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What has remained? - An ex post Evaluation of Watershed Management in the Mekong Region

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Fotos	Top left: Upland rice paddies on slopy, erosion-prone hills, Luang Prabang Province, Laos (Jeremy Ferguson) Top right: Farmers replanting wetland rice, Siem Reap Province, Cambodia (Jeremy Ferguson) Bottom: Nam Ngum hydroelectric dam and river, Vientiane Capital Province, Laos (Jeremy Ferguson)

Foreword

For 51 years, the Centre for Rural Development (SLE - Seminar für Ländliche Entwicklung), Humboldt Universität zu Berlin, has trained young professionals in the field of German and international development cooperation.

Three-month practical projects conducted on behalf of German and international organisations in development cooperation form an integral part of the one-year postgraduate course. In interdisciplinary teams and with the guidance of experienced team leaders, young professionals carry out assignments on innovative future-oriented topics, providing consultant support to the commissioning organisations. Involving a diverse range of actors in the process is of great importance here, i.e. surveys from the household level to decision makers and experts at national level. The outputs of this “applied research” directly contribute to solving specific development problems.

The studies are mostly linked to rural development (including management of natural resources, climate change, food security or agriculture), the cooperation with fragile or least developed countries (including disaster prevention, peace building, and relief) or the development of methods (evaluation, impact analysis, participatory planning, process consulting and support).

Throughout the years, SLE has carried out over two hundred consulting projects in more than ninety countries, and regularly publishes the results in this series. In 2013, SLE teams completed studies in Brazil, Haiti, Colombia, and in the Mekong region.

The present study is the synthesis of an ex post evaluation along the DAC criteria of two watershed management / capacity building programmes implemented by (ex-) GTZ and InWEnt in Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, and Vietnam.

The evaluation was commissioned by the Monitoring and Evaluation Unit of Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH within their 2013/2014 portfolio evaluation cycle focusing on rural development. The full report is available from GIZ upon request, the summary downloadable from the GIZ M&E website.

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Our thanks also go to all GIZ and other staff in the Lao-German House in Vientiane for providing us with our office space, equipment, logistical support as well as plenty of green tea, tasty Thai and Laotian lunch, and for always making us feel welcome.

Hunting down relevant information for an ex post evaluation is a particular challenge, as the projects' structures are no longer in place and many former project staff have moved on. We would like to express particular thanks to Dr Cornelis van Tuyll, former team leader of the GTZ Watershed Management Project (WSMP), and Lüder Cammann, former coordinator of the InWEnt project, for sharing their contacts and introducing us to key players of both projects in all four countries.

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We would like to express our special gratitude to all the members of the communities and villages where our research was conducted. Without the patience, support and local wisdom of the inhabitants of the pilot watersheds in all four countries, this evaluation would not have been possible. We sincerely hope that our work will also be of benefit to them

Our appreciation is extended to the numerous resource staff in all four countries who shared their expertise and knowledge with us in countless hours of interviews, namely local government representatives, ministry staff, members of other governmental and non-governmental organisations, university staff, freelance consultants, and other experts. Furthermore we greatly appreciate the cooperation of our translators – their work was very beneficial and effective.

We would like to thank all the individuals and organisations who provided support, valuable advice and comments in preparing and implementing the evaluation, especially to Dr Susanne Neubert and all SLE staff.

We are thankful to all the hosts who generously accommodated us at the various places and to all the concierges, cooks, tuk-tuk and taxi drivers etc. who generously ensured our wellbeing and who made our stay so enjoyable and rewarding. And finally, we are very grateful for all the circumstances that let us come back to Berlin safe and sound.

We apologise for not being able to mention everybody here. Please accept the sincere thanks of the entire evaluation team for the assistance received throughout the study.

Executive Summary

Context

For its independent evaluation cycle of 2013/2014, the Monitoring and Evaluation unit of the Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) is conducting portfolio evaluations with a focus on rural development. Independent institutes or consultancy companies were commissioned to conduct a total of six ex post evaluations and five final evaluations. The ex post evaluation of "the German contribution to the sustainable management of the Lower Mekong Basin through the support of the Mekong River Commission" was assigned to the Humboldt University of Berlin's Centre for Rural Development (Seminar für Ländliche Entwicklung, SLE) and carried out as one of the yearly overseas projects by seven participants of the SLE's 51st postgraduate course programme and two team leaders.

The two development measures evaluated were titled "Sustainable watershed management in the Lower Mekong Basin" (GTZ) and "Potentials of rural areas in Mekong countries" (InWEnt). The GTZ project started in 2002 and ran over three phases until 2011. The InWEnt project ran in a single phase from 2005 until 2008. The development measures aimed at contributing to a more sustainable management of the Lower Mekong Basin (LMB) through improving watershed management, building capacity, and increasing the political dialogue between the riparian countries Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam.

Framework conditions

In the Lower Mekong Basin more than 80% of the population are directly dependent on the resources of the Mekong river system for irrigation and agriculture, fisheries, navigation/transport, forest use and hydropower generation. Around 60 million people inhabit the basin and 300 million people are supplied with food produced there. The intensive use of the water and land resources with its pressure on flora and fauna often fails to comply with the principles of sustainability. The lack of coordinated and integrated watershed management (IWSM) in the face of competing needs and uses results in deforestation (commercial/illegal logging, slash and burn agriculture), soil degradation, water pollution as well as substantial disturbance of the flow regime, causing a higher frequency of floods and droughts. Rapid population growth, a growing tourist sector and increasing industrialisation in the countries that share the Mekong Basin mean that the basin serves as a resource "mine" for economies within and outside the basin. As the technology available for exploiting resources has become more sophisticated, pressure on resources within the basin has increased even more. Agriculture is the single most important economic activity in the LMB. An estimated 75% of the lower basin population earn their livelihood from agriculture.

Due to these challenges, the Mekong River Commission (MRC) was established in 1995 with the Mekong Agreement between Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam. Its mission is "to provide effective support for sustainable management and development of water and related resources." The MRC was the leading partner for the two development measures evaluated.

Methodology

The evaluation team used the five internationally acknowledged evaluation criteria (relevance, effectiveness, impact, efficiency, and sustainability) of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) as well as the GIZ evaluation guidelines (cf. Chapter 4). During a two month preparatory phase the evaluation team conducted an extensive desk study of some 200 project-related documents and developed a research concept as well as tools for the central questions of an ex post evaluation. Based upon these the team collected (mostly qualitative) data in all four riparian countries and, where possible, complemented it with quantitative data. Amongst the methodology and instruments that were used were expert interviews, focus group discussions, timelines as well as the 'most significant development'-tool. The team reconstructed and used results models for both development measures, making this one the first evaluations to have done so. Assessment grids were used to weight data and therefore come to a plausible grading for each DAC criterion. Simplified results models were also used to help resource persons identify project pitfalls as well as successes and best practices.

The evaluation team faced some difficulties with collecting data for the report. Research permits had to be applied for and often governmental staff accompanied the team on field visits. Moreover, the team experienced that only few interview partners were open enough to express critical remarks. The ex post character of the evaluation was a challenge, since resource persons were hard to find, as many had changed jobs - the projects having terminated some 2-5 years ago. This occasionally also made it difficult for them to recall detailed information about the development measures. The strengths of the evaluation mission lay in the size of the team - consisting of 7 young professionals and two experienced team leaders - and in the duration: the team was on site in Southeast Asia for a total of three months, which allowed for an extensive and wide data collection in all four countries.

The two projects and main results of the evaluation

The GTZ project objective was that "Planning and coordination of sustainable management of resources in watersheds by selected relevant organisations of the four LMB riparian countries are improved at national and regional level". To achieve this objective the project combined the measures of policy and institutional

development, information management and capacity building. Through these activities, the sectors were to be harmonised and regional cooperation promoted. Action plans were to be developed and implemented on district level. All experiences gained were to be replicated in other watersheds. The intended impact of the development measure was to improve the management of watersheds and in the long run to contribute to resource conservation, poverty reduction and conflict avoidance.

The results of the study show that the harmonisation of sector politics was rather limited. However, the regional dialogues amongst ministries and administrations were successful and a broadly common understanding of watershed management had been achieved. Action plans were formulated in all four riparian countries. However, due to limited financial means, not all action plans were implemented and only in Cambodia were they fully integrated into the provincial plan. Project experiences were only partially replicated in the four countries, since these were very particular and specific to the pilot watershed and therefore difficult to copy. Looking at these results it can be concluded that the project objective was only partially achieved. However, the evaluation also revealed that water user conflicts were reduced on the impact level, water quality was improved locally, and there has been less deforestation, flooding, and droughts according to most people interviewed. Thus the project's intended impacts were partially achieved.

The InWEnt project's objective was that "institutions working on watersheds in the Lower Mekong Basin are strengthened". This was to be achieved through high level meetings and training for political decision makers, training of trainers, as well as a one year International Leadership Training (ILT) course, with all of these measures focusing on watershed management. The intended impact of the development measure was a sustainable use of natural resources, actualisation of economic and social potentials, the promotion of employment opportunities and poverty reduction.

The results of the evaluation reveal that training participants have learned relevant concepts and methods for their working context, which they can directly apply. However, not all participants of the training courses were able to realise and anchor training contents in their institutions, due to a lack of finances and support. However, the project worked very well with local partner organisations in the rural areas. Many people were reached through the training and the participation of the rural population in political decision-making processes was increased. The evaluation team did not find any direct results of the training on the institutional level, which is where the project was docked. Therefore, the InWEnt project objective was not fully achieved. The impact objectives were set very high and due to a large attribution gap it was difficult to actually relate results directly to the development measure. On the positive side, the management of natural resources in the pilot watersheds improved and the

increased participation of the rural population could contribute to poverty reduction in the long run.

On the basis of the detailed results of the evaluation, the team formulated specific recommendations directed to the GIZ, the MRC, and other development partners. These are meant to serve as institutional learning experiences for these organisations and will hopefully be of use for planning and implementation of future projects (cf. Chapter 6).

The evaluation team gained valuable experience that can be useful for future evaluations. The seven young consultants experienced that a professional and sincere appearance is of utmost important in Southeast Asia, since respect of age, politeness and hierarchy in general play a crucial role in society. Moreover, the evaluation team believes it is very important to make sure all people involved are made aware of the objective of the evaluation in order to not raise any false expectations. Also it is important to formulate precise indicators (if these are not already given) to measure the objectives once familiar with the development measures but with reasonable time left to collect the relevant information. At this stage, the evaluation team also recommends developing guiding questions as well as assessment grids for each DAC criterion. These were an important tool for the evaluators and add transparency and legitimacy to the results.

Zusammenfassung

Hintergrund der Studie

Die vorliegende Studie entstand im Rahmen des Evaluierungszyklus 2013/2014 der Stabsstelle Monitoring und Evaluierung der Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), in dem Portfolioevaluierungen im Schwerpunkt ländliche Entwicklung durchgeführt werden. Das Seminar für Ländliche Entwicklung (SLE) der Humboldt Universität zu Berlin wurde in diesem Rahmen mit der Durchführung einer ex post Evaluierung zweier Projekte der GIZ-Vorgängerorganisationen GTZ und InWEnt beauftragt. Die Evaluierung wurde als eines der vier jährlichen Auslandsprojekte von einem Team von sieben Teilnehmern des 51. Jahrgangs des Postgraduierten-Studiums des SLE durchgeführt und von zwei Teamleitern betreut.

Die Titel der zu evaluierenden Projekte lauteten "Nachhaltige Bewirtschaftung von Wassereinzugsgebieten im unteren Mekong-Becken" (GTZ) sowie "Potentiale ländlicher Räume der Mekong-Länder" (InWEnt). Das GTZ-Projekt lief über drei Phasen von 2002 bis 2011, das InWEnt-Projekt bestand aus nur einer Phase (2005 bis 2008). Beide Vorhaben sollten einen Beitrag zu einer nachhaltigeren Bewirtschaftung des unteren Mekong-Beckens leisten, insbesondere durch Maßnahmen zur Umsetzung von Wassereinzugsgebietsmanagement, Capacity Building, sowie durch die Intensivierung des politischen Dialogs zwischen den Anrainerländern Kambodscha, Laos, Thailand und Vietnam.

Rahmenbedingungen in der Mekong Region

Schnelles Bevölkerungswachstum, der zunehmende Tourismus und die Industrialisierung in den Ländern des Mekong-Beckens haben dazu geführt, dass die natürlichen Ressourcen des Mekong-Beckens zunehmend für wirtschaftliche Zwecke erschlossen werden und ihre ökologischen und sozialen Funktionen immer weniger erfüllen können. Die intensive Nutzung der Wasser-, Land- und Bioressourcen genügt in vielen Fällen nicht den Kriterien der Nachhaltigkeit. Ihre unkoordinierte Nutzung durch unterschiedliche, oftmals konkurrierende Interessengruppen hat zunehmende Entwaldung (kommerzielle/illegale Abholzung, Brandrodung), Bodenerosion und abnehmende Bodenfruchtbarkeit, Wasserverschmutzung und schwerwiegende Veränderungen des Strömungshaushalts mit zunehmenden Überschwemmungen und Dürren zur Folge. Diese Entwicklungen stellen eine erhebliche Bedrohung für die Lebensgrundlagen großer Teile der Bevölkerung dar: 60 Millionen Menschen leben im Unteren Mekong-Becken; Landwirtschaft ist nach wie vor die wichtigste wirtschaftliche Aktivität, sie ernährt 75% der Bevölkerung direkt; darüber hinaus versorgt die Region 300 Millionen Menschen mit Nahrung.

Die Mekong River Commission (MRC) wurde 1995 zwischen Kambodscha, Laos, Thailand und Vietnam mit dem Mandat gegründet, die nachhaltige Nutzung der Wasser- und sonstigen natürlichen Ressourcen des Mekong zu unterstützen. Die MRC war wichtigster Partner und politischer Träger der beiden evaluierten Entwicklungsvorhaben.

Methodologie

Das Evaluierungs-Team des SLE richtete sein methodisches Vorgehen stark an der Vorgabe seitens der GIZ aus, die Projekte nach den international anerkannten Evaluierungskriterien des Development Assistance Committees (DAC) der OECD zu beurteilen: Relevanz, Effektivität, übergeordnete entwicklungspolitische Wirkungen (Impact), Effizienz und Nachhaltigkeit (vgl. Kapitel 4). Während einer zweimonatigen Vorbereitungsphase analysierte das Team zunächst eine Vielzahl von ca. 200 Projektdokumenten, die von der GIZ zur Verfügung gestellt worden waren, und entwickelte ein Untersuchungskonzept für die zentralen Fragestellungen einer ex post Evaluierung sowie entsprechende Forschungsinstrumente. Anschließend wurden während eines dreimonatigen Auslandsaufenthalts eigene Daten in allen vier Ländern erhoben: Das Team führte u.a. Experteninterviews, Fokusgruppendifkussionen und Workshops durch und nutzte dabei verschiedene qualitative Erhebungsinstrumente wie "timelines" und "Most Significant Development". Dafür erstellte und nutzte das Team Wirkungsgefüge bzw. -modelle der beiden Vorhaben, welche die Aktivitäten der Projekte und deren beabsichtigte Wirkungen im Zusammenhang darstellen. Es handelte sich dabei um eine der ersten Anwendungen von rekonstruierten Wirkungsmodellen zu Evaluierungszwecken. Die Wirkungsmodelle wurden bei der Datenerhebung als Interview-Stimulus eingesetzt und dienten der Strukturierung der anschließenden Analyse und zur Beurteilung der verschiedenen Projektaspekte. Zur Auswertung wurden Aussagen aus Projektdokumenten und die Ergebnisse der eigenen Datenerhebungen untereinander verglichen, um so zu gültigen Aussagen bzgl. der Projekte und ihres Erfolges zu gelangen. Dabei verwendete das Team Leitfragen und Bewertungsraster, um zu systematischen und nachvollziehbaren Beurteilungen zu gelangen.

Staatliche Kontrolle, Hierarchien, kulturell bedingte Zurückhaltung und Höflichkeit in den Projektländern einerseits, und Schwierigkeiten, zuverlässige Informationen über bereits vor zwei bzw. fünf Jahren abgeschlossene Projekte zu erhalten andererseits stellten erhebliche Herausforderungen bei der Datenerhebung dar. Von großem Vorteil war hier, die Größe des Teams aus sieben jungen Consultants und zwei erfahrenen Teamleitern, sowie die Dauer von drei Monaten in der Region, in der umfangreiche Daten erhoben und als Grundlage der Bewertung genutzt werden konnten.

Zentrale Ergebnisse der Evaluierung

Das Ziel des GTZ-Projekts lautete: "Planung und Koordination der Ressourcenbewirtschaftung in Wassereinzugsgebieten durch relevante Organisationen der vier Anrainerstaaten des unteren Mekong sind auf nationaler und regionaler Ebene verbessert". Um dieses zu erreichen, sollten mit Hilfe von Politikberatung und Informationsprodukten die Sektorpolitiken innerhalb der beteiligten Länder harmonisiert und der regionale Austausch untereinander gefördert werden. Durch die Bereitstellung von Informationsprodukten sowie die Durchführung von Capacity Development-Maßnahmen sollten zudem Aktionspläne für verbessertes Management in ausgewählten Pilot-Wassereinzugsgebieten erstellt werden. Diese Aktionspläne sollten dann in Distrikt- und Provinz-Entwicklungspläne integriert werden. Die so gewonnenen Erfahrungen sollten anschließend in anderen Wassereinzugsgebieten repliziert werden. Auf diesem Wege sollte das Projektziel erreicht und auf Impact-Ebene das Management von Wassereinzugsgebieten verbessert werden. Dadurch sollte das Projekt mittel- bis langfristig einen Beitrag zu Armutsminderung, Ressourcenschutz und Konfliktvermeidung leisten.

Die Evaluierungsergebnisse zeigen, dass eine Harmonisierung der Sektorpolitiken nur bedingt stattgefunden hat: der nationale und regionale Dialog zwischen verschiedenen, zuständigen Ministerien und Behörden wurde erfolgreich ausgeweitet und dadurch ein gemeinsames Verständnis des Wassereinzugsgebietsmanagement-Konzepts erreicht; doch die beteiligten Ministerien wollten oftmals keine Entscheidungsmacht abgeben und konnten sich daher nicht immer auf klar aufgeteilte Zuständigkeiten für Aufgaben in den Wassereinzugsgebieten einigen. Aktionspläne für Pilot-Wassereinzugsgebiete wurden in allen Ländern erstellt, aber aufgrund mangelnder Finanzierung nicht in allen Ländern umgesetzt. Zudem wurden sie nur in Kambodscha vollständig in den Provinzplan integriert. Die Projekterfahrungen wurden in den vier Ländern nur teilweise repliziert, da hierfür weder von Geberseite noch von den beteiligten Regierungen ausreichend Finanzmittel zur Verfügung gestellt wurden und weil die Erkenntnisse aus den Pilot-Wassereinzugsgebieten teils zu spezifisch waren, um sie einfach auf andere Wassereinzugsgebiete zu übertragen. Folglich wurde das Projektziel nur bedingt erreicht: die Erfolge des Projekts sind auf Pilot-Wassereinzugsgebiete begrenzt; auf regionaler Ebene hat sich die Koordination von Wassereinzugsgebieten nicht wesentlich verbessert. Nichtsdestotrotz wurden auf Impact-Ebene Nutzerkonflikte vermindert, hat sich die Wasserqualität lokal verbessert, und es gibt laut Aussage der meisten Befragten weniger Abholzung, Dürren und Überschwemmungen.

