



## Striving for excellence or race to the bottom?

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## Key messages



- Hydropower in the Mekong Region to date has been unsustainable
- Integrated energy and water planning urgently needed
- Project developers and their financiers should commit to international standards for projects endorsed through a public process



## “Sustainable” hydropower: a myth

- *An overwhelming body of evidence globally indicates large dams have been unsustainable*
  - Resettled people unable to recover livelihoods
  - Natural resources on which people depend destroyed
  - Water pollution and changes to river hydrology, sediment and nutrient cycles, and ecology
  - Source of Greenhouse Gas emissions



## Many examples of unsustainable hydropower in Mekong basin



Vinya Sysamouth

Riverbank erosion downstream of  
the Theun Hinboun dam

- Theun Hinboun, Laos
- Yali Falls, Vietnam
- Pak Mun, Thailand

*These dams have  
exacerbated rather than  
reduced poverty*



## Recommendation to MRC

*Define the environmental  
and social standards that  
the Hydropower  
Programme will promote*



## Upstream solutions needed: Integrated Resources Planning (IRP)



Micro hydropower turbine, Thailand

- Mekong region hunger for electricity growing
- Balanced assessment of supply and demand side electricity options urgently needed – IRP
- Public participation crucial



## Recommendation to MRC

Support call for Integrated Resources Planning for electricity sector and promote the river's wider value within this process



## Basin scale planning, Cumulative Impact Assessment, Strategic Environmental Assessment



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Fisher harvests fish at Siphandone,  
Southern Laos

- Poor planning will lead to more dams, higher impacts, fewer revenues.
- Need to protect critical resources
  - Mekong mainstream should be off-limits to hydropower
- Public participation crucial



## Recommendation to MRC

Call for moratorium on new dams until basin wide planning and cumulative impact assessments undertaken

Demonstrate the benefits of these approaches to MRC member governments



## New hydropower proponents



Kamchay Dam, Cambodia

- New developers, mainly from Thailand, Vietnam, China, Russia, and Malaysia
- Private and public financiers also primarily from these countries
- Limited public accountability, few environmental and social standards



## Performance not improving



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Sekaman River, March 2004 and 2008

- Little evidence that new projects are meeting the standards set by Nam Theun 2 or even local law
  - Nam Ngum 2 and Xekaman 3, Laos
  - Kamchay, Cambodia
  - Sesan/ Srepok, Vietnam



## International standards for international projects

- Adhering to international environmental and social standards reduces investment risk and improves project quality, minimizing cost to local livelihoods.
  - Governments should reject any projects that do not include comprehensive, well-funded and realistic resettlement and livelihood restoration plans
  - Dam affected communities should receive a direct share of project benefits for the life of the project



# Recommendations

- Poorly planned dams create rather than reduce poverty
- Integrated energy and water planning is urgently needed; all development options should be examined first
- Public participation crucial
- Basin-wide planning tools, international standards, benefit sharing essential



# Thank you for your attention



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