

## **MRC Response to International River's Comments on Pak Beng Project's PC**

The Mekong River Commission (MRC) would like to confirm receipt of the submission by the International Rivers on Prior Consultation for Pak Beng Hydropower Project.

The 6-month milestone of the Prior Consultation (PC) for Pak Beng Hydropower Project was completed at the Special Session of the MRC Joint Committee (JC) in June 2017. The Session provided the formal opportunity within the official PC timeframe for the JC members, the management body of the MRC, to discuss key recommendations of the final Technical Review Report (TRR) of the proposed Pak Beng Hydropower Project (PBHPP) undertaken by the MRC Secretariat. Having considered the TRR as well as the outcomes from regional and national stakeholder forums, the JC agreed on a statement calling on 'the Government of Lao PDR to make all reasonable efforts to address potential adverse transboundary impacts of the Pak Beng project' and requests the Secretariat to prepare a Joint Action Plan outlining a post six-months prior consultation process.

Measures for consideration in the statement include addressing the potential upstream and downstream impacts on hydrology and hydraulics including the backwater effects into Thailand; improving sediment transportation; improving upstream and downstream fish passage; gaining a better understanding of potential socio-economic transboundary impacts; ensuring the freedom of navigation; establishing a communication channel for providing inputs on the ongoing design and development of the project; sharing of improved designs and monitoring data, and MRC joint monitoring programme for Pak Beng.

The MRC is working closely with member countries to draft the Joint Action Plan, based on the agreed statement on the PBHPP PNPCA. We are conducting an internal reflection session and draft a lesson learnt on PBHPP PC and finalise PNPCA Commentary which reviews experiences for three PNPAs of Xayaburi, Don Sahon and Pak Beng.

Our Council Study is to be completed by December 2017 and we hope that it will provide reliable scientific environmental, social, and economic impacts of water resources development in the Mekong River encompassing cross-cutting sectors and impacts. The study also will fill major knowledge gaps on the environmental, social, and economic impacts of major development in the Mekong basin in the short, medium, and long term. The Council Study is expected to support a process in guiding future development and management of the Mekong.

We would like to note that the MRC is an intergovernmental organisation established by four Mekong countries for regional collaboration to manage shared water and related resources sustainably. The MRC's role is to provide a platform for the four governments to discuss their needs and challenges in water development and negotiate better use of the common resources for the benefit of the region.

We would like to welcome all inputs and contributions for the prior consultation processes as well as for other MRC works. These inputs and contributions are considered seriously. We trust that what all of us are doing will sustain the Mekong River in the most sustainable way.