Das Ziel des InWEnt-Projekts lautete: "Durch die Qualifizierung von Entscheidungsträgern und Fachkräften wird die Leistungsfähigkeit der Institutionen im Unteren Mekong-Becken gestärkt." Um dieses zu erreichen, sollten Fachkräfte

durch Kurz- und Langzeittrainings Konzepte und Methoden des Wassereinzugsgebietsmanagement erlernen und diese anschließend in ihren Heimatinstitutionen anwenden und verbreiten. Überdies sollte durch Trainings für die ländliche Bevölkerung und lokale Autoritäten die Partizipation an Entscheidungsprozessen der Entwicklungsplanung erhöht und damit die Entscheidungsgrundlage und Legitimität der Institutionen verbessert werden. Auf Impact-Ebene sollte dies wiederum einen Beitrag zur nachhaltigen Nutzung natürlicher Ressourcen, zur Nutzung sozialer und wirtschaftlicher Potenziale, sowie zur Beschäftigungsförderung und Armutsminderung leisten.

Die Evaluierungsergebnisse haben gezeigt, dass Teilnehmer an den Trainings in der Regel für ihren Arbeitskontext relevante Konzepte und Methoden erlernt haben, so dass sie das Gelernte direkt in ihrer Arbeit anwenden konnten. Jedoch konnten nicht alle Trainingsteilnehmer die Trainingsinhalte in ihre Institution einbringen und dort verankern, da ihnen eine längerfristige Unterstützung im Sinne von begleitendem Coaching und finanzieller Unterstützung fehlte. Bezüglich der Partizipation der ländlichen Bevölkerung zeigen die Evaluierungsergebnisse, dass durch eine gute Zusammenarbeit mit lokalen Partnerorganisationen viele Leute durch die Trainings erreicht wurden und die Beteiligung an politischen Entscheidungsprozessen dadurch gestiegen ist. Jedoch konnte die Evaluierungs-Mission kaum direkte Wirkungen dieser Trainings auf Institutionen-Ebene feststellen. Insgesamt wurde das Projektziel, welches auf Institutionen-Ebene angesiedelt ist, somit nur begrenzt erreicht. Die Ziele auf Impact-Ebene waren sehr hoch gesteckt. Dadurch bestand eine große Zuordnungslücke zwischen Projektziel- und Impact-Ebene, sodass es schwierig war, Ergebnisse bezüglich dieser drei Ziele eindeutig dem Projekt zuzuschreiben; jedoch konnte insgesamt ein verbessertes Management natürlicher Ressourcen in den Pilot-Wassereinzugsgebieten festgestellt werden, und die gestiegene Beteiligung der lokalen Bevölkerung könnte langfristig zur Armutsminderung beitragen.

Das Evaluierungs-Team hat auf Grundlage der detaillierten Ergebnisse spezifische Empfehlungen an die GIZ, die MRC sowie an andere Durchführungsorganisationen der Entwicklungszusammenarbeit gerichtet, die dem institutionellen Lernen dieser Einrichtungen und der erfolgreicherer Planung und Umsetzung zukünftiger Entwicklungsvorhaben dienen sollen (vgl. Kapitel 6).

Bezüglich des methodischen Vorgehens hat das Evaluierungs-Team überdies einige Einsichten gewonnen, die auch für zukünftige Evaluierungen von Nutzen sein können. Ein angemessener, die eigene Expertise in den Vordergrund rückender Auftritt erscheint für junge Consultants insbesondere in südostasiatischen Ländern wichtig, wo Respekt vor dem Alter und Höflichkeit eine große Rolle im Alltag spielen. Bei einer Evaluierung und ganz besonders bei einer ex post Evaluierung, an die keine direkten Entscheidungen eines laufenden Entwicklungsvorhabens gebunden

sind, sollte sichergestellt werden, dass allen Beteiligten der Sinn und Zweck einer Evaluierung hinreichend erklärt wird, um keine falschen Erwartungen/Hoffnungen zu wecken. Zudem sollten Indikatoren zur Messung der Zielerreichung - falls die Projekte selbst keine angemessenen Indikatoren aufweisen - zu einem Zeitpunkt festgelegt werden, zu dem die Evaluatoren mit den Projekten hinreichend vertraut sind, zugleich aber noch ausreichend Zeit zur Erhebung der relevanten Informationen vorhanden ist. Zu diesem Zeitpunkt empfiehlt es sich, Leitfragen und ggf. Bewertungsraster zu jedem DAC-Kriterium zu entwickeln, um die Beurteilung der Projekte zu systematisieren und sie gegenüber dem Auftraggeber transparent und nachvollziehbar zu machen.

Abbreviations

BMZ	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
DANIDA	Danish Development Cooperation
DED	Deutscher Entwicklungsdienst
DWHH	Deutsche Welthungerhilfe
EDC	Enterprise & Development Consultants Co. Ltd , Lao PDR
EU	European Union
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (since 2011)
GTZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit GmbH (until 2011)
ILT	Integrated Leadership Training
IWRM	Integrated Water Resources Management
IWSM	Integrated Watershed Management
LMB	Lower Mekong Basin
LWF	Lutheran World Federation
MAF	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Laos
MAFF	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery, Cambodia
MARD	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Vietnam and Laos
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MoNRE	Ministry of National Resources and Environment, Vietnam and Laos
MRC	Mekong River Commission
MRCs	Mekong River Commission Secretariat
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NMC	National Mekong Committee
NWG	National Working Group
PES	Payment for Environmental Services
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
PWS	Pilot Watershed

WREA	Water Resources and Environment Agency
WSC	Watershed Committee
WSM	Watershed Management
WSMP	Watershed Management Project

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1 Introduction

1.1 Overall context

For its internal evaluation cycle of 2013/2014 the Monitoring and Evaluation unit of the Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) is conducting portfolio evaluations with a focus on rural development. Independent institutes or consultancy companies were commissioned to conduct a total of six ex post evaluations and five key evaluations. The ex post evaluation on "the German contribution to the sustainable management of the lower Mekong basin through the support of the Mekong River Commission" was assigned to the Humboldt University of Berlin's Centre for Rural Development (Seminar für Ländliche Entwicklung, SLE) and carried out in the Lower Mekong Basin (LMB). The evaluation team consisted of two team leaders, Jeremy Ferguson and Dr. Ekkehard Kürschner, both international consultants, as well as the seven young professionals David Bühlmeier, Niklas Cramer, Alexis Flevotomas, Abdurasul Kayumov, Margitta Minah, Anna Niesing, and Daniela Richter.

The two development measures evaluated were "Sustainable watershed management in the Lower Mekong Basin" (GTZ) and "Potentials of rural areas in Mekong countries" (InWEnt). The GTZ project started in 2002 and ran over three phases until 2011. The InWEnt project consisted of one phase from 2005 until 2007. The development measures took place in Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, and Vietnam with the project partner being the Mekong River Commission (MRC).

The ex post evaluation is important to GIZ for reasons of legitimacy and learning. The development measures are financed by German public funds and GIZ is accountable for their appropriate use. A further main factor is learning from past projects in order to improve future development measures. Moreover, the study can serve the MRC in their work. Important lessons can be drawn from the final report and its recommendations.

1.2 Structure of this Study

This study supplements a comprehensive GIZ evaluation report (GIZ 12/2013) with a contribution to development policy debate. The official evaluation report served GIZ's internal learning and accountability and was not intended for a wider public. It was written within a strict remit and in a very technical language which also rendered it unsuitable for publication.¹

¹ The full version of report you can find here: http://www.giz.de/de/ueber_die_giz/516.html

However, the evaluation team wanted to make its insights more widely available and to continue the tradition of SLE to publish the results of the consulting projects carried out each year. Therefore, it compiled this study as an additional product based on the results of the evaluation commissioned by GIZ. It outlines the regional context of the projects which were evaluated, a less technical and more conceptual examination of their planning, implementation, and results, and a discussion of methodological insights gained from an ex post evaluation.

The study is divided into six chapters. Following this introduction, the framework conditions of the two development projects as well as approaches and concepts are delineated in Chapter 2. The reconstructed results models which the evaluation team developed and used are presented and explained in this Chapter.

The third Chapter explains the methodological approach of the evaluation mission. This includes a detailed description of research activities including guiding questions, instruments and methods. Moreover, the Chapter provides insights into how the team used the results models to carry out the evaluation, the advantages and challenges this entailed, and factors which affected the validity of the data collected.

Chapter 4 then provides a summary of the main results of the evaluation mission along the DAC criteria.

In Chapter 5, recommendations are formulated for future development projects in the fields of watershed management and capacity development to support institutional learning processes of GIZ and other development agencies.

Finally, in Chapter 6, the evaluators share 'lessons learnt' from this evaluation and in particular the insights gained concerning the use of the results model as a tool for conducting an evaluation. This last Chapter is therefore directed to future evaluation missions.

2 Framework conditions

2.1 Framework conditions and context

The Lower Mekong Basin (LMB) is made up of the riparian countries Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam (See Figure 1). More than 80% of the population is directly dependent on the resources of the Mekong river system for irrigation and agriculture, fisheries, navigation/transport, forest use, and hydropower generation. 70 million people inhabit the basin and 300 million people are directly supplied with food produced in the basin.

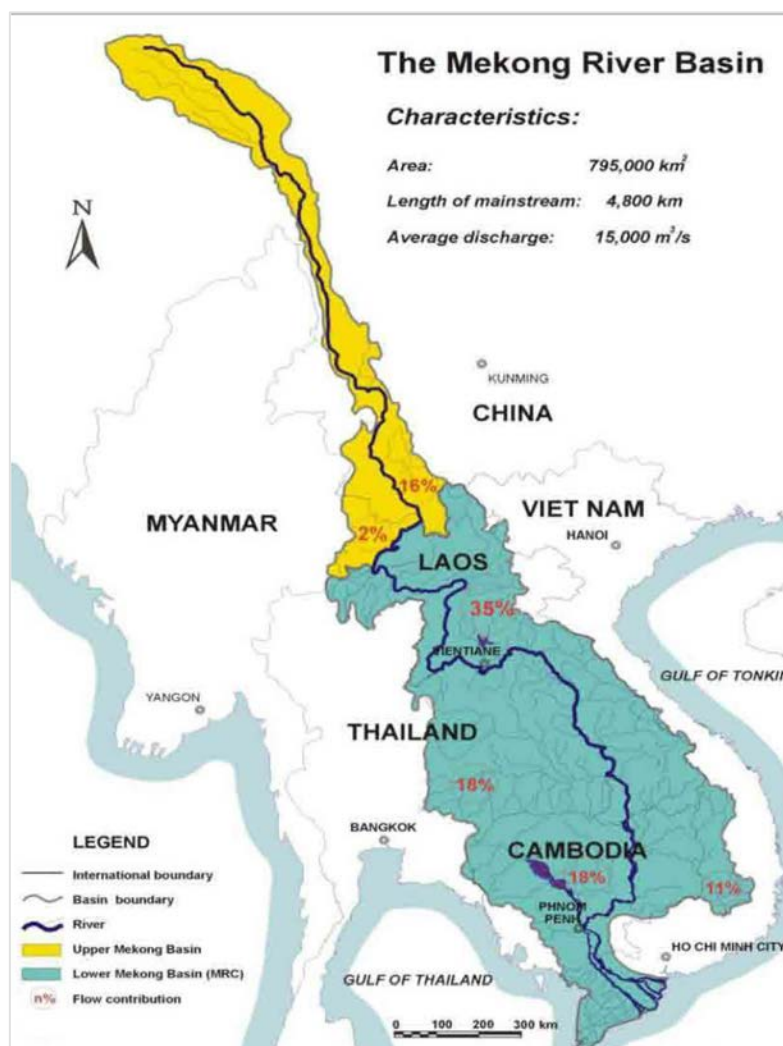


Figure 1: Hydrogeographic map of the Mekong basin, with indications of the Mekong River and main tributaries, and flow contributions by country (MRC 1999)

The intensive use of the water and land resources as well as flora and fauna often does not correspond with the principles of sustainability. The lack of co-ordinated and integrated watershed management (IWSM) in the face of competing needs and uses

results in deforestation (illegal) logging, slash and burn agriculture), soil degradation, and decreasing soil fertility, water pollution as well as substantial disturbance of the flow regime, causing a higher frequency of floods and droughts (Hatfield Consultants/Denkmodell 2008). Rapid population growth and industrialisation in the countries that share the Mekong Basin have meant that the basin serves as a resource "mine" for economies within and outside the basin. As the technology available for exploiting resources has become more sophisticated, pressure on resources within the basin has increased (See Figure 2 and Table 1).



Figure 2: Forest Cover Change 1973 to 2009

Table 1: Selected criteria for environmental degradation (source: <http://www.gms-eoc.org/gms-statistics/gms>)

Criterion	2007	2009	2011
Forest cover	1,200,530 sq.km	1,214,460 sq.km	1,207,330 sq.km
Population	320,133,000	326,533,000	329,480,000
Criterion	2005	2007	2008
Ecological footprint²	363,248,000 Gha	377,187,000 Gha	400,019,000 Gha

Demographically, politically and economically, there is a great variety within the Lower Mekong Basin. Ethnically, Lao PDR is more diverse than Cambodia, Thailand, and Vietnam. Economically, Thailand is considerably more advanced than its neighbours, having the highest per capita income and industries contributing more than 40% of GDP. It is characterised by the World Bank as a Lower Middle Income Country, while the remaining LMB countries are Lower Income Countries (MRC 2010).

Still, many of the people in the basin remain poor and the per capita availability of natural resources is declining. This has given rise to growing concerns in governments and civil society organisations about negative human impact on the basin's environment and the consequences that this will have for its people. More than 60% of breadwinners in these countries have jobs related to water. Women play a key role in the provision, management and safeguarding of water and related resources. Households headed by women are often among the poorest of the poor. That makes them particularly vulnerable to the various impacts of watershed development (MRC 2010). Ethnic minorities practice traditional cultivation such as slash and burn and depend heavily on forest resources. More than 95 different ethnic groups live in the Mekong Basin (WWF Greater Mekong). Therefore, rural poor, ethnic minorities and disadvantaged women are especially vulnerable to changes in water availability and accessibility (MRC 2012).

2.2 Typical livelihoods in the Lower Mekong Basin

The region experienced rapid economic development throughout the project's implementation phase 2002-2011. However, the economic progress varied

² Surface area (in global hectares) used to support the consumption of resources such as land, food, energy etc.

considerably between the four countries as well as between urban and rural areas. As a consequence there are great differences in the extent to which poor population groups benefit from the general economic progress. These economic disparities make cooperation among the riparian states difficult and at the same time highlight the political relevance of a body like the Mekong River Commission that can reconcile user interests.

Agriculture is the single most important economic activity in the lower Mekong basin. An estimated 75% of the lower basin population earn their livelihood from agriculture (MRC 2003), in combination with other activities such as fisheries, livestock or forestry. However, the picture varies considerably between the riparian countries. Agriculture declined in its relative importance over the 1990s in all four riparian countries (See Table 2). The change was most pronounced in Vietnam, which rapidly industrialised during this period. However, although the relative contribution of agriculture to national economies decreased between 1995 and 1999, the absolute value of agricultural output increased by 12% in Cambodia, 22% in Lao PDR, 10% in Thailand and 19% in Vietnam (MRC 2003).

Table 2: Demographics, GDP, Gender Inequality (source: World Bank 2012a)

Country	Area (km ²)	Population (million) Estimates 2001	GDP – USD Per Capita 2000/ 2008	HDI: Human Development Index 2000/ 2010	GII: Gender, Index, Inequality value 2000/ 2010
Cambodia	181,040	11.5	1.035/ 1.898	0.444/ 0.526	0.603/ 0.486
Lao PDR	236,800	4.9	1.355/ 2.041	0.453/ 0.517	0.579/ 0.500
Thailand	513,115	62.0	5.497/ 7.378	0.625/ 0.679	0.458/ 0.384
Vietnam	332,000	78.0	1.597/ 2.611	0.534/ 0.597	0.357/ 0.315

2.3 The Mekong River Commission

The Mekong River Commission (MRC) was established in 1995 under the Mekong Agreement between Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam with the mission "to provide effective support for sustainable management and development of water and

related resources". The MRC is the only inter-governmental agency that works directly with the governments of Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Vietnam on their common specific interests, namely joint management of shared water resources and sustainable development of the Mekong River. Providing its member states with technical know-how and basin-wide perspectives, the MRC plays a key role in regional decision-making and the execution of policies in a way that promotes sustainable development and poverty alleviation.

Technical and administrative functions fall under an operational branch, the MRC Secretariat with two offices, one in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, and the other in Vientiane, Lao PDR. The secretariat facilitates regional meetings of the member countries and provides technical advice on joint planning, coordination and cooperation. It also works closely with national coordinating bodies, the National Mekong Committees (NMCs) and other state agencies.

Currently, China and Myanmar are engaged as MRC Dialogue Partners. The MRC is funded by contributions from its four member countries and development partners such as bilateral donor countries, development banks and international organisations (<http://www.mrcmekong.org/about>).

The MRC acted as lead executing agency for the GTZ Watershed Management project, thus allowing a regional approach and national coordination structure. At MRC Secretariat, the GTZ Watershed Management Project is one of the three components under the Agriculture, Irrigation and Forestry Programme (AIFP).

2.4 Pilot areas for watershed management

The GTZ Watershed Management Project established pilot watersheds in all four riparian countries. The pilot watersheds were selected in early 2004 as reference areas according to their critical condition. The criteria for critical watersheds were high elevation range, steep slopes, current or previous high rates of deforestation, high rate of land use changes and land conflicts, high population increase (internal growth or in-migration), as well as poverty-induced pressure on natural resources. The pilot watershed in Cambodia was Strung Siem Riep, in Lao PDR it was Nam Ton Watershed, in Thailand Huay Sam Mor and in Vietnam Krong Ana (Baseline Survey 2004).

3 Conceptual Framework

3.1 The concept of integrated watershed management

“Integrated Watershed Management (IWSM) is the multi-stakeholder process to manage land, water and other related natural resources, to bring about sustainable balanced economic, ecological and social benefits within the hydrological boundary.” (MRC-GTZ WSMP, 2011)

A watershed, which is also called a drainage basin or catchment area, is a unit of land draining into a common outlet along a river channel (epa.gov). Water travels downstream and meets with similar strength of streams, forming a river (Wani and Garg 2009).

Every watercourse has an associated

watershed, and small watersheds aggregate together to become larger watersheds.

Watersheds are considered as a decisive unit for planning and management of water resources. By giving watersheds the attention they deserve, it is expected to overcome fragmentations created by natural and administrative borders and the complementary incompatibility of administrative guidelines and institutions (DIE 2004).

The concept of Integrated Watershed Management as applied by the MRC-GTZ project considers a watershed not simply as the smallest hydrological unit but also as socio-political-ecological entity which plays a crucial role in securing livelihoods of the rural population. A watershed has to serve three main functions: ecological, economic and socio cultural.

To serve the ecological functions, a watershed needs to provide sufficient good quality water as well as other natural resources goods and services like natural erosion control, soil fertility, clean air or biodiversity. From an economic perspective, watersheds should provide natural resources including food, fuel, water or energy that go beyond subsistence production for rural populations and provide income generating opportunities. A watershed also serves social and cultural functions as it



Figure 3: Example of a watershed (MRC 2007)

creates cultural identity, supports indigenous livelihoods and provides recreational opportunities.

It becomes clear that people and livestock are an integral part of watersheds and their activities affect the productive status of watersheds and vice versa. To secure the balanced function of all dimensions, watershed management is a complex procedure that requires adequate policies and planning, bringing together all relevant stakeholders, providing up-to-date information and a thorough knowledge management.

