



M-POWER
Mekong Program on Water
Environment and Resilience



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Hydropower Sustainability Assessment Protocol stakeholder training workshop takes place in Laos

A four day workshop providing training on the Hydropower Sustainability Assessment Protocol followed by stakeholder training preparation took place this week in Vientiane, Laos from 18-21 February 2012.

The workshop was co-hosted by the International Hydropower Association (IHA) and M-POWER, Challenge Program on Water and Food (CPWF) as part of an initiative to encourage better understanding and use of the Protocol among a wide range of hydropower stakeholders. The training session was facilitated by Cameron Ironside IHA and Kate Lazarus, M-POWER/CPWF.

"This training workshop has been a great opportunity to demonstrate the value and applicability of the Protocol to a wide group of hydropower stakeholders in the region, as well as to get their feedback on both the training and the Protocol. It's important to be working with all stakeholders in efforts to advance hydropower sustainably." said Mr Ironside.

Representatives from a number of Mekong stakeholders attended including; EcoDEV (Burma), Culture and Environmental Preservation Association (CEPA - Cambodia), the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (Laos), the Asian Development Bank (Laos), Mekong River Commission, EVN (Viet Nam), CEWAREC (Viet Nam), Pan Nature (Viet Nam), Yunnan University (China), Conservation International (Cambodia), WWF International, WWF Malaysia, Yunnan Provincial Energy Bureau (China), the Foreign Affairs Office of the People's Government of Yunnan Province (China), and the Assessment Center for Environmental Engineering, Ministry of Environment Protection (China).

"In the Mekong Region, M-POWER and CPWF have been building awareness of the Protocol as a tool for dialogue about hydropower. This training workshop provided Mekong stakeholders with further in-depth knowledge to assess the Protocol's applicability in assessing hydropower projects. Mekong stakeholders were able to ask critical questions about its use and to discuss and impress upon the Protocol Governance Committee representatives the important role of NGOs, civil society, government, academics and other individuals in encouraging its application." said Pech Sokhem, Co-Chair of M-POWER, and the CPWF Representative to Cambodia.

Members of the Hydropower Sustainability Assessment Protocol Governance Committee also attended the training workshop including representatives of Transparency International, Hohai University (China), Conservation International, and GIZ (Germany).

The *Hydropower Sustainability Assessment Protocol*, a comprehensive tool to assess the sustainability of hydropower projects globally, was launched on 16th June at the International Hydropower Association (IHA) 2011 World Congress on Advancing Sustainable Hydropower in Iguassu, Brazil. It provides a rigorous, evidence-based assessment of between 19-23 relevant sustainability topics, depending on the development stage of the project.

The Protocol is the product of a multi-stakeholder development process involving representatives from social and environmental NGOs (Oxfam, The Nature Conservancy, Transparency International, WWF); governments (China, Germany [as an observer], Iceland, Norway, Zambia); commercial and development banks (including banks that are signatory to the Equator Principles, and the World Bank [as an observer]); and the hydropower sector, represented by IHA. The development process of the Protocol involved field trials in 16 countries, across 6 continents, and stakeholder engagement with nearly 2,000 people in 28 countries.

The Protocol topics cover the three pillars of sustainability: social, economic, and environmental, and include issues such as downstream flow regimes, indigenous peoples, biodiversity, infrastructure safety, resettlement, water quality, and erosion and sedimentation.

The assessment tools are used as a framework to produce a sustainability profile for a hydropower project. In so doing, multiple stakeholders can become better informed on the sustainability profile of a project, and develop strategies to address any weaknesses.

In Vientiane, participants agreed on the need to translate the Protocol into Mekong languages, continuing to build understanding on the potential uses of the Protocol, trial the Protocol in a number of hydropower sites; and continue to use the Protocol as a dialogue tool to improve energy planning and hydropower.

Notes for editors

The Protocol is the result of intensive work from 2008 to 2010 by the Hydropower Sustainability Assessment Forum, a multi-stakeholder body with representatives from social and environmental NGOs (Oxfam, The Nature Conservancy, Transparency International, WWF); governments (China, Germany [observer], Iceland, Norway, Zambia); commercial and development banks (members of the Equator Principles Financial Institutions, The World Bank [observer]); and the hydropower sector, represented by IHA.

The development process of the Protocol involved field trials in 13 different countries and stakeholder engagement with 1,933 individuals in 28 countries. More information and a copy of the Hydropower Sustainability Assessment Protocol can be found here:

<http://www.hydrosustainability.org>

The International Hydropower Association (IHA) was formed under the auspices of UNESCO in 1995 and addresses the role of hydropower in meeting the world's growing water and energy needs as a clean, renewable and sustainable technology. With members active in more than 80 countries, IHA is a non-governmental, mutual association of organisations and individuals.

The Mekong Program on Water, Environment and Resilience (M-POWER) is a network of individuals and organizations working to democratize water governance in the Mekong Region. M-POWER is prominent in action-based research, facilitating dialogues and knowledge networking in efforts to improve water governance in the Mekong Region in ways that support sustainable livelihoods and healthy communities and ecosystems. For more information:

www.mpowernetwork.org

The Challenge Program on Water and Food (CPWF) works with governments, research institutions, development agencies and other partners in the Mekong to improve the way hydropower is designed, managed and operated so as to mitigate negative social and environmental impacts, benefit Mekong countries and increase the number of uses to which hydropower and dam reservoirs are put. If CPWF is successful, hydropower in the Mekong region will be: managed in ways that are fairer and more equitable to all water users; managed and coordinated across cascades to optimize benefits for all; planned and managed to account for environmental and social needs; used for multiple purposes besides hydropower alone; and better governed and the benefits more fairly shared. For more information: www.mekong.waterandfood.org.

M-POWER and CPWF Mekong are searching for ways to improve hydropower. In the last 2 years, they have convened fifteen dialogues and trialled the Protocol in Cambodia, Thailand and Vietnam (using the 2009 Draft version). In China, they have work with the Huaneng Lancang Jiang Company and WWF China (using the final 2010 version). Collectively, this work is intended to constructively contribute to the way in which hydropower is designed, developed and managed. M-POWER and CPWF are working with a range of stakeholders including civil society, governments, financiers and developers. They expect to see major hydropower companies operating in the region evidence demonstrable gains in corporate social and environmental responsibility.

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