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LOWER MEKONG BASIN

Background

The Mekong River flows 4,800 km from China, to Myanmar, Lao PDR, Thailand, Cambodia and Viet Nam, ending in the South China Sea. The Mekong is the third most biodiverse river in the world, hosting over 1,100 species of fish. Its resources support the lives of over 70 million people. The river is characterized by a dynamic and extensive flood pulse which supports the world's most productive freshwater fishery.

Key achievements to date

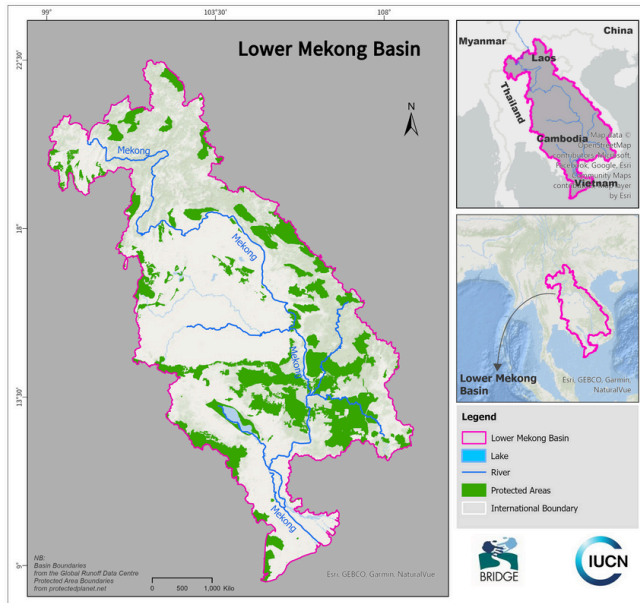
- Supported Viet Nam with the ratification of the UN Watercourses Convention and its complementarity with the Mekong Agreement.
- Developed a Nexus Water, Energy, Food Environment and an energy profile for the Sekong, Sesan and Srepok Transboundary River sub-basins.
- Supported Viet Nam's Resolution 120 on sustainable and climate-resilient development of the delta.
- Promoted the use of the Green List of Ecosystems.
- Partnered with Oxfam on the integration of gender in water governance.
- Initiated a Ramsar Regional Initiative to promote improved management and conservation of wetlands.
- Initiated additional programmes (e.g. GEF IW funded projects) to strengthen transboundary governance.

BRIDGE implementation

BRIDGE has operated in the basin since 2011. BRIDGE aims to strengthen partnerships within the Lower Mekong countries to advance understanding, knowledge and learning to better conserve and sustainability manage water resources, ecosystems and biodiversity and advocate for appropriate policy changes at the national and regional levels.

Basin objectives for Phase 5

- Strengthened legal and institutional basis for transboundary cooperation, working at diplomatic level to engage the Mekong River Commission (MRC) in strengthening the Mekong River Agreement (MRA);
- Advocate for improved energy trade among the Mekong countries to increase the proportion of solar and wind and decrease the reliance on hydropower.
- Attract funding the implementation of large-scale Nature-based Solutions to promote the conservation of the Mekong fisheries and other uses;



Basin at glance

Total area (km²): 571,000

Population: 65 million

Climate zone: Tropical monsoonal

Rainfall (mm/yr): 1,512

Countries sharing: Viet Nam, Lao PDR, Cambodia and Thailand

BRIDGE operating in the basin since: 2011

CROSS-SECTORAL AND INSTITUTIONAL COLLABORATION

The management of the Lower Mekong is governed by the Mekong River Agreement, a regional water treaty adopted in 1995 to govern the sustainable development of the river between Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Viet Nam. The Mekong River Commission (MRC) was also established by the Mekong Agreement as an inter-governmental institution with the aim of fostering cooperation between basin states to effectively manage uses of the river. The basin's integrity is threatened by hydropower intensification throughout the basin, impacting the productivity of downstream fisheries and agriculture, and threatening food security for millions of people

BRIDGE engages with the Mekong River Commission Secretariat, through policy dialogues, and participation in the MRC Development Partnership group, the Mekong Community Roundtable, the MRC Regional Stakeholders Forum, and the MRC International Conference. BRIDGE works directly with the governments of Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Viet Nam, to promote water governance in the Mekong.

BRIDGE also works closely with the Stimson Center's Southeast Asia Program to promote transboundary cooperation in the water-energy sectors of mainland Southeast Asia to address regional electricity needs and support robust levels of economic development while protecting the core ecology of the Mekong river system. Through BRIDGE, IUCN is co-leading a series of Track 1.5 Policy Dialogues in the Mekong, focusing on a range of issues, from water governance, to regional connectivity, among others. Additionally, BRIDGE works with a large network of civil society s in the basin, including International Rivers, Oxfam, Culture and Environment Preservation Association (CEPA), Mekong Wetlands University Network and Fisheries Action Coalition Team (FACT).



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
 Confédération suisse
 Confederazione Svizzera
 Confederaziun svizra

Swiss Agency for Development
 and Cooperation SDC

Additional information

BRIDGE website:
www.waterandnature.org/initiatives/bridge

Water Law and Governance website:
www.waterlawandgovernance.org/bridge

LinkedIn:
[IUCN Water and Wetlands](https://www.linkedin.com/company/iucn-water-and-wetlands)

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