The GTZ project envisaged seven steps to put the concept into practice:

- Linking policy and institutional frameworks
- Selecting critical watersheds
- Creating dialogue
- Assessing the functions of a watershed
- Creating a Plan of Action that defines a strategy towards prioritising local watershed problems and defining necessary actions
- Implementing and financing the Plan of Action
- Monitoring and Evaluation

It is important to note that Integrated Watershed Management is a process, not a product. IWSM as a concept does not provide a specific blueprint for a given water management problem but rather constitutes a broad set of principles, tools, and guidelines, which must be developed in a participatory manner and tailored to the specific context of the country, region or a river basin.

There are a vast array of tools and guidelines for implementing IWSM, according to the cultural, political and social needs of the countries, regions and river basins.

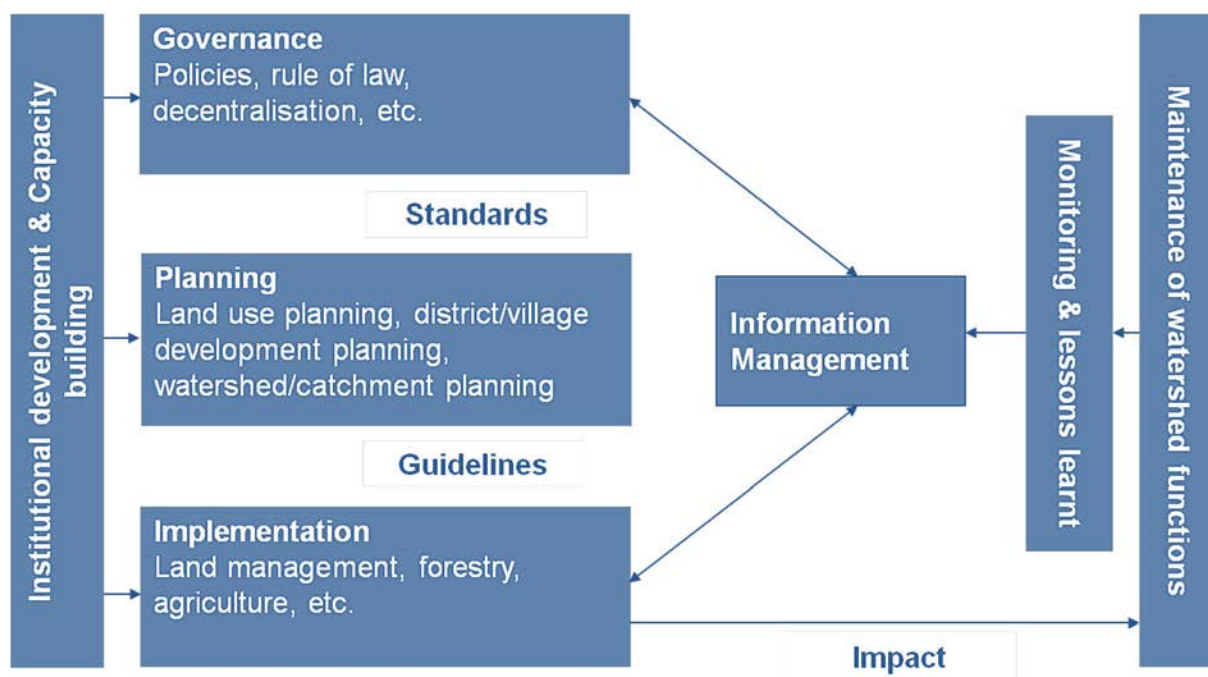


Figure 4: Overview of watershed management system (MRC 2007, adapted to GTZ project)

3.2 The GTZ Watershed Management project

The GTZ development measure “Sustainable watershed management in the Lower Mekong Basin” started in 2002 and ran over three phases until 2011. It took place in Laos, Cambodia, Thailand and Vietnam.

The project aimed to improve local watersheds of the Lower Mekong Basin in a way that they fulfil their environmental, economic and social functions and provide a sustainable basis for improved livelihood of the population. It further hoped to indirectly contribute to poverty reduction as well as conflict avoidance in the region (overarching development results).

With this idea, the ultimate beneficiaries were the rural people in the four riparian states who depend on the sustainable use of natural resources of the Mekong basin. These include mainly poor and very poor sections of the population with subsistence-oriented livelihood strategies.

To account for huge differences in institutional development and experience across the four partner countries, the project introduced a national implementation strategy with pilot watersheds. This way, the focus of the project moved from a transnational approach towards a national and more local approach. Therefore the project objective was revised for the final phase in 2009 (See

Figure 5: Project objective (cf. GTZ 2002a, GTZ 2008b)

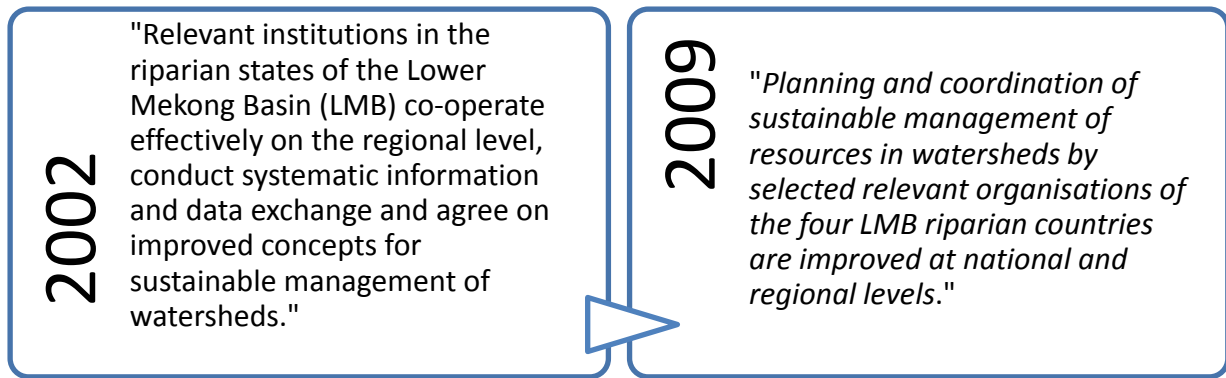


Figure 5: Project objective (cf. GTZ 2002a, GTZ 2008b)

To achieve its objective of improved planning and coordination, the project combined the measures of policy and institutional development, information management and capacity building. These activities contribute to the development and application of improved policy drafts for the sustainable use of natural resources as well as the development of human capacities. The logic of the project can be expressed in three main hypotheses.

1. The project provides methods and tools along with sensitisation activities that lead to the establishment of bodies that coordinate and promote watershed management at different levels.

On the national level, the idea of the project was to initiate and support national working groups that consist of high-level representatives from National Mekong Committees and line ministries concerned with watershed management. Sometimes more than nine ministries are represented in working groups, including ministries of agriculture, natural resources and environment, forestry, fisheries or infrastructure. The idea of the project was that tailored training would lead to improved analysis, planning and implementation of sustainable watershed management.

Similarly, on a provincial level, multi-sector watershed committees were to be constituted in selected pilot watersheds. They consisted of members of the same authorities as the national working group who received complementary training.

The project provided regional platforms for members of the national working groups and watershed committees to encourage the exchange of experience between the riparian states in order to facilitate regional cooperation and coordination.

2. Action plans that target local needs and address central problems are developed, a similar approach is replicated in other regions, and information and skills are exchanged on regional level.

The idea of the project was that watershed committees would develop watershed action plans and pursue their integration into socio-economic district and province

development plans. As one of the seven steps envisioned in the GTZ concept (cf. Chapter 3.1), action plans were thought to be developed in a participatory manner, including stakeholder dialogues. Action plans define a strategy towards prioritising local watershed problems and defining necessary actions. Their integration into socio-economic and development plans was expected to enhance their implementation.

The national working groups were intended to initiate and supervise the replication of the process on provincial level in other watersheds in order to institutionalise watershed management. At the same time, the GTZ would pursue cooperation with other donors to ensure implementation of formulated action plans and replication of their approach. Through policy analysis and advice, the project logic aimed to harmonise different sector policies as well as national policies and pilot watershed action plans.

3. Up-to-date information services are provided and are sustainably disseminated on all levels.

The project logic included the provision of various information products such as the MekongInfo website which serves as a platform for the sharing of information and experience in integrated water resources management in the Mekong River Basin. The MekongInfo website was a product of a previous GTZ project.

In addition, the Resource Kit was to be made accessible, which is a comprehensive publication on the basics of watershed management, policy and legislation, institutions and organisations, planning and implementation, monitoring information and case studies. The Resource Kit was also to be used to derive capacity building packages for different target groups like e.g. high-level ministry staff or provincial planners.

In order to provide evaluability, the evaluation team constructed the results model from project documents. It includes assumptions by the evaluation mission that were considered necessary if the intended effects were to actually materialise³. However, it does not make assumptions with regards to preconditions for success beyond the project's reach.

This results model is a simplified version⁴ which the evaluation mission used as a tool for data collection as well as for analysing the projects' results.

³ Those assumptions are discussed more in detail in Chapter 5 where the project results are discussed.

⁴ For a more detailed version of the results model, cf. Annex V and VI.

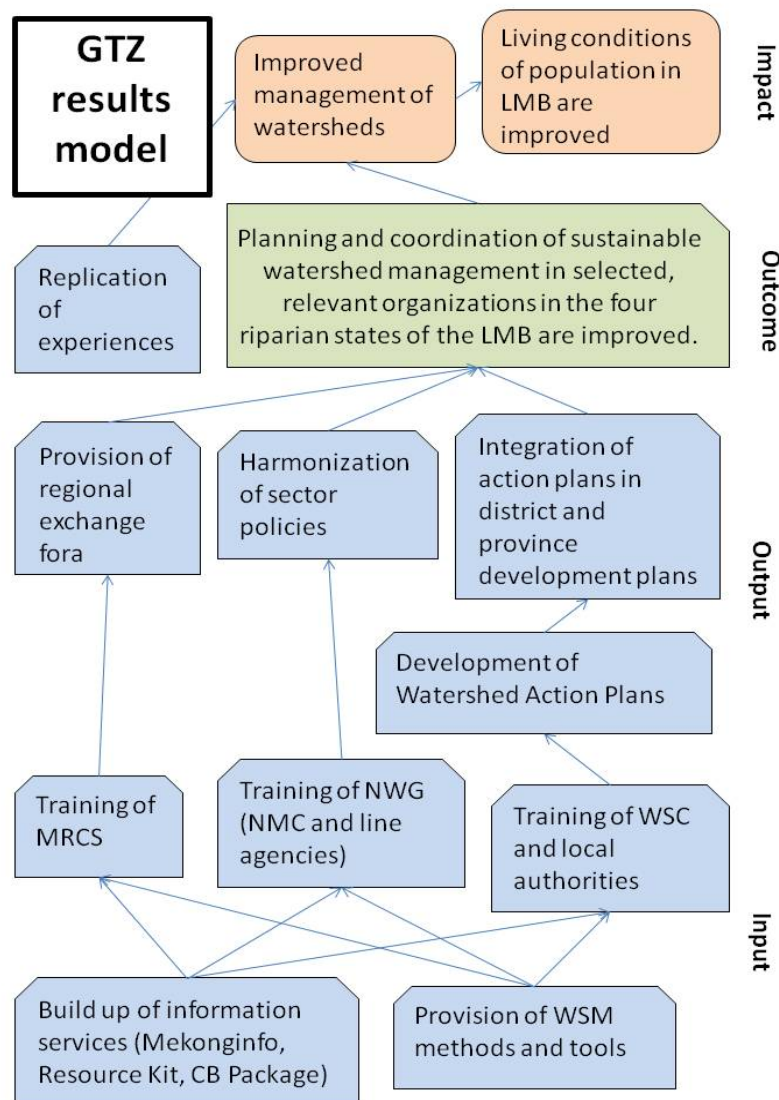


Figure 6: Results model GTZ project

3.2.1 A critical look at the GTZ concept

The GTZ project followed a multi-level strategy from regional exchange via national and sub-national policy advice to local implementation. Due to its limited resources and mandate, the project was dependent on the willingness of national and international programmes to cooperate and co-finance implementation in the pilot regions. Without this, the project would have been under serious threat. The evaluation team sees this as an intrinsic weakness of the concept.

Only the last project offer as of 2008 specifically considered gender aspects, mainly via awareness raising and in the analysis of the framework conditions. Women should be strengthened by integrating them in decision-making and coordination bodies. However, the concept lacks strategic measures to ensure female

participation. In view of the special role of women in watershed management (cf. Chapter 2.1), the absence of concrete activities flaws the concept.

The project aimed at reducing poverty. However, effects at target group level were to be reached only directly in pilot watersheds. Outside the area where the project was active, effects on poverty were to be reached through an even longer results chain. Amongst others, this brought about a strong focus on intermediaries such as ministry staff working on watershed management, the national or regional working groups. Through this strong focus, the project ran the risk of excluding further relevant actors representing civil society and the private sector.

As mentioned before (cf. Chapter 1.2), the project focus had moved from regional to national level. Although the model of the development measure is generally plausible, it contradicts the mandate of the Mekong River Commission which covers trans-boundary aspects of the main Mekong stream. As a result, the Mekong River Commission became less significant and was marginalised as project partner.

3.3 The InWEnt project

The InWEnt development measure “Potentials of rural areas in Mekong countries” had only one phase from 2005 until 2007 and was implemented in Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam. Its objective was “By qualifying decision makers and mid-level professionals, capacities of institutions working on watersheds in the Lower Mekong Basin are strengthened.”

The technical implementation of the project was based on the InWEnt capacity building approach with various components:

- Dialogue events, high level meetings and training for political decision makers to intensify trans-boundary policy dialogue and improve national policies, strategies, and instruments for sustainable use of natural resources
- Training of trainers and training of decision-makers, officers and activists on national, provincial, district, and local levels in order to improve watershed management (cf. Chapter 3.1), to foster the participation of rural population in political decision-making processes and to improve the efficiency of rural service organisations; this also involved preparing training materials such as a rural development training manual which delineates ways of involving the rural population in development planning
- The one-year Integrated Leadership Training (ILT) course on sustainable management of watersheds held in Germany included an internship in a German organisation related to the management of watersheds and the planning of a ‘transfer project’ to be implemented in the respective sending institution after the return of the trainee. This transfer project was supposed to allow alumni to apply

their new knowledge, disseminate it and, thereby, to strategically strengthen their sending institutions.

The project aimed at reaching the target group via intermediaries participating in capacity building activities. The intermediaries were decision-makers and specialists from national line institutions, for instance national ministries, sub-national and local governmental institutions, user associations, self-help groups, NGOs and other institutions from economy and civil society. The implementation strategy included counselling the trained intermediaries in the change processes they were supposed to initiate in their own institutions. The activities were directed at individuals at regional, national, sub-national, and local levels. The target group or final beneficiaries were users of water and bio-resources in the Mekong countries, men and women alike. Through the sustainable management of natural resources their income and livelihood situation was supposed to improve.

Just as for the GTZ project the evaluation team constructed the results model of the InWEnt project from project documents in order to provide evaluability.

This results model is a simplified version⁵ which the evaluation mission used as a tool for data collection as well as for analysing the projects' results.

⁵ For a more detailed version of the results model, cf. Annex V and VI.

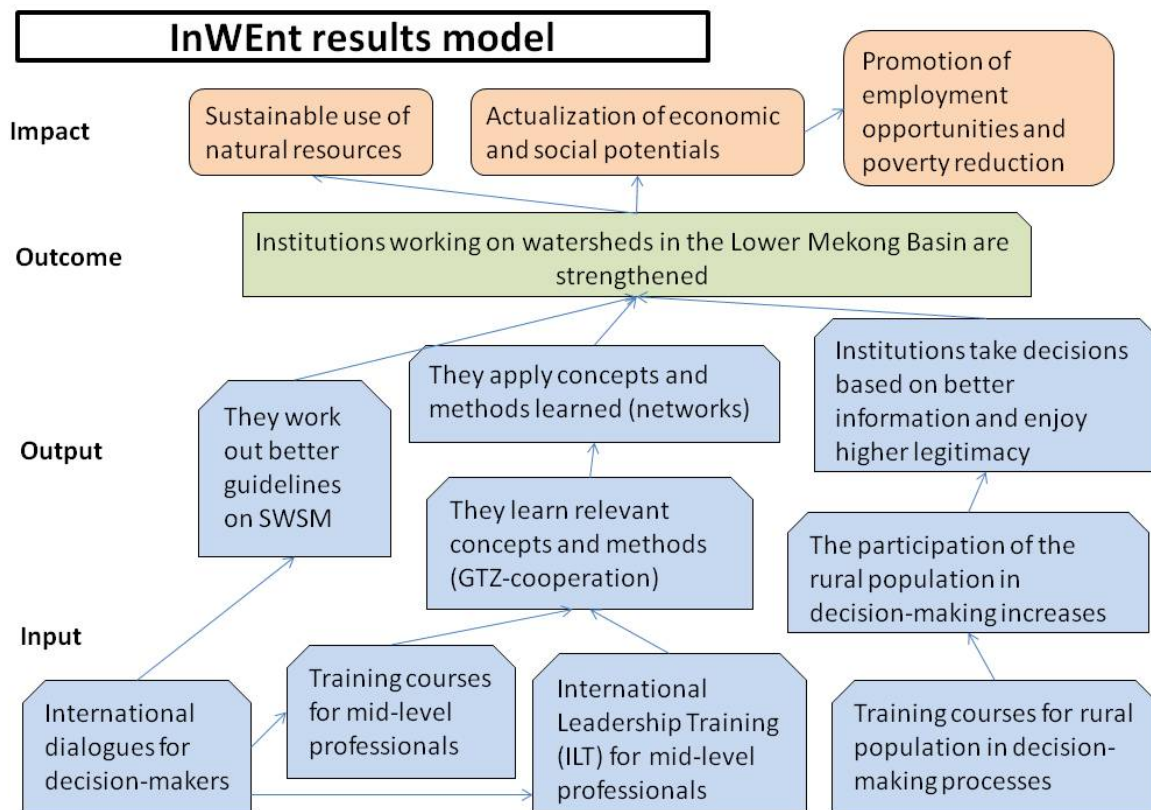


Figure 7: Results model InWEnt project

Via international dialogue events, interested and motivated decision-makers from relevant national agencies (such as ministries for agriculture, rural development, forestry) of the three partner countries would be sensitised for concepts such as watershed management (WSM; cf. Chapter 3.1). The decision-makers work out better guidelines to create trans-boundary policies. These would then be approved and implemented nationally which leads to the project objective "the capacities of institutions working on watersheds in the Lower Mekong Basin are strengthened".

At the same time, the interest of sensitised decision-makers in training their mid-level professionals would be strengthened by means of the dialogue events. Thus they would send adequate employees to short term training courses and international leadership training (ILT). Here the trainees are made aware of the advantages of watershed management for the challenges they face in their daily work. Subsequently they are taught concepts and methods of IWSM relevant to those challenges. The training courses are designed beforehand by InWEnt in consultation with GTZ WSMP and, according to needs assessments of the partner institutions involved, carried out by InWEnt and GTZ WSMP. They are also implemented in cooperation with GTZ WSMP. The trainees were expected to return to their home institutions and share the concepts and methods with their colleagues. Moreover, the necessary preconditions for change are assumed to exist in those institutions. To

promote trans-boundary dialogue – an important step of IWSM according to the GTZ project (cf. Chapter 3.1) - the project also financed network platforms and events for the training course alumni and other interested persons. Through those, recent information on IWSM could be spread and staff are better informed and encouraged to use this information.

The training for the rural population included courses for grassroots advocacy and methods to further participation in decision making processes for rural villages. Those courses would lead to an increase in the participation of the rural population and authorities' acceptance and active engagement with them. That way, decisions would be better suited to the rural population's needs, so that institutions enjoy a higher legitimacy and are thus strengthened.

