

**« Data Sharing and Sustainability of River Basin Organisations.  
The Mekong River Commission as Case Study »**

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Abstract :

Explaining success and failure in international river management is a challenging task. It is even more difficult to anticipate whether institutional mechanisms selected by riparians will actually improve the management of transboundary water resources.

On the Mekong, information management is key to an efficient development of water resources; to the production of accurate flood forecasting; and to forming a knowledge base on sustainable development. In practice, one can witness over time the improvement of water-related data exchange among riparian countries.

However, circulation and exchange of water-related data remain a major challenge. This is the case both within and among countries. Technical, financial, strategic and political factors have been found to limit this exchange. These factors include: ageing hydrometric networks; maintenance and skills; operation rules for reservoirs; seasonality; competition over water resources; international politics; and economics of regional integration.

Building up on professional experience in UNESCO's PC-CP Programme, this paper presents results of a recent Ph.D. research in Mekong countries. We advocate that the level and conditions of data exchange can be an indicator of hydrological cooperation on river basins. In addition, the lack of data sharing is a direct threat to the sustainability of river basin institutions. Reasons to low level of information exchange are identified, as well as possible incentives to improve it.

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