and economic impacts of mainstream hydropower projects but also the effects of climate change, floods, and drought and other infrastructure development projects such as water diversion, navigation and sand mining. The Council Study helped to further enhance the ability of the MRC to advise Member Countries on the positive and negative impacts of water resources development in the Basin.



## STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (SEA) OF THE HYDROPOWER SECTOR IN MYANMAR

The SEA of the hydropower sector in Myanmar, carried out by the Government of Myanmar and the International Finance Corporation with support from Australia, provides planners and decision-makers with significant information about low, medium and high risk areas for hydropower development across the country. It presents an informed hydropower pathway for each major river basin, taking a balanced approach and aiming to replace project-by-project planning. Taking a consultative multi-stakeholder approach including government representatives, non-government organisations and development partners, the SEA provides a sustainable development planning framework for the hydropower sector in Myanmar with a view to support decisions about project locations that assess cumulative environmental and social impacts at sub-basin and basin levels.



## DEVELOPING AN OPERATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR RIVER HEALTH ASSESSMENT IN THAILAND

The Asian Institute of Technology's healthy rivers project, through Australian funding to the CGIAR Mekong Research Program on Water, Land and Ecosystems, developed an indicator system to monitor and evaluate river health in the Mekong River Basin and demonstrated its application in a selected river basin - the Songkhram in Thailand. River Health Indicators (RHI) have traditionally been centered on water quality parameters. However, other drivers of river health, such as river basin disturbance, hydrological changes, and riparian habitat conditions must be taken into consideration in order to develop a more complete RHI system. The project focused on filling existing gaps by developing a holistic indicator system at the river basin and community levels.

### Salween River Basin

Basin: 271,914 km<sup>2</sup>

Countries: China, Myanmar, Thailand

### Irrawaddy River Basin

Basin: 413,710 km<sup>2</sup>

Countries: China, Myanmar

### Chao Phraya River Basin

Basin: 178,785 km<sup>2</sup>

Countries: Thailand

## BALANCING RIVER HEALTH AND HYDROPOWER REQUIREMENTS IN THE LANCANG RIVER BASIN IN CHINA

Carried out by the Asian International Rivers Center, under Yunnan University's Institute of International Rivers and Eco-Security, through Australian funding to the CGIAR Mekong Research Program on Water, Land and Ecosystems, this research project focused on river health management in the Lancang River Basin. By involving Chinese academics, NGOs, the MRC and the private sector it's ambitioned to improve the ways in which decisions are made with respect to hydropower projects' location, coordination, development and operation in the Lancang River Basin. The project included the monitoring and analysis of a number of indicators such as flood and drought, water temperature and water quality, variations in fish populations, and changes in river morphology, including sediment.



**Red River Basin**  
Basin: 170,888 km<sup>2</sup>  
Countries: China, Vietnam

## PARTICIPATORY IRRIGATION MANAGEMENT IN VIETNAM

Community based irrigation management is commonly practiced in many parts of the Mekong region. In Vietnam, the government has supported the development of community-based irrigation management models, including the establishment of Sub-regional Management Boards (SrMB). With Australian funding to Oxfam's Inclusion Project, the Centre for Water Resources and Conservation in Vietnam (WARECOD) developed an action plan to manage and maintain irrigation systems, including by investing in better maintenance practices and ways to better manage drought and salt intrusion to directly benefit farmers and improve their food security. SrMB also facilitated the delivery of taro cultivation training including water saving techniques to boost production and income. WARECOD also hosted a 'forum theatre' production which challenged community and SrMB members' attitudes towards gender equality, encouraging an increased participation of women in SrMBs.



## NATIONAL WATER AND WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT STRATEGY IN LAO PDR

Building on support provided to the Government of Lao PDR to help draft the 2017 national Water Law, Australia, through the Australian Water Partnership, is assisting the Lao Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources to develop a comprehensive National Water and Water Resources Management Strategy. The Strategy, a requirement of the Water Law, aims to provide guidance and integrated approaches for the Lao Government and relevant stakeholders to plan, manage and protect Lao PDR's water resources. It seeks to complement and enrich the Government's existing planning processes, and provide an over-arching set of national targets for sustainable use and protection of water resources.



## COMMUNITY FISHERIES MANAGEMENT IN CAMBODIA

Northeastern Rural Development (NRD), a partner organisation under Oxfam's Inclusion Project, is supporting community participation and leadership in community fisheries management on the Mekong River in eastern Cambodia. The purpose of Community Fisheries (CFI) organisations is to manage fisheries and related ecosystems in a sustainable and equitable way. NRD is working with 27 CFI organisations to help them improve their knowledge on fisheries management and understand their rights to participate in water infrastructure project development consultation processes. NRD has also supported predominantly women and young community members to directly speak to the community via a radio program focusing on water governance and the impact of issues such as illegal fishing and hydropower development.

**Mekong River Basin**  
Basin: 805,604 km<sup>2</sup>  
Countries: Cambodia, China, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam

# OUTCOMES



## SUPPORTING INCLUSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT ACROSS THE GREATER MEKONG REGION



### EFFECTIVELY MANAGED

Strengthening the institutional frameworks and capacity of regional, national and local actors to manage resources more effectively.

Example:  
Support to the Mekong River  
Commission 2016-2020  
Strategic Plan



### ACCOUNTABLE

Raising the accountability of government and the private sector; normalising high standards for water investments; and promoting more transparent decision-making.

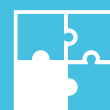
Example:  
Strategic Environmental  
Assessment of the Hydropower  
Sector in Myanmar



### INFORMED

Enhancing the availability and influence of research to improve water resources management and water investment decision-making.

Example:  
Balancing River Health and  
Hydropower Requirements in  
the Lancang River Basin  
in China



### INCLUSIVE

Supporting civil society and local community input into water decisions and management at all levels.

Example:  
Community Fisheries  
Management in Cambodia



### POLICY DIALOGUE

Fostering trust and open discussion between governments in the Greater Mekong region and other water-related stakeholders.

Example:  
Annual Greater Mekong Forum on Water, Food and Energy

## PARTNERS



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