The strengthening of those institutions working on watersheds in the LMB would then lead to improvements in the management of watersheds in terms of natural resources management and livelihoods; this would then, in the long run and through rather indirect results chains, contribute to the envisaged impact of sustainable use of natural resources, actualisation of economic and social potentials, and promotion of employment opportunities and poverty reduction.

3.3.1 A critical look at the InWEnt concept

In summary, the project's approach corresponded with capacity building standards at the time of its planning. Arguably, the training to enhance rural participation does not fit well with the project objective of strengthening institutions working on watersheds in the Lower Mekong Basin. The strengthening effects that enhanced participation would have on institutions are very indirect and their occurrence is less reliable compared to the effects of training provided to institutions' personnel. The evaluators did, however, evaluate the training courses, because although they were of comparatively small relevance to the project objective, they included 72% of the people reached directly through the development measure. Moreover, the creation of dialogue in general was considered a crucial step of IWSM by the GTZ project (cf. Chapter 3.1)

The project objective was very ambitious and not formulated in a sufficiently specific way. The planned impacts were too ambitious for a capacity building project of this scope. This is also reflected in the definition of target group and intermediaries. While the project offer differentiates well between target group (i.e. impact level) and intermediaries (i.e. outcome level), the target group as ultimate beneficiaries are only remotely affected by the project, and as it turns out, these changes on impact level cannot be clearly attributed to the project's outputs (cf. Chapter 6.2).

The project objective could only be reached by its activities to a limited extent because most activities focused on training individuals. Activities to strengthen

institutions by other means such as analyses of stakeholders of the water sector and systemic consulting were neglected. Such activities are recommended by state-of-the-art capacity development approaches (GIZ 2013). This neglect by the InWEnt project meant that it was not ensured that trainees could actually apply their new knowledge in their home institutions and that they could implement adequate activities to improve the management of watersheds in the Lower Mekong Basin.

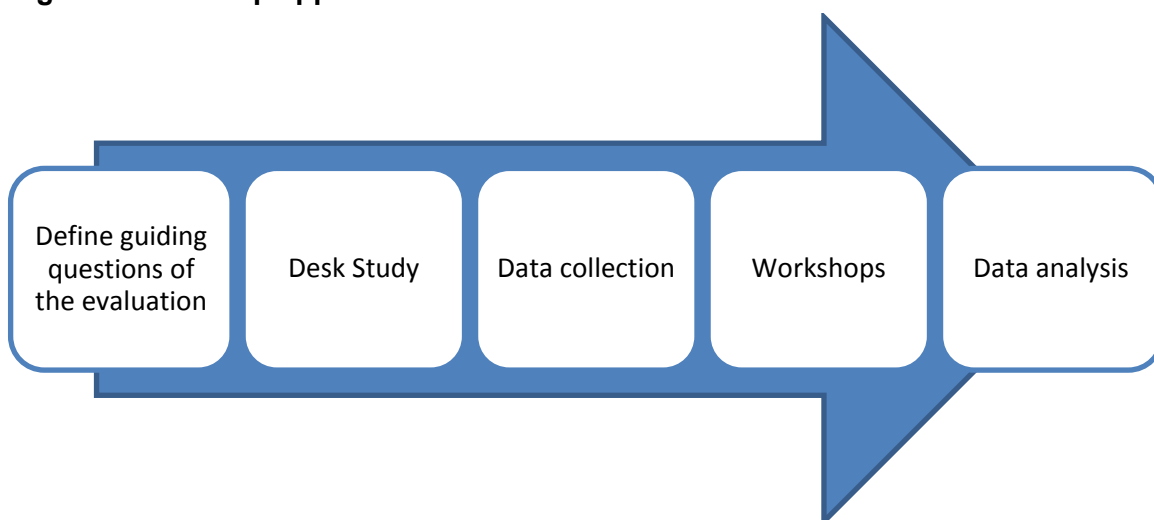
4 Methodology

4.1 Methodological approach

To face the complex challenge of evaluating two terminated projects in four countries and across four levels in three months, the evaluation team developed an approach that combines extensive desk study, data collection and structured analysis.

The team collected data in Laos, Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam. Mostly qualitative data was collected and, wherever possible, complemented by quantitative data. A five-step approach was applied (See Figure 8).

Figure 8: Five-step approach



4.1.1 Guiding questions of the evaluation

After identifying the necessary requirements unique to ex post evaluations, the team decided that a qualitative approach would be most suitable to answer the overall guiding questions which were derived from the five evaluation criteria of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the GIZ evaluation guidelines (See Table 5). Each guiding question is answered against a number of sub questions⁶ which were suggested by the GIZ (cf. Chapter 5 results).

⁶ An overview of sub questions is given in Annex I and II.

Table 3: Overview DAC-criteria and guiding questions

DAC- criteria	Guiding question
Relevance	"Are we doing the right thing?"
Effectiveness	"Are we achieving the objectives of the development measure?"
Impact	"Are we contributing to the achievement of overarching development results?"
Efficiency	"Are the objectives being achieved cost-effectively?"
Sustainability	"Are the positive results durable?"

The achievement of each DAC criterion was calculated on the basis of a six-point scale. (Except sustainability, which was calculated on a four-point scale⁷)

- very good rating
- good rating, no significant defects
- satisfactory rating, positive results predominate
- unsatisfactory rating; negative results predominate despite identifiable positive results
- clearly inadequate rating: despite several positive results, the negative results clearly predominate
- The project/programme is useless, or the situation has deteriorated on balance

A rating of one to three indicates a positive assessment while a grade of four to six is an assessment that is not positive. All single ratings are summarised in an overall rating. A project is however only considered a "success" if the DAC criteria effectiveness, impact and sustainability are rated at least "satisfactory".

The unique situation of carrying out an ex post evaluation is characterised by looking at the effects of the project after it has ended. The evaluation team therefore focus in particular on the criteria of effectiveness, impact and sustainability, which however does not mean that the remaining two criteria were neglected. The focus makes it possible to generate further institutional learning effects and to provide for the better design of future development interventions by paying special attention to capturing positive and negative changes within the criteria in focus.

⁷ 1 (very good sustainability); 2 (good sustainability); 3 (satisfactory sustainability); 4 (inadequate sustainability)

In addition to the DAC-criteria, the evaluation team examined the following cross-cutting issues that were integrated into the DAC-criteria.

- gender parity, poverty reduction,
- sustainable use of natural resources,
- the interplay and complementary nature of instruments used by GIZ's predecessor organisations (GTZ, InWEnt and DED).

The guiding questions were further used to develop interview guidelines and detailed questions. This process was facilitated by matching guiding questions to results models reconstructed from the project offers (cf. Chapter 4.2 evaluating with results model).

4.1.2 Desk study

For the desk study, the evaluators reviewed and analysed project reports and documents related to Integrated Water Resources Management in South East Asia. Key documents were made available by GIZ, through relevant resource persons, the website of the Mekong River Commission, and the MekongInfo website.



Figure 9: Focus Group Discussion with villagers in Cambodia (own image)

In the course of the desk study, the evaluators faced several

hundred documents and developed a system to manage the information they contained. First, all documents were saved in a systematic way and could be accessed on- and offline by all evaluators. To ensure that relevant literature would be easily identified, documents received key words and an initial rating of their importance. By following this approach, it was later possible to differentiate relevant from less relevant literature.

While reviewing the documents, the evaluators used the computer program Atlas.ti to systematically code information according to DAC criteria and cross-cutting issues. This facilitated the first processing, the analysis and the triangulation with other data collected.

4.1.3 Data collection

Interviews and focus group discussions were conducted through semi-structured interviews adapted to the interviewees' position and level, and if applicable were tailored to country specific characteristics. To adhere to a common approach across countries, much attention was given to standardising and pre-testing respective guides.

Interview partners at regional and national level included former project staff as well as representatives of the Mekong River Commission Secretariat, National Mekong Committees, line ministries and individual experts. At sub-national and local level, interviews were conducted with former project coordinators, district authority personnel and villagers. In total, more than 130 people were interviewed through expert interviews and focus group discussions. Further, 36 semi-standardised questionnaires were sent out by email to ILT alumni members (return rate 30%). These questionnaires were sent and collected by alumni coordinators in the GIZ offices in Hanoi and Phnom Penh.

On the village level, the team would have preferred to compare two communes with different degrees of involvement in the project, but this was not possible due to restrictive externally imposed schedules. No comparison groups or comparison villages could be included in the research mainly due to restriction and supervision from government authorities as well as supervision by GIZ staff.

The mission aimed at interviewing at least two members of each type of interview partner. However, due to the fact that the WSMP often worked with high level ministerial staff and people often got promoted to higher positions after the project ended, access proved to be difficult. This was especially true for the National Mekong Committees. National working groups and watershed committees often no longer existed, which made it difficult to obtain relevant information, especially monitoring data, figures, dates and facts. The same applied for former GTZ project staff who had long moved to other positions and/or had changed organisations. This complicated the process of tracking them down and not all targeted interview partners could be met. Equally, it negatively affected the access to relevant information, e.g. training information, monitoring data etc.

These circumstances affected the research regarding the InWEnt project to an even greater extent. Because there had been no local InWEnt structures, and because of a lack of detailed documents regarding short term training, it was especially difficult to find former InWEnt training staff nearly five years after the end of the project. Staff from the GTZ project who had partly coordinated the InWEnt project proved very helpful but could only provide contacts to some consultants and trainers.

Expert interviews were standardised through the use of interview guides that followed a similar approach:

Table 4: Conducting expert interviews

Stage	Activity
Interview opening	At the beginning of each interview, the members of the evaluation team were introduced. No more than three team members participated in expert interviews and focus group discussions. Sometimes, the team was complemented by translators and/or coordinators. Team members explained the course of the interview and the roles SLE-Team members would take during the interview. Furthermore, the SLE Team would highlight their role as independent evaluators, making clear they were not working for GTZ, to encourage interviewee's openness.
Guided questions	After introduction, the discussion guide was followed and questions put forward to the interview partners. Since it was made clear that flexibility would be needed to obtain unexpected answers, the evaluators could easily adapt to local circumstances and uniqueness in individual communities and at different levels. The interview guide was structured according to the DAC-criteria with room for most significant development stories and the timeline which was usually developed at the beginning of the interview.
Closing	At the end of the interview, interviewees could ask questions, which sometimes concerned the use of their answers, the purpose of the study, formalities or expectations from the evaluators, the GIZ or the German government. Then, it was again made clear that the evaluators came in their role as independent consultants and that interview partners should not expect any direct intervention.
Data transcribing	During the interviews, much attention was paid to noting down answers of interview partners; notes were afterwards transcribed on the computer using a standardised protocol format.

One method used in the interviews was the “most significant development” approach. This consists of collecting stories about most significant developments concerning natural resources observed by the interviewees. In a second step, these stories are verified/triangulated in other communes and at higher levels. However, the externally imposed schedules demanded to travel to the capital cities first to interview

ministerial representatives and subsequently to the pilot watersheds (PWS). This left no time to verify stories at a higher level, except by means of the regional results workshop. The stories were mostly used to assess effectiveness and impact.

The evaluators developed a "timeline" tool that was adapted to the characteristics and knowledge of interview partners (See Figure 4-2). This tool was derived from the participatory method for impact assessment of programmes and projects (MAPP). Timelines were conducted in all communes and with 23 national and sub-national representatives.

Figure 4-2 shows an example timeline that was developed with farmers in Vietnam. During the focus group discussion, farmers were asked to answer the following questions:

- What are the biggest problems with the river that you are facing in your community? (Example "living conditions")
- How have these problems developed over time? Please draw a graph on the timeline provided.
- Questions referring to graphs, for example:
 - reason for development, changes.....?
 - what happened there.../ between... and....?
 - what was the contribution of the project to that change?

The evaluation team noticed that the timeline worked well with interview partners at all levels. The topic of the timeline differed between interview partners. At a national level, questions related to the project objective of improved coordination and planning. During the interviews, it was observed that interview partners kept drawing on the timeline using different colours and referring to different topics. At the same time, they used the timeline to mark relevant events and project interventions.

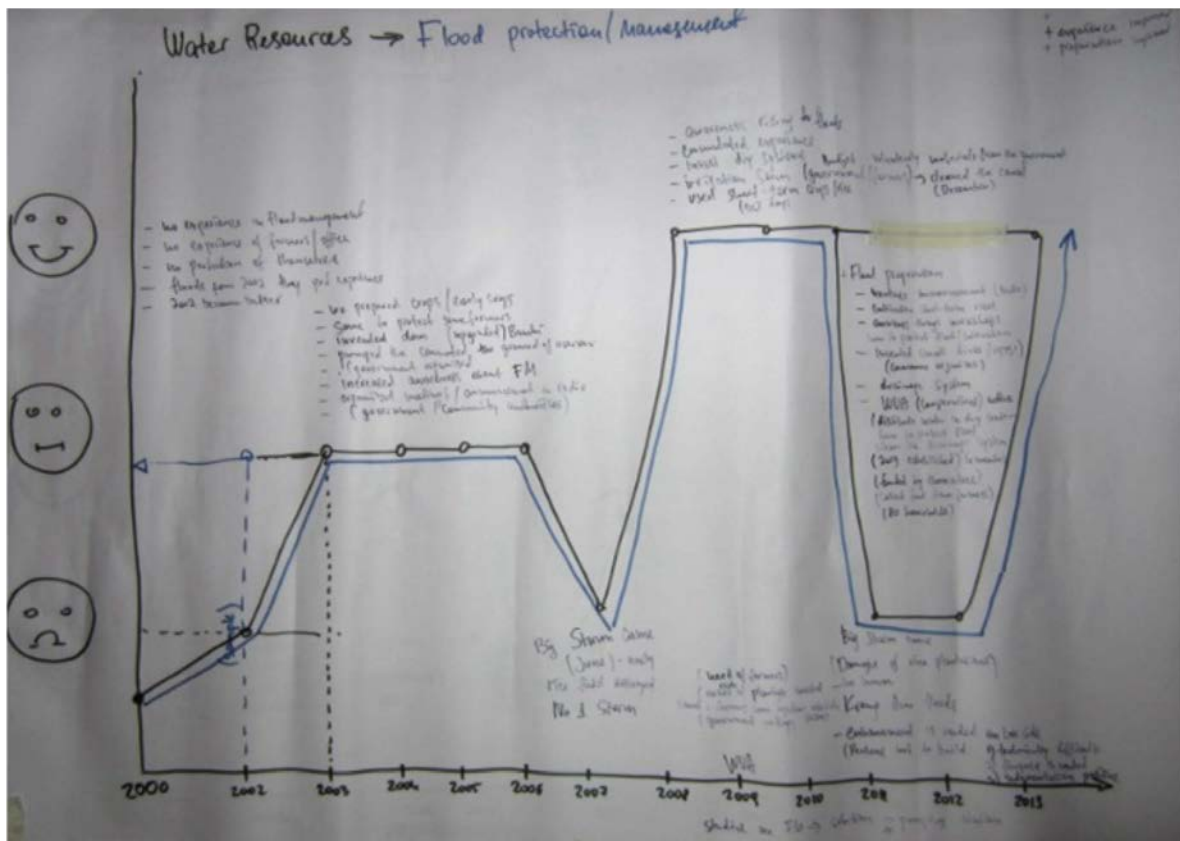


Figure 10: Example of a timeline developed in a Focus Group Discussion in Dak Lak, Vietnam (own image)

The majority of interviews took place on national level. This section illustrates the difficulties the evaluation team faced on sub-national and local level. The evaluators' research in the communes had to be organised through GIZ offices, former GTZ staff or official authorities. Villages were selected by them and selection criteria often remained unclear to the team. The research permits did not allow for a visit to other communes that could possibly have served as a comparison group. Although the evaluation team aimed at standardising data collection across the four countries, individual country-specific adaptations had to be made:

For Cambodia, instead of a research permit, only an official letter by GIZ was required. Still, the team did not find easy access to the communes and had to rely on former GTZ staff to arrange group discussions. Two villages were visited with seven to nine participants per group interview (commune council members and other villagers). The team was accompanied by former staff working in the same village, which may have influenced the interviewees' statements. The given timeframe in both villages was very tight (around one hour), which did not allow for other participatory methods.

The team decided to visit a resettled village 8 km outside Siem Reap. This was done without an escort and two families were interviewed through an independent local translator.

In Laos, the team managed to arrange an ad hoc visit to a commune council member in the Nam Ton watershed during an interview with a district representative. In Nam Ton WS, GIZ Laos runs a trilateral cooperation with Thailand, the 'Nam Xong Sub-River Basin Management Project'. Interviewees seemed to confuse activities of the WSMP and the current project, an issue that could not be overcome even with the help of the two translators. As the interviews were officially arranged via MONRE, no triangulation was possible.

In Thailand, the evaluation team was accompanied by GIZ staff, government representatives and a translator, which led to an imbalance of seven visitors and only three interviewees. A focus group discussion was carried out on the first day of the field visit. The evaluation team felt that the imbalance of participants in the focus group discussion jeopardised its independence and village members were reluctant to answer questions openly. On the second day, the evaluation team was accompanied by the translator and villagers who are part of the WSC, but without government staff and GIZ staff. The evaluation team was brought to three good practice sites in the watershed, where villagers and members of the WSC spoke very openly and presented their good practice sites.

In Vietnam, the team spoke with several provincial officials. Three focus group discussions were held. Of these, two were carried out with selected district officials. One focus group discussion was held with local farmers, not in their village, but at the commune office, and in the presence of commune officials. The selection was carried out by the officials and the criteria for the selection of the farmers remained unclear. A scheduled second focus group discussion with farmers was cancelled on the same day because the responsible commune officials had other appointments. During the focus group discussions, the timeline method was used with two sub-groups each. This allowed the evaluation team to get detailed views on a wider variety of topics.

4.1.4 Workshops

The evaluation team conducted two major workshops that took place in Vientiane, Laos.

The kick-off workshop took place soon after our arrival in Laos at the GIZ office in the Lao-German House with eight participants including former stakeholders and experts in the field of watershed management. The main objective of the kick-off workshop was to inform interested experts about the evaluation mission and to gain their valuable feedback regarding our approach. The evaluators presented their research design, including the methodological approach. An important aspect of this workshop

was to discuss and elaborate on the methods that were intended to be used on local level and to confirm the suitability of these methods.

During the kick-off workshop, the following issues were discussed:

- A power point presentation of the intended research approach
- A suitable communication strategy applied during the mission
- World Cafés with three topics on promoting and impeding factors of each project, identification and prioritisation of suitable interview partners, recommendations for research practice

A week before the end of our mission, the results workshop was held in the meeting room of the Mekong River Commission with 18 high-level participants. The objective of the results workshop was to present and share the key findings, good practices, lessons learned and preliminary conclusions drawn during our evaluation mission. Further, it was intended to discuss and validate findings and to refine conclusions and recommendations aimed at stakeholders of WSM programme development in the Mekong Region.



Figure 11: World Café during results workshop in Vientiane, Laos (own image)

During the results workshop the following issues were discussed:

- A power point presentation of the main findings of the evaluation
- World Cafés with four tables to discuss approaches to combine the objectives of regional cooperation and national implementation, attribution gaps and the extent to which developments could be linked to the projects, as well as alternatives and how key outputs of the projects could have been reached with different means; also the sustainability of the projects
- Further actions needed to promote watershed management in the Lower Mekong Basin

4.1.5 Data analysis

After each interview, the two interviewers compared their understanding of the main findings and transferred interview notes to a standardised format. All interview protocols were then coded with the Atlas.ti computer programme. Both documents

from the desk study and interview protocols were coded against the same code structure. This approach allowed triangulating data from all sources.

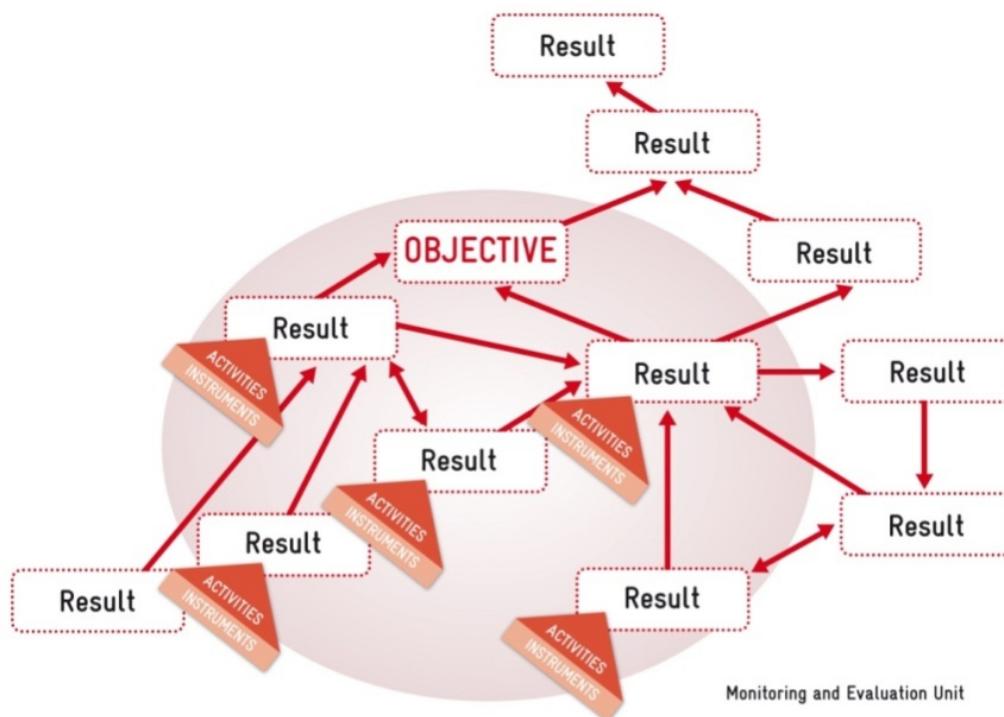
All collected data was triangulated in several ways: data from the desk study was verified in interviews and vice versa. Assumptions, hypotheses and results were justified with former project staff. As far as possible, data was triangulated between the different countries and levels. Through the results workshop, final results were verified through former project staff, current GIZ project staff and experts.

The evaluators developed a tool for analysis in the form of evaluation grids in order to facilitate analysis and to account for transparency (cf. Annex I and Annex II evaluation grids). The evaluation grids were developed according to each DAC criterion for both projects. The tool not only provides an overview of the guiding questions and their sub-questions but also rates each sub-question and provides comments individually. To complement the grid, the evaluators provide short explanations on the reasons behind the ratings. The overall rating of each criterion was then calculated, based on the individual ratings and weighted importance of the sub-questions. The latter were defined before the start of analysis.

4.2 Evaluating with the results model

Results-based monitoring (RBM) refers to the systematic recording of results. It monitors the entire change process that is generated by an intervention. In GIZ projects, RBM is carried out together with partners. It is used to manage the project or programme, and acts as the basis for evaluations and for reporting to the commissioning party. As a basis for assessment in RBM and evaluation, the GIZ makes use of a consistent results model. Development organisations have moved away from log-frames and utilise results models, which are becoming a standard tool. The results model maps the entire change process in a sector and shows the entry points of a measure. An example of a GIZ results model is pictured below:

GIZ RESULTS MODEL



The results model maps the entire change process in a sector and shows the entry points of a measure.

- Result
 - These boxes correspond to steps in the change process. They comprise:
 - intended positive results of the measure,
 - other changes / results required of actors outside the sphere of responsibility and
 - general conditions / external factors outside the sphere of responsibility.
- - These arrows represent hypotheses, i.e. assumptions about causal links between results.
- OBJECTIVE
 - This box contains the objective that has been negotiated and agreed with the partner and commissioning party.
- ▲
 - These symbols show where we leverage our interventions (instruments, activities).
- Sphere of responsibility / cooperation with partner / system boundary

Figure 12: Example of a GIZ results model

A key question in international cooperation is whether measures are producing positive results and if they are doing so sustainably, beyond the end of a development measure. It is the task of GIZ's results-based monitoring and evaluation system to monitor, assess and evaluate results systematically and in line with

international standards. GIZ makes a basic distinction between two types of evaluation. Independent central evaluations are managed by the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Unit. The operational units that are responsible for the individual programme manage decentralised monitoring and evaluation activities. For this purpose, the M&E Unit develops standards, guidelines and instruments, and advises the departments on how to use them. The GIZ complies with its accountability obligations towards commissioning parties and clients, partners and the general public (GIZ 2013).

Orientation on results is one of the basic pillars of the organisation's work and by choosing a consistent approach for all evaluations; GIZ targets quality assurance and unifies the different models of the GIZ predecessors. Also, this model can be connected to assignments in developing, emerging and 'developed' countries, to new clients, to the GIZ management model Capacity WORKS⁸ and the OECD-DAC logic. Important characteristics of the results model that are important to point out are:

- 1.) The results model explains changes (effects) that causally correlate with each other
- 2.) The results model indicates intended change processes, for instance in a sector of a partner country, and contains assumptions/external effects
- 3.) The results model eases discussions and negotiation processes with partners as well as the communication with contractors
- 4.) A visual results model also shows alternative courses of action that can be discussed with partners
- 5.) It can be used as a tool for analysis in the process of data analysis

In the model, "both the assumed relationship between activities and intended results and the interplay of the individual results" are displayed, thereby helping to illustrate complex project models. Moreover, the objectives of the development measures and results hypotheses are illustrated. Assumptions and external factors that have an influence on the project are also illustrated in the results model, which serves as an important factor for the success of the development measure.

In contrast to the linear results chains that were used before, results are interlinked, which makes change processes visible and allows hypotheses to be analysed.

The results model can also be used to assess DAC criteria. Different parts of the results model are used for the assessment of DAC criteria:

⁸ Capacity WORKS is the management model of the GIZ, where the objectives and results are the central aspects of the model. The measurements are covered, monitored, adjusted as well as corrected by 5 success factors.

- The measure's objective and eventually reformulated indicators for the assessment of effectiveness
- The overarching development results and especially the results that lead there for the assessment of impact
- Precise knowledge of inputs, activities and outputs in order to assess efficiency

However, the evaluation team had faced difficulties with this combination. The evaluation team faced the challenge that, at the time the projects had been planned, results models were neither a common concept nor a requirement yet. The team thus had to reconstruct a results model ex post for both projects, based on the project logic and information drawn from project documents (that obviously contained no results models). This allowed the evaluation team to have a common understanding of the development measure. Moreover it served as a helpful reference tool for the expert interviews.

Especially for a project consisting of three phases over 11 years, the complete results model turned out to be very complex (see Annex V: Detailed results model of GTZ project and Annex VI: Detailed results model of InWEnt project). While this complex form can be verified by project staff involved in the conceptualisation, it might overwhelm other interview partners. The evaluation team therefore drafted a simplified results model (see simplified results model in Chapter 3.2. GTZ WSM Project) in order to have a visualisation with the main steps of the development measure. However, the evaluation team faced difficulties deciding what to keep in the simplified results model and what to leave out. The simplified results model proved to be a very useful tool that gave a common understanding and visual conversation basis for the expert interviews. It was used at the beginning of the interview to touch on important steps of the development measure as well as to verify and triangulate assumptions and hypotheses. However, the experience also showed that the simplified results model could pre-determine answers for the interview partners. Moreover, the simplified results model may lack vital information that would be relevant for an expert interview. On the other hand, it would take too much effort and time to explain the complex results model in detail.

For the teamwork and work process, the evaluation team members found that the results model also served them as a useful tool in order to reach a common understanding of the project logic. It furthermore served as a helpful visual tool in order to see the results model hypotheses and to verify as well as complement assumptions. The team was able to use the results model in order to identify promoting and impeding factors that had an influence on the development measure's objective.

Overall, the evaluation team had positive experience using the results model and sees it as a useful tool, but it is not a method in itself.

4.3 Implications for the significance of the results

The methodological approach taken by the evaluation team and the experience of consultants in 'the field' have important implications for the significance of the evaluation's findings.

There are certain aspects of this evaluation which constitute methodological strengths and therefore enhance the validity of the evaluation results:

- Seven consultants plus two team leaders spent three months in the Mekong region. The unusually large team and the long period of time made it possible to carry out a relatively large number of mostly qualitative interviews and focus group discussions. This generated a firm empirical foundation for the evaluation findings. Moreover, the variety of professional backgrounds represented in the evaluation team reduced potential 'blind spots' or biases which a smaller or less heterogeneous group of evaluators might have had. It thus contributed to a more balanced assessment of the two projects.
- The timeline instrument proved to be a very useful tool for data collection. It could be adapted to different levels of knowledge and expertise of interview partners and ensured that the various issues relevant to them could be discussed during interviews. The flexible use and adaptation to the respective context made it possible to integrate very heterogeneous perspectives from different levels into the evaluation of the two projects; for instance, such different factors as strong leadership, adequacy of training, problem pressure, and funding were brought up by respondents as factors promoting cooperation among actors involved.
- The evaluation team followed a very systematic approach thanks to the use of the results models of each project. This ensured that all team members had a common understanding, firstly of how the projects were supposed to attain their envisaged results; secondly of the results hypotheses upon which data collection needed to focus in order to be able to assess to what extent and why those objectives were finally reached (cf. Chapter 4.2).

Besides those points, several factors limiting the significance and validity of the evaluation's results appear salient. They can be divided into limitations related to specific characteristics of the four countries and their population, to evaluations in general, and to particularities of the projects evaluated.

Country-specific limitations comprised the following factors:

- Cultural norms in Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam bring about that direct criticism is not very common; politeness requires to utter criticism in a rather less

explicit manner. Of course the countries, well-known for their 'ever smiling populace' and the significance of 'saving one's face' in public, differ in this regard, but on the whole, this partly restricted the data the evaluation could assemble.

- Another cultural trait that limited the significance of the evaluation's results was that age plays an important role in those countries. Older and more experienced consultants might be treated with more respect.
- In those countries, hierarchical ways of decision-making are widely applied, especially in governmental bureaucracies, and criticism is not necessarily accepted by governmental agencies. The supervision through state employees during data collection meant that those respondents who would criticise higher levels within the hierarchical state bureaucracy might risk facing sanctions afterwards. These tendencies are also reflected in the fact that the idea and the purpose of an 'evaluation' were not well-known among many interviewees. This obviously restricted the openness with which respondents would comment on the two development projects.
- In addition, governmental agencies had to be consulted to issue research permits and arrange 'field visits' to rural communities. The evaluation team hardly had a say in selecting those communities where data collection was to be carried out. Of course, this severely affected the evaluators' independence and impaired balanced data collection.
- The evaluation mission also did not get civil society perspectives on the development projects and on the issue of natural resource management in the four countries. This was due to a lack of time for the evaluation team to meet civil society representatives as well as due to the projects themselves, which did not make civil society inclusion a major strategic feature of project planning and implementation. A more independent local perspective might have provided valuable insights neglected in official representations of the projects.
- The evaluation team was aware that there were sensitive topics regarding GIZ's partners and the on-going cooperation in a particular country. The evaluators proceeded with a "Do No Harm" approach in order not to undermine the on-going cooperation. The team conducted a communication strategy with its partners that meant that the evaluation team were only allowed to talk to selected contacts, but not to other people. While this appears comprehensible from today's cooperation interests, that approach limited the data collection and insights into challenges the projects faced during implementation.

The limitations related to evaluations in general entailed the following:

- The evaluation team relied on GIZ to support them with logistics on the ground such as office space, transport or translators. Due to the tight schedule (especially

in Cambodia, Thailand, and Vietnam) a preselection of villages for field trips and interview partners for expert interviews was also usually arranged by GIZ. Especially this last process was not always transparent for the evaluators and somewhat affected the independence of the evaluation mission.

- Moreover, this was an ex post evaluation, two and five years after the respective projects had ended. This made it difficult to identify resource persons who had been involved in the projects and to relate existing structures to the former projects. This is valid especially for capacity building projects where results such as enhanced individual or institutional capacities are generally difficult to assess - attributing them to the project from an ex post perspective was all the more difficult for the evaluation team. Therefore, the evaluation needed to rely mostly on estimations of former project staff, involved experts, and respondents from respective institutions to assess the projects' contribution.
- Another implication of an ex post evaluation is that it is one-sided: partners are burdened with efforts in terms of time (and money) to enable the work of the evaluation mission while hardly anything is provided in return besides the vague prospect of having better projects implemented in future. This challenge of including local partners in mutually beneficial ways is all the more salient for ex post evaluations where no immediate improvements in the next phase of a project can be promised. Nonetheless, expectations are easily aroused about new projects by the commissioning party. This asymmetric constellation in an ex post evaluation can easily affect partners' willingness to support an evaluation mission.
- The lack of a counterfactual situation to assess the project effects severely limits the informative value of the evaluation (cf. Chapter 7 for a more detailed discussion).

Finally, the evaluation and the informative value of its results were affected by the approaches taken by the two projects. Their administrative and governance focus often meant that persons who had been involved in the projects were in high positions and difficult to access (cf. Chapter 4.1.3). Focus group discussions with them would have been desirable to bring together the variety of actors and agencies involved, but these were hardly possible as it proved unfeasible to make appointments with such high-level individuals.

5 Results of the evaluation

5.1 Results of the GTZ project

The projects were assessed according to the five OECD-DAC criteria. Assessment of each criterion is based on selected guiding questions with each question being rated separately. Each criterion's final grade is derived according to the weight of the single questions (cf. Annex I 'evaluation grids')

5.1.1 Assessment of relevance

The relevance of the GTZ project was assessed against three main guiding questions that evaluate the project design against its fit with (1) central development issues and (2) national policies and strategies in the partner countries. The project's compliance with German development policy orientation was also considered (3).

(1) The watershed management project addressed main causes of environmental degradation in the Lower Mekong Basin such as water pollution and deforestation. Intermediaries stated that via the project's training activities their capacities relating to sustainable watershed management were enhanced. However, some of them criticised the forestry focus, which is only one of the issues in watershed management. Interview partners also criticised the lack of project funds for the actual implementation of the acquired planning skills which is foreseen in theory in GTZ's seven steps WSM concept (cf. Chapter 3.1.). Action plans for the pilot regions were developed but only partly implemented. Additionally, experience in one single pilot watershed was mostly considered as too unique to be scaled up. This way, the lessons learnt were less relevant for other areas. There were no specific activities that targeted ethnic minorities or women. Thus, no tangible results in gender parity and improvement of the living conditions of ethnic minorities were produced. This puts the two population groups at risk of being excluded from the project's benefits although they play a special role in watershed management in the region.

(2) The project was in line with central topics as set out in the PRSPs in all four countries. It shared objectives with relevant policies and strategies of partner countries and institutions. It directly supports the riparian countries in the implementation of the objectives set in Mekong River Commission's article of agreement, basin development plans as well as strategic plans.

On the downside, the project's focus shifted continuously towards national implementation activities in a limited number of pilot regions along tributaries of the Mekong. Thus the project partly moved out of the MRC's mandate which only covers the main stream and not the river branches in the pilot regions. The new focus

irritated the project partner and the project lost relevance for MRC. On the other hand, experience-based national legislation and institutions are as important for trans-boundary cooperation as the regional component. Furthermore, being the political partner, the MRC had been able to influence the project conception.

(3) The project targets the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) 1 (eradicate extreme poverty and hunger) and 7 (ensure environmental sustainability) and fits very well into the strategies of German bilateral development cooperation. Interview partners agreed that sustainable watershed management helps to reduce poverty in the long run by means of improved planning and policies. Sustainable development and environmental protection are relevant and considered in the project design.

The WSMP's relevance is thereby rated as: good (2).

5.1.2 Assessment of effectiveness

The effectiveness of the GTZ project was mainly assessed by (1) looking at the extent to which the objective of the development measure was achieved and (2) evaluating the decisive reasons why the objective was or was not achieved.

(1) The GTZ project objective was to improve planning and coordination of relevant organisations at national and regional levels. To come to conclusions about the extent to which this objective was achieved, the evaluators developed a set of indicators from those used by the project itself (cf. Annex II 'indicators of the GTZ project'). Indicators measured (a) the integration of watershed management concepts and the replication of key elements, (b) whether coordination forums took place, (c) the integration of gender-sensitised and experience-based information and training products, (d) the formulation of action plans that address central issues of watershed management, (e) beneficial legal frameworks for watershed management planning and coordination, (f) the establishment of mandated task forces or committees to promote WSM.

(a) Concepts of WSM were integrated and implemented in Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam, mostly in the form of information and training products. However, the replication of key elements only took place in two watersheds in Cambodia and Laos. Replication was hindered because the experiences made were often too specific to the pilot area and difficult to transfer to other sites. Also there were hardly any national funds and cooperation with other donors to finance replication activities.

(b) National coordination forums in the form of national working groups were established in all countries. They contributed to awareness raising among the relevant sectors for watershed management. However, at the end of the project they were only still existent in Cambodia and Vietnam, but not in Laos and Thailand. Coordination forums in form of regional consultation meetings and policy dialogues

as well as a final international conference positively influenced planning and coordination.

(c) The project ensured gender sensitivity in their information products and published project experience from all countries except Thailand in a series of manuals and resource materials. The project produced several information and training products that were integrated in a strong network of national and regional training institutions in all four countries.

(d) In all pilot regions, the watershed committees developed watershed management action plans. Central problems were identified and addressed in each watershed. For instance, deteriorating water quality was addressed through awareness raising activities and a waste disposal programme; an increasing rate of deforestation was tackled by land use planning and the assignment of forest conservation areas.

(e) The countries created a beneficial legal framework for improved planning and coordination of watershed management. The WSM approach was adopted in the formulation of the five year plan by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE) in Laos, in the Vietnamese national water resource strategy, and in the code of conduct on watershed management in Cambodia. However, it is difficult to judge the exact extent to which the WSMP and its experience in the pilot watersheds actually influenced these laws and policies.

(f) Watershed committees with specific mandates to promote watershed management operated in Cambodia and Thailand. The institutionalisation of such committees was impeded in Vietnam by a shift of responsibilities between ministries, and in Laos by a disagreement between districts over problems and responsibilities. Instead, task forces were set up.

(2) The achievement of the overall project objective also met with promoting factors and impediments: Firstly, almost all interview partners saw a success factor in human resources, i.e. having the right people in the right positions. For instance in Cambodia, the NWG was chaired by a change-agent who was not only very dedicated and passionate about WSM but also had strong ties with the Prime Minister. Interviewees could not estimate the actual influence this had on policy making and government attention, but the evaluation team supposes a strong effect.

Secondly, interview partners highlighted how a lack of incentives, especially for members of NWG and WSC, might have affected the process towards achieving the project objective. Members of NWG and WSC are also members of other relevant working groups. Since membership is voluntary, the incentive to invest time and energy is relatively small. In this case, the project depended very much on the motivation of individuals.

Thirdly, almost all interview partners across the four riparian states mentioned a shift of mandates for the management of water resources, mostly from land and forestry ministries to ministries of water and natural resources, which were in some cases newly established. This resulted in disputes about responsibilities and resources amongst line ministries. This was said to have slowed down policy advice and the institutionalisation of coordination mechanisms like WSCs. Interview partners attributed the difficulty in reaching consensus to the growing economic importance of water resources in the region.

Moreover, project success was highly dependent on the perception of the importance of watershed issues and national agendas in particular. In this regard, GTZ spent the first years on raising awareness and interest in WSM issues amongst stakeholders. The challenge then was to maintain interest, as watershed management was not considered a top priority on the political agendas. The last phase then saw a focus of activities on sub-national level and awareness for the topic lost momentum at national and regional level.

In summary, 5 of 6 indicators were fully achieved, one partially. The effectiveness of the project is rated: good (2).

5.1.3 Assessment of impact

The assessment of the project's impact includes the extent to which (1) the project contributed to the improvement of watershed management to reach overarching development results, (2) positive changes by the project were replicated and scaled up and (3) unintended positive and negative overarching development results were generated. (4) The evaluators also assessed the extent to which poverty reduction and gender empowerment were achieved by the project.

The project impacts would materialise only in the long run as an effect of improved planning in the form of national policies and strategies and through the replication of WSM approaches by national programmes and donor-funded projects. According to the results model, the improvement of WSM should serve the more sustainable use of water resources and hence result in the avoidance of potential conflicts over access to these. Immediate improvements should be effected in the fields of forestry and agriculture, especially by establishing consultative mechanisms for infrastructure development. As agriculture is the main source of livelihood for the majority of the rural population in the Lower Mekong Basin, the project impacts should contribute to more income generation at target group level.

(1) Positive impacts resulted from improved watershed management. In all riparian countries, capacities of local institutions were increased and stakeholder dialogues strengthened, which in turn contributed to improved planning. Villagers learned about

negative effects of deforestation on water quality and quantity and how to protect forests and water. Additionally, communes became more aware about tourism and business activities and their influence on water quality. With regard to tourism and business, a new regulation has been established on environmental protection and nature conservation in Laos' pilot watershed. Bringing together stakeholders, i.e. all relevant ministries and authorities as well as civil society and business, was perceived as an important step.

(2) These effects could not be scaled up because replication took place only partially due to limited finances. As mentioned before, the knowledge gained was difficult to transfer from one watershed to another because the problems varied in the watersheds. The only way stakeholders from different watersheds could exchange ideas and learn from one another was through workshops and meetings. Unfortunately, these were too short and took place too irregularly to effectively exchange experience: the explanation and understanding of the different situations and problems in the respective watersheds simply took time.

Also, much educational material that was to contribute to scaling-up was not easily accessible and contents were often too complex for the local level. The scaling-up of awareness raising activities through publication materials was impeded by the fact that they were in English and mostly aimed at technical staff with the relevant language skills. Therefore the general population was only able to learn through local authorities. This made them dependent on those authorities, which did not always have the capacity to pass on the knowledge and skills they had acquired.

Watershed management requires long-term funding, but no inherent financing mechanisms were installed during the project. To materialise the impact of GTZ WSMP required an extensive approach and long-term financing. With the different capacities and political systems of the LMB countries on the one hand, and with the limited time and budget of the project on the other, it was difficult for GTZ WSMP to contribute to impact objectives in full. Considering the short period of time since the end of the project, an impact of the GTZ WSMP in the whole region cannot be seen and contributions found by the evaluation mission were limited to target groups in the pilot watersheds.

(3) An example of a positive unintended impact of the project in Thailand was the return of (internal) migrants. They had been moved from the river banks to safer places because of regular floods. Since GTZ influenced the building of reservoirs and water pump stations, flooding was reduced and former villagers started migrating back. Families were reunited and thanks to the improved water infrastructure they could use the land more efficiently: They could harvest more from the same area of

land and were able to sell rice and fish, which assured them a more stable income than before.

(4) The WSMP did not contribute to poverty reduction in financial terms, but did improve the general situation of the population in the watersheds. The WSMP contributed to an improvement of living conditions in the pilot watersheds. Before, people had little knowledge of how to improve their livelihoods. The awareness raising strengthened the self-help capacity of local communities which resulted not only in a general increase of self-confidence and self-determination of the communities, but also led, to some extent, to a changing interaction between the communities and the local administration. This in turn allowed for a fast and effective response to local challenges and thereby contributed to improved watershed management. However, a significant critique was that the GTZ WSMP did not promote any alternatives to substitute the income sources of poor people whose livelihoods largely depended on natural resources exploitation.

The overall rating of impact is satisfactory (3).

5.1.4 Assessment of efficiency

The assessment of efficiency is a measure of the degree to which the resources invested in a development measure are appropriate compared to the outputs and results achieved. It (1) rates production efficiency with regard to the composition of modes of delivery and the structure of the measure, (2) looks at the extent of coordination and complementarity with the project partner and (3) other donors.

(1) More than 50% of the project finances were spent on personnel and for organising capacity development activities. However, the WSMP often trained and hired national and international consultants rather than using local staff from national working groups or watershed committees. This made the national partners dependent on external experts during the project's implementation: when the experts left, they took the knowledge and skills with them. Concentrating on the project partners would have given more ownership to the national structures and it would have increased the efficiency of the project. Additionally, interview partners had wished for a stronger focus on the local level and implementation in order to directly apply the skills they learned during the project and in order to achieve better results on the impact level.

(2) The WSMP built up a parallel structure: on the one hand by employing GTZ staff in the form of country coordinators in all countries and the above mentioned international and national consultants instead of giving those tasks to MRC and national staff; on the other hand by operating in national pilot areas on tributary rivers that are outside of the MRC's mandate for the main stream. That way, the MRC's role

in the project became increasingly marginalised. However, a change of the project partner in order to overcome that situation would not have been an efficient option due to high transaction costs. But choosing to set up pilot areas in the few existing trans-boundary watersheds instead of purely national watersheds could have been an option for more efficient regional cooperation.

(3) The project closely consulted and cooperated with other German development projects on the implementation of the WSM approach and focused on KfW, InWEnt, and DED. The most important cooperation took place with KfW in the pilot watershed in Nam Ton, in Lao PDR. The KfW cooperation project was built on the organisational structures that had already been supported by WSMP, with the newly established Water Resources and Environment Agency (WREA) as project partner. KfW covered 90% of the project expenses and contributed 10% to the coordination tasks in MRC. Moreover, GTZ closely cooperated with InWEnt in jointly preparing the capacity building on the WSM approach. The WSMP was complementary to other donor programmes on related topics like agriculture and natural resource management. They communicated their objectives and actions to other donors working in watershed management like DANIDA and FAO.

The overall rating of efficiency is therefore: satisfactory (3).

5.1.5 Assessment of sustainability

The assessment of sustainability asks whether the positive results are durable. It was measured against the degree to which (1) results remain after the end of the project, (2) the concept is spread (3) elements of the approach are replicated as well as (4) which threats to sustainability exist.

The produced information services 'Resource Kit' and 'MekongInfo' were regarded as very useful and are still in use today in all four countries. They have been translated into Lao, Thai, Vietnamese, and partially into Khmer. They have also been integrated in curricula of various academic and training institutions. However, they need to be updated and fully translated.

Training courses given during the project were very important and contributed to reaching a common understanding on watershed management and increased capacity and knowledge of local institutions. Villagers became more aware of the environment which led to better conservation of natural resources which still carries on today.

(2) While watershed management was not an entirely new concept, the concept introduced by the GTZ contributed to a new, broader view. Elements of WSM were adopted in different policies and decrees in Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam. Continued implementation of the WSM approach on the other hand is difficult due to a lack of

national funds and due to many other development priorities of the partner countries, e.g. infrastructural development, health, or education.

Interviewed experts have recommended and emphasised that WSM should involve both a bottom-up and top-down approach. That means that local needs are communicated to higher levels and national institutional and political frameworks are adapted to deliver adequate and needed services (for natural resource users in watersheds). More decentralisation and ownership, as well as increased local funding may allow more actual implementation of activities derived from the WSM approach. Nevertheless, improvements in watershed management can be attributed to the GTZ project, and the concept of water resources management is broadly anchored in these countries.

(3) Replication of the whole approach took place in Laos and Cambodia. Additionally, the WSMP concept has been adopted by a Lao-Thai-German trilateral cooperation initiative in Laos. Replication of central elements like the watershed committees is also carried out in Thailand. On the downside, watershed committees and national working groups as well as local learning centres are hardly active anymore. WSC members are unpaid, which means they must have a strong motivation to participate, which was and still is the case in Cambodia and Thailand.

(4) A major threat to sustainability is that WSM is highly donor driven. This is due to the fact that the project did not install any internal financing mechanisms. The dependency on international donors and funding from the international community is not sustainable and contravenes the principles of Accra and Paris, in particular for ownership.

Apart from this, increasing investments in hydropower development threaten the sustainability of the project's results through their social and environmental impacts. Hydropower has become a major strategy to meet the energy demands and is seen as an avenue for poverty alleviation by governments in the region. However, the governments face the challenge of developing their economies while at the same time ensuring the livelihoods of their people. Hydropower dams fundamentally alter river ecosystems, often with negative impacts on livelihoods and biodiversity. As over 75% of rural households in the Lower Mekong Basin are involved in fisheries, both for their own consumption and for generating income, any impact on the ecological balance of the river also threatens the sustainability of those aquatic resources millions of people depend on. Trade and tourism are also on the increase, with a doubling of the volume of cargo moved on the river between China and Thailand since 2004. The development of tourism in a non-sustainable manner is a threat to the Mekong River. These developments in the region will have an immense effect on the ecology of the region and threaten the livelihoods of millions of people.

All in all, the development effectiveness of the project is positive to date. With a high degree of probability it will decrease significantly but will remain positive. Sustainability is therefore: satisfactory (3).

Table 5: The overall rating for the entire GTZ project is satisfactory (3)

Criterion	Rating for criterion
Relevance	2
Effectiveness	2
Impact	3
Efficiency	3
Sustainability	3
Overall rating of the project	3

5.2 Results of the InWEnt project

5.2.1 Assessment of relevance

The relevance of the InWEnt project was assessed against three main guiding questions that evaluate the project design against its compliance with (1) central development issues, (2) national policies and strategies in the partner countries and (3) project compliance with German development policy orientation.

(1) By aiming at the improvement of watershed management, the InWEnt project "Potentials of rural areas in the Lower Mekong countries" targeted major regional challenges such as flooding and negative impacts of agriculture extension. The evaluation shows that the InWEnt project addressed country-specific problems by training mid-level professionals in methods for conflict resolution and by strengthening participation of the rural population in political decision-making processes. In accordance with the BMZ country strategies, the project worked towards poverty reduction by improving the management of natural resources that form the livelihoods of the extremely poor. However, the project lacked activities that would specifically address gender parity and therefore ran the risk to exclude women.

(2) The project generally worked in accordance with policies and strategies of the three partner countries (Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam) and the institutions involved covered the following topics:

- watershed management,
- food security,
- sustainable use of land, water and bio-resources,
- rural support and service,
- public participation in decision making processes.

All topics except the last one are in line with respective national Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers. Especially the issue of combining the "management of natural resources" with "poverty reduction" that was mentioned above supports the objectives of the partner countries' Poverty Reduction Strategies. The riparian countries' common goals regarding the management of the Mekong River are materialised in the MRC's strategic plans. Here, regional benefit-sharing and trans-boundary alignment of rules and regulations play an important role. In accordance with the principles of integrated trans-boundary watershed management, the project satisfied national requirements and adhered to the MRC's "Mekong River Integrated Training Strategy and Programme" from 2003.

(3) It was found that cross-cutting issues like poverty reduction or the sustainable use of natural resources that form part of the strategies of German bilateral development cooperation and the BMZ were considered in the planning and implementation of the project. This does not hold true for the cross-cutting issue of gender parity. Furthermore, the project worked towards MDG 1 (Eradicate extreme hunger and poverty) and 7 (Ensure environmental sustainability) by addressing management of natural resources and poverty reduction.

The relevance of the InWEnt project is therefore rated as good (2).

5.2.2 Assessment of effectiveness

The effectiveness of the InWEnt project was mainly assessed by (1) looking at the extent to which the objective of the development measure was achieved and (2) evaluating the decisive reasons why the objective was or was not achieved.

The InWEnt project objective was to qualify decision-makers and mid-level professionals to strengthen the capacities of institutions working on watershed management in the Lower Mekong Basin. To come to conclusions about the extent to which this objective was achieved, the evaluators developed a set of indicators (cf. Annex Indicators). Indicators measured

- adoption of political and institutional guidelines,
- implementation of strategies and methods of sustainable watershed management (SWSM) by national partner organisations and at target group level,
- application of strategies and methods of SWSM by training participants,

- appreciation of the International Leadership Training (ILT),
- active engagement with and participation of target groups.

(1) Guidelines for the sustainable use of watersheds were passed in Cambodia and Vietnam during the project and the evaluation team considers that the InWEnt project's input facilitated their development. Moreover, it is plausible to say that InWEnt contributed to the implementation of strategies and methods of SWSM in close cooperation with the GTZ's Watershed Management Project.

The training provided by InWEnt was considered to be useful by interview partners, especially in the case of close coordination either with the GTZ project or with training organisations, and participants were able to apply strategies and methods of SWSM in their work environment. The ILT was also considered valuable for individual participants and home institutions by most respondents. However, positive effects at organisational level were diminished by occasional inadequate selection of participants, insufficient agreements concerning the return of trainees to their employers, and the lack of a local support structure for alumni.

(2) Training courses were successful and had mostly strengthening effects on home institutions when InWEnt cooperated closely with them and coordinated training and participant selection. This assured adequacy of training contents to individual and organisational needs. Moreover, continuous cooperation with those organisations and staff significantly enhanced capacity development. Many respondents commented that alumni networks were of significant use to them as well as to their organisations, because they provided continuous support and enabled exchange among former trainees.

Several trainers explicitly lauded the unique InWEnt training methods and highlighted their participatory, interactive and 'learner-centred' characteristics. Also, they appreciated the follow-up monitoring of whether the results were useful and could be applied by participants.

The InWEnt approach focused on individuals and their learning effects, but neglected whether their organisational environment would allow them to actually apply the acquired knowledge. There was too little post-training support for participants and no systemic consultation of organisations to assure that change management could actually take place.

Consequently, the effectiveness of the project is rated: satisfactory (3).

5.2.3 Assessment of impact

The impact of the project was measured against the extent to which the project contributed to (1) positive effects at impact level, (2) structural changes, and replication or scaling-up efforts, (3) the extent to which target groups were reached.

The intended impacts of the project include a sustainable use of natural resources, actualisation of economic potentials, employment promotion, and poverty reduction. These changes were to be achieved by improving the management of watersheds, including consideration of people's livelihoods.

(1) It was found that the InWEnt project contributed to differentiated training approaches that target different levels of intermediaries and villagers. Interview partners highlighted the fact that tailor-made training increased the awareness on environmental protection and a sustainable use of natural resources. Farmers and local officials confirmed that this had led to improved management of their natural resources.

The evaluators expect further impacts at target group level to materialise in the future. This is especially the case for Cambodia, where increased participation in decision-making processes and development planning was identified as an effect of the project. This is expected to bring about strategies that are in line with the needs and livelihoods of the rural population and which in the long run will contribute to poverty alleviation, actualisation of economic potentials, employment promotion and a more sustainable use of natural resources.

A major external driving factor for poverty reduction of the InWEnt project is the rapid economic growth in the region. Although economic growth has positive effects on the poverty level, it often conflicts with the sustainable use of natural resources. The findings, however, show that the InWEnt project lacked a systematic approach to account for the correlation between economic growth and sustainable use of natural resources.

(2) The project achieved some broad impact through the further use and replication of its concepts and approaches since institutes and non-governmental organisations in Cambodia and Vietnam integrated parts of the developed training products into their curricula. The Lutheran World Federation, for example, used InWEnt materials to train its staff, but also to carry out training courses at target group level. The project cooperated closely with the Mekong Institute in Thailand, which facilitated training courses and also integrated parts of the training products into its curricula.

Through its strong cooperation with academic and training institutions, the InWEnt project made an active and systematic contribution towards scaling-up. It was found that institutions spread materials and concepts, thus creating multiplication effects.

Furthermore, several actors (KfW in Laos, Ministry of Land and Forest in Cambodia) were found to replicate the integrated watershed management approach that was followed by the GTZ and InWEnt projects in other watersheds. Several respondents have highlighted the fact that the concept of integrated watershed management and related strategies were introduced in the work of ministries, the Mekong River Commission, and its National Committees. Therefore, it is expected that concepts and materials that were co-developed by InWEnt were disseminated and applied beyond the scope of academic and training institutions.

(3) The evaluators found relevant improvements at target group level and in the capacities of training institutions. Through the dissemination and implementation of concepts on watershed management and rural development, scaling-up effects and broad impacts were achieved. The situation of the 'poorest of the poor' and women are arguably improved through better management of natural resources; however, this effect only materialises in the long run as the 'poorest of the poor' and women were not directly reached by the project.

Respondents confirmed that the project contributed towards overcoming structural poverty through increasing participation of the rural population in public decisions. It was found that the rural population has more influence on development planning and can more effectively claim its needs vis-à-vis authorities.

Based on these findings, the overall impact of the project is rated: satisfactory (3).

5.2.4 Assessment of efficiency

The assessment of efficiency is a measure of the degree to which the resources invested in a development measure are appropriate compared to the outputs and results achieved. (1) It rates production efficiency with regard to alternative solutions, (2) looks at the extent of coordination and complementarity with other donors and (3) assesses if results were achieved at the correct time.

(1) The production efficiency of the InWEnt project was suboptimal. Judging by the effectiveness of the project's various components and the budget spent, alternative solutions could have made for greater efficiency, especially in the case of the International Leadership Training. This one-year training course was conducted in Germany and instructed in German.

It is important to note that the International Leadership Training took up nearly 65%⁹ of the project's financial resources, reaching 36 participants, with an inadequate selection of participants. On the other hand, short term training courses, for instance,

⁹ BMZ had made the provision to InWEnt that this large part of the budget should go into ILT.

reached more than 3,500 participants with a portion of 6% of the budget. This comparison disregards the difference in content and objective of both training courses. Also, it cannot be denied that personal benefits of the training are mentioned much more by ILT participants than short term training participants. But comparing the effects of ILT and those of short term training, the dissemination of the concepts among institutions could have had a much broader scope by applying less expensive training methods in a more extensive fashion.

It was found that cooperation with training institutions in the region has shown considerable impact and resulted in a broad and sustainable dissemination of the watershed management concept. The evaluation team considers long-term cooperation with these institutions a more cost-effective alternative to ILT.

(2) Harmonisation and alignment of the project was good. Regarding the coordination with other German development measures, GTZ was by far the most important partner of the InWEnt project. InWEnt's lack of local administrative and technical structures was deemed a hindering factor for success of the project. The nature of the cooperation between the InWEnt project and GTZ, which coordinated most of the implementation on the ground, was however deemed excellent in most responses. The communication between the two projects was facilitated by a common ground in the form of BMZ requirements, such as sector and country strategy papers.

The cooperation with the *Deutscher Entwicklungsdienst* (DED) was described as constructive by ex-DED and InWEnt personnel alike. DED personnel were consulted with regards to the design of training courses on food security in Northern Laos, for instance. The cooperation with DED also relied on the common basis of BMZ requirements, and cooperation agreements were reached swiftly, and often without prior personal meetings.

Another German partner to the InWEnt project was the *Deutsche Welthungerhilfe* (DWHH). InWEnt financed training on food security that was implemented by DWHH. DWHH covered different partners and different provinces than the German governmental organisations, thus increasing the scale of the InWEnt project. According to the project progress reports, DWHH made considerable financial and conceptual contributions to the joint training events.

The intention of cooperating with World Bank, Asian Development Bank and EU remained unrealised. In the end, the lack of coordination of the InWEnt project with other donors did not have any negative consequences as far as this evaluation shows. However, potential synergies with other donors working in the water sector could have been lost as a result.

Component 5 which was concerned with empowering the local population was carried out in cooperation with LWF. The cooperation went well, according to all three

project progress reports. In contrast to procedures with the German partners, formal agreements were drafted and signed after a personal meeting had taken place. These agreements included detailed descriptions of target groups, contents and cost for the trainings.

(3) The three-year project duration was rather short to achieve significant and lasting changes on institutional or system level. The discussion of effectiveness and the alternatives discussed suggest that the timing was not the main problem. However, since the objective as well as its impacts were neither quantified nor equipped with time-bound indicators it is hard to say if a different timing would have suited the project better.

The overall efficiency rating for the InWEnt project is satisfactory (3).

5.2.5 Assessment of sustainability

The sustainability of the project was measured against the degree to which (1) results remain after the end of the project, (2) knowledge is spread and results are replicated, (3) networks were established and are active today, (4) the requirements such as exit strategies are met.

(1) The project's results at the individual level continue to be the most visible. Managerial skills and specialised knowledge acquired in the training have proved sustainable in various ways. Especially alumni from the International Leadership Training course have been promoted and were entrusted with more responsibilities. Most of them attributed their promotion directly to the project. They still apply the acquired knowledge and skills in their daily work (e.g. research, teaching and consulting, project management, international communication and collaboration). Only the acquired German language skills proved non-sustainable as none of the interviewed alumni had the opportunity to speak German in their home country or work context.

At the organisational level, many alumni acted as disseminators. By carrying the "InWEnt philosophy" into their organisations, many interview partners saw a direct contribution of the project to organisational development. However, only about 70% of all ILT participants returned to their employers (Warich 2008; Raetzell, L. et al. 2010). The lack of institutionalised funding necessary for the implementation of their transfer projects, and also a lack of coaching were mentioned as major reasons for insufficient transfer and sustainability of the knowledge acquired in the ILT. Due to the lack of direct capacity building activities at the organisational level and missing support after participants returned, the evaluation team rated the sustainability of the project's results at organisational level as limited.

(2) It was found that training participants have since actively shared their knowledge at local, district, national and even regional levels through teaching and facilitating. Also, training materials are broadly in use by partners and have been further disseminated. A positive impact can be observed in higher education, as concepts and methods promoted by the project were integrated into the curriculum of universities in Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia and Thailand.

The interview partners' explanation for the success and sustainability of the methods and concepts introduced by the project are that they were innovative and different from the methods and concepts then in use. Taking into account that one of the interviewed participants alone taught knowledge promoted by the project to 500 - 700 students and workshop participants, the evaluators assume a scaling-up and the further dissemination of the methods and concepts introduced by the project.

(3) A sustainable result of the project can be also seen in the presence of active networks, promoting dialogue and cooperation between individuals and institutions, which was considered an important step of IWSM by the GTZ project (cf. Chapter 3.1). All interview partners attested that they are in continuous contact with or at least have access to a network of former participants and trainers.

The established networks are used for the exchange of professional knowledge and experience, information on conferences and publications, jobs, coordination and cooperation and informal socialising. It can be differentiated between informal and formal networks. Formal networks are for instance used by the GIZ to keep contact with InWEnt alumni, to recruit resource persons for current capacity building activities, and to disseminate information.

The regulations required for accessing funds for alumni networking events changed with the fusion¹⁰ of GTZ, InWEnt and DED in 2011. A former alumni coordinator had resigned due to the lack of support from GIZ and the increased bureaucracy she had to go through to receive funding for alumni events.

(4) The InWEnt project did not have a formulated exit strategy. Nevertheless, there are some indications that the project did take planned steps for the continuation of its desired results, including the support for networks and follow-up workshops for participants as well as institutionalised feedback mechanisms with partner organisation. However, InWEnt showed no continuous presence beyond its training activities, for example by means of economic support or coaching, thereby missing important efforts towards long term sustainability.

¹⁰ In 2011, the GIZ was established through a merger of the three German organisations Deutscher Entwicklungsdienst (DED), Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ), and Internationale Weiterbildung und Entwicklung (InWEnt).

Furthermore, it was found that the International Leadership Training course lacked internationally recognised academic certificates or credit points. This neglected the fact that in the participants' home countries academic qualifications are not only indispensable for careers but are also of personal importance in terms of recognition in hierarchically structured cultures.

Nevertheless, the evaluation results show that there are human, organisational and political capacities and resources available for maintaining the results achieved. Most interview partners successfully carry on the project's capacity building approach, several organisations foster positive developments and cooperation, and ministries in all three partner countries promoted and enabled changes in legal frameworks in the field of watershed management. Concerning the financial resources, however, differences were noted between and within the countries. The lack of institutionalised funding clearly puts the sustainability of the project's outcomes at risk.

The overall sustainability rating for the InWEnt project is satisfactory (3).

Table 6: The overall rating for the entire InWEnt project is satisfactory (3)

Criterion	Rating for criterion
Relevance	2
Effectiveness	3
Impact	3
Efficiency	3
Sustainability	3
Overall rating of the project	3

6 Recommendations

6.1 Recommendations GTZ

The following recommendations are directed at GIZ and project partners for institutional learning effects in terms of conceptualisation and knowledge management for future programmes involving regional cooperation, watershed management and capacity development.

Concerning the regional approach of the two projects, not only the language barrier made the regional dialogue very difficult, but also differences in the understanding of concepts such as SWSM. Future regional cooperation projects are recommended to put **enough time and effort into reaching a consensus with the project partners from the different partner countries about fundamental concepts**. Good practice of the WSMP was to prolong the initial phase until common understanding was reached. It is advisable to use simple words and clear definitions and to assure comprehension by regularly asking the counterparts to separately define their understanding. This becomes especially relevant in the cultural context of Southeast Asian partner countries, where ambiguities and uncertainties are often tolerated for reasons of modesty, politeness, and/or hierarchy.

Concerning the implementation phase it is urged to further facilitate the **translation and regular updating of important products** of the projects (e.g. the Resource Kit established by the GTZ project or the rural development training manual from the InWEnt project). By translating the products into the various national languages and into those of ethnic minorities, the scope of impact can be broadened considerably. By updating materials on a regular basis, their sustainable and effective use would be promoted. The evaluation team therefore encourages the Mekong River Commission to ensure an update of the Resource Kit, and encourages MRC's Information and Knowledge Management Programme to monitor and continuously update the MekongInfo website. Regarding the InWEnt project's rural development training manual, local GIZ staff should safeguard maintenance, possibly in cooperation with former InWEnt partner organisations which still use the manual.

The **four level approach** of involving the local, sub-national, national and regional levels in Integrated Watershed Management is vital for success. The GTZ regional approach was laudable, but it was criticised that people received training on planning and management but were not able to directly apply acquired skills. Implementation at local level was not a main objective of the development measure, and it lacked funding. The evaluation team recommends transferring such activities to other cooperation partners in order to ensure their success and implementation as well as

to guarantee that intermediaries can put their strategies into action. An example of such implementation is the cooperation with KfW in the Nam Ton watershed in Laos. In order to overcome dependency on external funding/donor support, the evaluation team recommends a more sustainable approach that incorporates the **integration of inherent and innovative funding mechanisms** into planning tools. Payment for environmental services (PES) could be a suitable approach to address central development issues and set incentives for environmental conservation at the same time. The GTZ project had taken PES into consideration in the training materials. In Vietnam, PES was applied by MARD while in Cambodia, GTZ supported an NGO in the instalment of PES – but more attention ought to be given to the implementation of such services.

Women and ethnic minorities were not specifically targeted by the development measure, which put them at risk of being further excluded. Since IWSM encompasses agriculture and water, where both women and minorities play a very important role, their inclusion would have been all the more important (cf. Chapter 2.1). Due to the often remote location of ethnic minorities they were repeatedly excluded from local awareness raising events. Furthermore, the project did not provide any alternative incentives to change traditional practices that have a negative impact on the environment (e.g. slash and burn agriculture). Therefore it is strongly recommended that future SWSM projects specifically **include vulnerable population groups** as a target group and tailor activities accordingly in the planning and implementation of the development measure, as well as promoting viable alternative sources of livelihood.

Special attention must be given to accommodating a balanced approach between top down and **bottom up policy making**. The GTZ watershed management project did not focus on decentralisation and involving the local level; it conducted training events and used sensitisation measures at the national, province and district levels to develop beneficial institutional and legal frameworks. However, the evaluation team recommends that in future development measures it should be ensured that advocacy potential at local level is increased; a bottom up approach ought to be structurally included and grass-roots' experience must be integrated in the policy making process. This can involve inviting decision makers from sub-national and national levels to communes in order to discuss local needs.

It is encouraged to develop action plans in a participatory approach involving all relevant stakeholders. Positive examples were seen in Vietnam, where stakeholders from hydroelectric power plants were invited to participate in discussions with locals. As a result, all stakeholders agreed on a common water use regulation that is still in place today. Also in Laos, where tourism strongly affects watershed management,

restaurant and guesthouse owners were invited to discussions with local farmers and fishermen about environmental problems and possible solutions to be included in the action plans. It is therefore encouraged to foster and maintain such participatory approaches and to **include, whenever possible, civil society and the private sector** along with government agencies and public authorities.

In order to ensure that conveyed knowledge remains “in the system” and is used in a sustainable manner, the focus when selecting training participants should be on government staff. As soon as trained freelance consultants change to another project they take their knowledge with them. Another reason to focus on government staff is to foster and maintain **ownership** of the development measure. Interview partners at the national level complained about not feeling really involved in the development measure as they only met to talk and often did not know what else was happening. In order to increase the ownership and sustainability it is recommended that activities ought to involve government staff as much as possible instead of employing GIZ staff or freelance consultants.

Strong leadership and the motivation of change agents were success factors in the GTZ project. This was the case in Cambodia with the chairman of the national working group, and also the governor of Siem Reap as head of the watershed committee, who both showed strong commitment to promoting watershed management. Interview partners reported that government employee salaries in all four countries are very low compared to the private sector. The GTZ project constructed a setup where members of national working groups and watershed committees had to do their work free of charge on top of their daily tasks. In order **not to overburden project partners**, it is recommended to **use existing national structures** as far as possible. For instance in Vietnam, the national working group already existed and the members knew one another and had a strong philosophy of working together.

The GTZ watershed management project received major criticism for creating a parallel structure to the one of its political partner, the Mekong River Commission. Interviewees criticised GTZ's practice of setting up national offices and employing its own staff rather than channelling their activities and budget through the MRC. In addition, the project shifted its focus towards a national approach and implementation strategy with pilot areas. But the MRC is mandated to operate on issues around the main Mekong stream at regional level but not at national level. This led to criticism by other donors. It is therefore recommended that a similar project should choose a **political partner that has both a regional and a national mandate**. Because no such organisation existed in the case of the GTZ project, a regional intervention could be carried out with four national partners instead of one regional partner.

6.2 Recommendations InWEnt

Concerning capacity development, several methodological lessons can be learned especially from the InWEnt project. Its activities showed satisfactory and sustainable results on the individual level, but effects at the organisational and the system levels proved limited. The evaluation findings suggest that InWEnt's approach focused too much on individual capacity building and neglected the institutional environment where individuals were supposed to apply their enhanced capacities for the promotion of positive institutional change. This is especially valid for the International Leadership Training, where the central strategic feature for strengthening institutions, the 'transfer project', was often not carried out after the participants returned to their home countries and home institutions due to a lack of assistance. The following major success factors should be thoroughly considered in planning and implementation of future long term training courses: **Continuous coaching opportunities** should be provided, e.g. through a constant contact person in the country, or through follow-up visits and international networks. These should be complemented by **financial support for the transfer phase**, which should be confirmed by binding agreements with the home institutions at the stage of selection. The institutions' share of the costs of the transfer project should also be formally agreed in advance. A high-level representative of each home institution should **warrant a secure position for a training participant on their return**. Ideally, incentives like promotion prospects are offered to the trained staff in order to enhance their motivation to return and engage in their former field. These should be discussed and negotiated between GIZ and the institutions.

Several interview partners criticised that InWEnt did not provide credit points for the one-year International Leadership Training course. Credit points are highly valued as entry points to further academic courses which many respondents considered an important asset for successful careers in government as well as in the private sector. Future long-term training courses are therefore advised to **orientate towards academic standards. Awarding credit points** through direct cooperation with local universities could be considered.

When comparing the effects of the ILT with those of the short-term training events, it seems that the dissemination of the concepts among institutions could have reached a much broader scale by applying **less expensive training methods in a more extensive fashion**. Furthermore it can be argued that a greater effect on institutions could have been achieved by training a critical mass of employees from few carefully selected institutions, instead of training only one or two employees from diverse institutions for nearly a year. Therefore different formats and lengths of training courses should generally be considered and weighed against each other in the

specific thematic, cultural and political context. Alternatives mentioned by the interview partners include **on-the-job training in the partner countries**, combined with **internships** in Germany and more **short-term and flexible training courses**, adapted to current issues of the partner institution.

Networks were encouraged and supported by the projects as sustainable structures for communication and the exchange of professional knowledge and experience. They have proven valuable for the alumni. Capacity development projects are advised to **further apply the instrument of networking and pay special attention to usability, taking slow internet access into account.**

The cooperation with central regional and national capacity building institutions showed considerable impact and resulted in a sustainable dissemination of concepts such as Integrated Watershed Management as well as of participatory methods in the Mekong Region. Partner institutions provided skilled personnel, local organisational structures and important insights into cultural and political framework conditions. **These valuable resources and capacities available in the partner countries should be further supported, synergies used and long-term cooperation encouraged.** This can be supported by the continuous use and updating of networks between the GIZ, the alumni qualified in the respective area by the two projects, and the partner institutions. In this way communication can be upheld and personnel as well as partner organisations can be recruited.

7 Lessons learnt

This part on lessons learnt serves as an important aspect of the evaluation, which can help other evaluators and development projects to learn from best practice and experience. A good practice and lesson learnt at the beginning was the workshop carried out after the arrival in Laos. This way the evaluation team and mission were personally presented to key persons and important information and valuable hints were collected. Moreover the early networking opportunity proved very useful in terms of support and new contacts for the phase of data collection.

Persons familiar with both the projects and their relations and the cultural context were particularly valuable to the evaluators. They gave advice concerning challenges and chances of the evaluation and helped the evaluation team to develop a communications strategy. Applying the “do-no-harm” approach, it was agreed on how certain “conflictive” people and sensitive topics should be best approached so as not to cause any damage. Thus, one lesson learnt is to identify and actively address such potential resource persons. Together, a communication strategy should be formulated. In Southeast Asian countries open criticism is not common and so this strategy should also consider how critical remarks concerning the projects can be collected without breaching cultural norms of politeness.

Moreover the evaluation team learnt about the importance of how it introduces itself and its mission. The introductory sentences influenced how openly interview partners were willing to talk about their experiences with the projects. Thus the introduction should not be underestimated as it decides on how trustworthy, independent and professional the evaluators are perceived by the interview partners. A good practice was to emphasise that the evaluation team does not form part of the GIZ and that it aims at an external view on the projects in order to formulate recommendations for future projects on similar topics in different regions. However, it so happened that accompanying GIZ staff then introduced themselves as GIZ, which challenged the trustworthiness of our introduction. Thus, where possible, the introduction should be presented or discussed with all accompanying persons beforehand. Using a flyer the evaluation team emphasised its professional background and the role and experience of the SLE as a successful research and consultancy centre. This is especially relevant in Southeast Asian countries, where seniority and hierarchy are decisive cultural factors with potential influence on the interview results. Concerning the ex post character of the evaluation, the team members found themselves in the uncomfortable situation of collecting information which would not be of direct benefit for the interviewed partners. In several situations interview partners expressed expectations directed at the evaluation team, which was perceived as being representatives of the German development cooperation. It is therefore important to

also inform about the functions of the evaluation in the introduction in order to avoid raising false hopes. As the interview partner's knowledge of English was not sufficient in many cases, the evaluation team was dependent on translation during some interviews. Preparing the translators for their task, it was very important to introduce them not only to the content of the projects, e.g. important definitions and technical terms, but also the intended strategy and methodology of data collection, e.g. which information is especially valuable or sensitive and how should this be approached during the interview.

During data collection it was very helpful to use visualisation in order to provide a common basis which could be referred to throughout the interview or focus group discussion. The evaluation team worked with a timeline (on large flipchart paper with marker pens) to visualize the time-span during which the projects took place. This proved an important tool, especially as orientation in time and differentiation between projects proved difficult for most interview partners. The timeline helped to ensure that the interview partners talked about the two projects actually being evaluated and not later or recent GIZ projects. Moreover the visualisation of the development of the major problems during the project implementation phase by graphs was very useful. Referring to certain deviations of the graphs, the evaluators were able to ask for reasons for the development of project-related problems (cf. Chapter 1.1.3). However, the evaluators were confronted with one unexpected challenge in Thailand, where they have a different calculation of time (Buddhist calendar). Thus a lesson learnt is to test symbols, graphics and visualisation techniques with a small control sample to ensure their validity and reliability.

Another challenge concerning the methodology was that the projects did not provide SMART¹¹ indicators and it proved difficult to define new SMART indicators in the preparation phase, in which the in-depth analysis of the projects was not completed. Ideally the evaluation team would stipulate indicators at a time when there is already enough familiarity with the projects to furnish the indicators with figures and precise specifications but still enough time to collect sufficient data to assess the achievement of those indicators. At this stage the evaluation team should also identify and agree upon central questions and a systematic structure for data collection. This should be oriented at the requirements of the final report and the expectations of the contracting agency. The evaluation team made use of evaluation grids which were developed according to the guiding question for each of the five DAC criteria. These provided a basis for consistent collection, analysis and rating of the data. Thereby the integrity and transparency of the evaluation results can be secured.

¹¹ specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-bound.

The evaluation team was dependent on logistical support from local GIZ staff. On the one hand this was necessary as the task of evaluating two projects in four countries on four levels in a limited time was very challenging and the team would not have been able to organise the same amount of field visits and appointments on its own. On the other hand this put the independency and transparency of the evaluation methodology at risk. The field trips were mainly organised by the GIZ offices in the respective countries, which automatically meant that the villages the team visited and the people the team talked to were pre-selected. The selection criteria remained unclear to the evaluation team. For a more independent and external view, the evaluation team would have needed to ask other development agencies or civil society organisations for advice and support concerning the selection of villages and the creation of counterfactual situations. However, in Laos and Vietnam it was also the high formal requests and strict official supervision which made independence nearly impossible. These circumstances reflect the reality of conducting evaluations in Southeast Asia, which makes it difficult to keep an evaluation independent under such conditions.

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Annex

Annex I: Evaluation grids GTZ project

DAC Criterion 1:	Relevance
Description:	On the basis of facts and figures, describe and assess the compliance of the development measure with the overarching policies and strategies of the partner country, especially sector strategies: its compliance with the needs of the partner institution; the suitability of measures for the target groups, also with regard to gender; complementarity with measures conducted by the international community, and compliance with the directives and guidelines of the commissioning party and GIZ.
Guiding question:	Are we doing the right thing?

Caclulation of rating of criterion:	2,48
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Guiding Question	Weight	Sub guiding question	Rating (1-6)	Justification, comments
To what extent is the development measure suitably designed to address central development issues for the partner country and target groups (differentiated according to gender, ethnic group, parties to a conflict), and specifically poor population groups?	33%	Addresses central development issues for partner country	3	Though the project addresses the central problems in the pilot regions (water scarcity, water pollution, deforestation, selected pilots in tourist areas), it has some shortcomings (little implementation, focus on forestry, only one pilot project, weak role of MRC)
		Risk of exclusion of poor/women.	4	Ethnic minorities and women were not directly targeted and there were no specific actions to include them
To what extent is the development measure suitably designed to help implement the (sector) policies and strategies of the partner country and the partner institutions? Are the general poverty and sector objectives consistent with each other or are there contradictions?	33%	Project has shared objectives with relevant policies and strategies of partner countries and institutions.	2	The project was consistent with PRSPs and MRC's strategies; focus shifted from regional to national level (implementation in pilot regions), project moved out of MRC mandate and was increasingly irrelevant for MRC

Guiding Question	Weight	Sub guiding question	Rating (1-6)	Justification, comments
Does the development measure comply with the commissioning party's basic development policy orientation?	33%	Which of the cross-cutting issues (gender parity, poverty reduction, sustainable use of natural resources) are relevant? How far are these taken into consideration in the design of the project or programme?	3	Poverty reduction is addressed via long results chains, gender parity only mentioned in the offer, but no designated activities, complies with the GIZ concept of "Sustainable Development"
		To what extent does the project fit into the country strategy, priority area and programme building and the sector strategies of German bilateral development cooperation?	1	The project was consistent with sectoral concepts and country focal points
		To what extent is the development measure targeted at the MDGs?	2	Targets goal 7 and goal 1

DAC Criterion 2:	Effectiveness
Description:	This section should contain statements on the achievement of direct results (overall objective, component objectives) on the basis of the indicators defined in the most recent valid offer (BMZ commission). Direct results are those that can be causally attributed to the development measure with sound evidence. For this, all indicators must be presented in an overview in the form of a comparison of the targets with the actual (current) situation.
Guiding question:	Are we achieving the objectives of the development measure?

Caclulation of rating of criterion:	1,83
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Guiding Question	Weight	Sub guiding question	Rating (1-6)	Justification, comments
To what extent are the objectives of the development measure being achieved (comparison of actual situation with targets on the basis of the defined indicators)? Project objective: Planning and coordination of sustainable management of resources in watersheds by selected relevant organisations of the four LMB riparian countries are improved at national and regional levels.	16,67%	1a) In at least two riparian states, concepts of sustainable watershed management have been integrated into planning of German or international development cooperation projects and they are implemented.	1	Key elements of the IWSM concept were implemented by German and international projects in three riparian states. Replication can only be verified in Laos and Cambodia. Study visits to Huay Sam Mor pilot watershed is considered to have initiated replication which however cannot be quantified.
		1b) Key elements of the IWSM approach are being replicated in at least three watersheds in at least two countries.	3	
For assessing the achievement of each indicator, the following sub-questions are also taken into consideration: What are the decisive project internal reasons why the objectives are or are not being achieved? What unintended positive and negative direct results have occurred and what was the response to these?	16,67%	Indicator 2: By the end of the project, 2 coordination forums in each nation (altogether 8) and 2 forums for regional exchange of experiences concerning WSM have taken place and contributed to improved planning and coordination.	1	More than 2 national and 2 regional coordination forums took place. Forums contributed to improved planning and coordination

Guiding Question	Weight	Sub guiding question	Rating (1-6)	Justification, comments
To what extent are the objectives of the development measure being achieved (comparison of actual situation with targets on the basis of the defined indicators)? Project objective: Planning and coordination of sustainable management of resources in watersheds by selected relevant organisations of the four LMB riparian countries are improved at national and regional levels.	16,67%	1a) In at least two riparian states, concepts of sustainable watershed management have been integrated into planning of German or international development cooperation projects and they are implemented.	1	Key elements of the IWSM concept were implemented by German and international projects in three riparian states. Replication can only be verified in Laos and Cambodia. Study visits to Huay Sam Mor pilot watershed is considered to have initiated replication which however cannot be quantified.
		1b) Key elements of the IWSM approach are being replicated in at least three watersheds in at least two countries.	3	
For assessing the achievement of each indicator, the following sub-questions are also taken into consideration: What are the decisive project internal reasons why the objectives are or are not being achieved? What unintended positive and negative direct results have occurred and what was the response to these?	16,67%	Indicator 2: By the end of the project, 2 coordination forums in each nation (altogether 8) and 2 forums for regional exchange of experiences concerning WSM have taken place and contributed to improved planning and coordination.	1	More than 2 national and 2 regional coordination forums took place. Forums contributed to improved planning and coordination

DAC Criterion 3:	Impact
Description	An assessment of the contribution that the development measure makes to overarching development objectives (indirect results). As it is not generally possible to establish a direct and exclusive connection between this contribution and the aggregated changes in the sectoral and regional environment at a higher level, a plausible connection should be made. The key questions for assessing overarching development results (impact) once again underline the importance of identifying the changes that have occurred between the start of the development measure and the time of the evaluation, and as a second step the relationship between these and the development measure. Questions of overarching importance in terms of poverty reduction, gender and BMZ cross-cutting issues must be dealt with in a differentiated manner.
Guiding question:	Are we contributing to the achievement of overarching development results?

Caclulation of rating of criterion:	3,20
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Guiding Question	Weight	Sub guiding question	Rating (1-6)	Justification, comments
What (positive and negative) changes at the level of overarching development results can be observed in the wider sectoral and regional environment of the development measure?	20%	How is the actual contribution of the development measure to the improvement of watershed management: conservation of resources and conflict avoidance assessed	2	The project promoted awareness raising on water quality and quantity, reduction of deforestation, strengthening of stakeholder dialogues and capacity building.
	20%	Are these changes replicated and scaled up and what are the decisive reasons why these are or are not being achieved	5	Replication did not take place due to budgetary restraints for that. In some countries the learning centers did not function anymore. The governments did not show interests for replication and the experiences from pilot watersheds were difficult to transfer to other watersheds.

Guiding Question	Weight	Sub guiding question	Rating (1-6)	Justification, comments
What (positive and negative) changes at the level of overarching development results can be observed in the wider sectoral and regional environment of the development measure? (cont.)	20%	What unintended positive and negative overarching development results have been generated?	3	Return of migrants due to improvement of watersheds versus resettlement in order to improve the watersheds
To what extent is the target group 'the poorest of the poor', especially women and girls, actually being reached, and can the target-group-specific result be substantiated?	40%	Poverty reduction	3	The people overcame structural poverty through awareness raising, however the project did not give any alternatives for livelihoods.
		Gender empowerment	3	Only in the third phase became gender an important policy of the project. Some evidences are to see on the ground.

DAC Criterion 4:	Efficiency
Description:	A measure of the degree to which the resources invested in a development measure are appropriate compared to the outputs and results achieved.
Guiding question:	Are the objectives being achieved cost-effectively?

Caclulation of rating of criterion:	3,32
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Guiding Question	Weight	Sub guiding question	Rating (1-6)	Justification, comments
Production efficiency (input/output) • Which alternative solutions are there (measured against comparable projects/programmes in the country or region/sector standards) with regard to ...	30%	... the delivery of the development measure's key outputs? ... the composition of modes of delivery: summary of instruments to be used and human resource assignment, materials and equipment, training courses and other human capacity development formats, financing contracts?	3	More than 50% of the project finances spent for sustaining personnel and for organizing capacity development activities. Most of the personnel were either international experts or national freelancers/consultants.
		...the structure of the development measure (e.g. project, programme, pro-gramme-based approaches; representation in regions)?	4	The project used MRC as a platform to contact other donors and established NMC, RWG, NWG und WSC. However the project has built its own structures without using existing local structures, which opposed to the compliance mentioned in Paris and Accra declarations.

Guiding Question	Weight	Sub guiding question	Rating (1-6)	Justification, comments
Avoiding the cost of inadequate harmonisation or alignment	50%	To what extent are the objectives and outputs/activities of the development measure coordinated with or complementary to those of others, or designed for task-sharing (joined-up German development cooperation, programme-based approaches?	3	The project had a tight contact to InWEnt, DED and KfW, but cooperation and coordination of the project was not always complementary.
		To what extent is there adequate coordination between donors and to what extent does the project/programme use harmonised donor processes for reporting, financial management, procurement?	3	The project had contact to ADB, DANIDA, AusAID and World Bank but yet no concrete coordination.
		To what extent does the project/programme make use of national/subnational systems for planning, implementation, financial management, procurement, M&E?	4	Though the project was integrated in the sub-national structures in some countries, in other countries it built its own structures.
Allocation efficiency (input/results)	20%	Are the results achieved at the correct time and within a reasonable period?	3	There were some delays in launching of the project. Besides the project objectives were put too ambitious for the given financial limitations.

DAC Criterion 5:	Sustainability
Description:	In this section, the key questions in the Guidelines on evaluating the success of projects/programmes aim to help ascertain whether the preconditions have been met and are in place for the changes introduced and proven within the lead executing agency, intermediaries or target groups (direct and indirect results) to be upheld after the conclusion of external support, and whether there is even perhaps an option of scaling these up, whether this be financed by the partner country or by the international donor community. There are two forms of dissemination: horizontal (e.g. a sustainable system of local value chains is introduced not just in province A, but also in provinces b, c and d) and vertical (e.g. the Ministry of Agriculture provides the legal and administrative basis for countrywide introduction of the new approach for sustainable management of value chains).
Guiding question:	Are the positive results durable?

Calculation of rating of criterion:	2,75
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Guiding Question	Weight	Sub guiding question	Rating (1-6)	Justification, comments
To what extent do results (knowledge, approaches, instruments, methods or concepts) for the target groups, partner institutions and partner country continue beyond the end of assistance?	60%	Information services ex. Resource Kit, Mekonginfo and Capacity Development Trainings	2	Translated in most languages, used at Universities, University Curricula, Methods taken up by other Donors
		Concept WSM	3	Some new laws were established and the concept anchored in four countries
		Capacity Development and policy advice	2	Capacity Development trainings considered very successful at all levels, knowledge has remained and is still being used today

Guiding Question	Weight	Sub guiding question	Rating (1-6)	Justification, comments
To what extent is knowledge spread and are results replicated?	15%	To what extent is knowledge spread and are results replicated?	3	Replication took place in two watersheds
To what extent are networks established and still active in use today?	15%	To what extent are networks established and still active in use today?	4	Exchanges and Dialogues between watersheds (local level), national level and regional level conferences
To what extent are the requirements for sustainability met?	10%	How does the exit strategy of the project/programme support the intended sustainability? Were important framework conditions considered? To what extent are (organisational/political, human, financial) resources and capacities available in the partner countries for maintaining the results achieved?	3	There was no explicit exit strategy, however positive development with Thai-German-Lao Trilateral cooperation as well as other donors taking some actions

Annex II: Evaluation grids InWEnt project

DAC Criterion 1:	Relevance
Description:	On the basis of facts and figures, and with respect to the key questions (see Guidelines on evaluating the success of projects/programmes), describe and assess the compliance of the development measure with the overarching policies and strategies of the partner country, especially sector strategies: its compliance with the needs of the partner institution; the suitability of measures for the target groups, also with regard to gender; complementarity with measures conducted by the international community, and compliance with the directives and guidelines of the commissioning party and GIZ.
Guiding question:	Are we doing the right thing?

Caclulation of rating of criterion:	1,82
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Guiding Question	Weight	Sub guiding question	Rating (1-6)	Justification, comments
To what extent is the development measure suitably designed to address central development issues for the partner country and target groups (differentiated according to gender, ethnic group, parties to a conflict), and specifically poor population groups?	33%	Addresses central development issues for partner country	1	Addresses regional challenges such as flooding, water-related conflicts and negative impacts of agriculture extension. Also addresses national topics such as decentralization and increasing food security.
		Risk of exclusion of poor/women.	4	The extremely poor and disadvantaged as well as ethnic minorities are targeted implicitly by addressing water-related factors that are important for their subsistence. Women were not targeted explicitly. No gender-assessment had taken place. Little effort was made to include women, and it was discontinued after it proved unsuitable. Both the poor and women have a high risk of exclusion from the project's benefits.

Guiding Question	Weight	Sub guiding question	Rating (1-6)	Justification, comments
To what extent is the development measure suitably designed to help implement the (sector) policies and strategies of the partner country (national agricultural strategies, PRSP etc.) and the partner institutions? Are the general poverty objectives and sector objectives consistent with each other or are there contradictions?	33%	Project has shared objectives with relevant policies and strategies of partner countries and institutions.	1	The InWent project was consistent with national PRSPs and relevant strategies of the MRC and other institutions.
Does the development measure comply with the commissioning party's basic development policy orientation?	33%	Which of the cross-cutting issues (gender parity, poverty reduction, sustainable use of natural resources) are relevant? How far are these taken into consideration in the design of the project or programme?	3	Poverty reduction is addressed via long results chains. Gender parity is only mentioned in the offer, but not planned to be implemented in designated activities. The project complies with the GIZ concept of "Sustainable Development".
		To what extent does the project fit into the country strategy, priority area and programme building and the sector strategies of German bilateral development cooperation?	1	The project is consistent with sectoral concepts and country focal points.
		To what extent is the development measure targeted at the MDGs?	2	The project targets goal 7 and goal 1.

DAC Criterion 2:	Effectiveness
Description:	This section should contain statements on the achievement of direct results (overall objective, component objectives) on the basis of the indicators defined in the most recent valid offer (BMZ commission). Direct results are those that can be causally attributed to the development measure with sound evidence. For this, all indicators must be presented in an overview in the form of a comparison of the targets with the actual (current) situation.
Guiding question:	Are we achieving the objectives of the development measure?

Caclulation of rating of criterion:	3,20
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Guiding Question	Weight	Sub guiding question	Rating (1-6)	Justification, comments
To what extent are the objectives of the development measure being achieved (comparison of actual situation with targets on the basis of the defined indicators)? The overall project goal is strengthening of capacities of institutions in watersheds of the Lower Mekong Basin by qualifying decision-makers, mid-level professionals, and technical staff?	20%	Indicator 1: In two out of three riparian countries, political and institutional guidelines for sustainable use of existing potentials in the watersheds of the Lower Mekong Basin are passed.	2	Status: Guidelines for the sustainable use of watersheds were passed in Cambodia and Vietnam. InWENT's exact contribution cannot be assessed easily because of the attribution gap and the close cooperation with GTZ WSMP. No new SWSM-related legislation was reported from Laos.
For assessing the achievement of each indicator, the following sub-questions are also taken into consideration: What are the decisive project internal reasons why the objectives are or are not being achieved? What unintended positive and negative direct results have occurred and what was the response to these?	20%	Indicator 2: In two out of three countries, strategies and methods of SWSM are accepted by national partner organisations and implemented in watersheds at target group level.	4	Status: InWent cooperated with GTZ WSMP concerning SWSM; the WSMP project developed action plans for its pilot watersheds in cooperation with its partners; implementation of activities scheduled at target group level however largely failed due to lack of funding. Replication of the SWSM approach was carried out by single donors, but the approach was not scaled up to national level.

Guiding Question	Weight	Sub guiding question	Rating (1-6)	Justification, comments
<p>To what extent are the objectives of the development measure being achieved (comparison of actual situation with targets on the basis of the defined indicators)? The overall project goal is strengthening of capacities of institutions in watersheds of the Lower Mekong Basin by qualifying decision-makers, mid-level professionals, and technical staff?</p>	20%	<p>Indicator 3: Training participants from national intermediary organisations apply strategies and methods of SWSM in their work environment.</p>	3	<p>Status: In cooperation with GTZ WSMP, InWEnt carried out various training activities; trainees could afterwards apply new skills to the benefit of their home institutions. Participants neither from GTZ WSMP-related institutions nor from training institutions already cooperating with InWEnt met significant difficulties applying new knowledge in home institutions as there was little coordination and follow up.</p>
	30%	<p>Indicator 4: The Transfer Projects of the International Leadership Training (ILT) "Rural Development in River Basins" are implemented and the ILT is considered as useful for home organisations: at least 60% of participants' Transfer Projects (TP) were implemented; at least 25% of participants consider the ILT as useful for their organisation.</p>	4	<p>Status: Less than 50% of TPs were implemented due to a lack of coordination with sending organisations; those implemented though and ILT in general were considered useful for individual participants and sending institutions. Problems in the selection of participants, return to employers, and lack of support after ILT extenuated positive effects on sending institutions.</p>
	10%	<p>Indicator 5: The participation of the rural population in development planning is enhanced in watersheds of the Lower Mekong Basin.</p>	2	<p>Status: InWEnt and its partners trained 3.953 participants on local government and target group level in methods of dialogue and participation. Multiplication effects through cooperation with training institutions were created and could be expected to continue. Communities' participation in development planning increased and local authorities' took rural population's concerns into consideration. Trainings however largely focused on Cambodia.</p>

DAC Criterion 3:	Overarching development-policy results (Impact)
Description:	An assessment of the contribution that the development measure makes to overarching development objectives (indirect results). As it is not generally possible to establish a direct and exclusive connection between this contribution and the aggregated changes in the sectoral and regional environment at a higher level, a plausible connection should be made. The key questions for assessing overarching development results (impact) once again underline the importance of identifying the changes that have occurred between the start of the development measure and the time of the evaluation, and as a second step the relationship between these and the development measure. Questions of overarching importance in terms of poverty reduction, gender and BMZ cross-cutting issues must be dealt with in a differentiated manner.
Guiding question:	Are we contributing to the achievement of overarching development results?

Caclulation of rating of criterion:	3,00
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Guiding Question	Weight	Rating (1-6)	Justification, comments
To which positive changes at impact level (sustainable use of natural resources, actualization of economic potentials, employment promotion & poverty reduction) did the project plausibly contribute?	50%	3	The project contributed to better management of natural resources in pilot watersheds. Often, funds for implementing SWSM plans were not available though and improvements were restricted to pilot areas. Impacts from Capacity Building are per se indirect and take time to translate into improvements of living-conditions.

Guiding Question	Weight	Rating (1-6)	Justification, comments
What broad impact is achieved: was the project suitable as a model, did it produce structural changes or replication of approaches, and was there an active and systematic approach to scaling-up concepts and methods?	25%	2	Through cooperation with universities and training institutions, concepts of WSM and Rural Development are disseminated. They are increasingly accepted in governmental agencies and are replicated and implemented in other development projects.
To what extent is the target group 'the poorest of the poor', especially women and girls, actually being reached?	25%	4	The situation of the 'Poorest of the Poor' and women is arguably improved through better management of natural resources. This effect, however, only happens very indirectly and 'Poorest of the Poor' and women were not directly reached by the project.

DAC Criterion 4:	Efficiency
Description:	A measure of the degree to which the resources invested in a development measure are appropriate compared to the outputs and results achieved.
Guiding question:	Are the objectives being achieved cost-effectively?

Caclulation of rating of criterion:	2,67
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Guiding Question	Weight	Sub guiding question	Rating (1-6)	Justification, comments
Production efficiency (input/output) • Which alternative solutions are there (measured against comparable projects/programmes in the country or region/sector standards) with regard to ...	16,67%	... the delivery of the development measure's key outputs?	4	The ILT was not efficient in its use of German as language of instruction. Teaching the courses in Germany made this component too expensive, especially when comparing its results with those of the short term trainings. A longer term cooperation with more national institutions would have been better.
	16,67%	... the composition of modes of delivery: summary of instruments to be used and human resource assignment, materials and equipment, training courses and other human capacity development formats (for example, dialogue platforms and e-learning, training courses), financing contracts?	2	The platform on Global Campus 21 that was provided by the project was and is not used much among the alumni of the project. The project employed too many external consultants, too few national and local experts.

Guiding Question	Weight	Sub guiding question	Rating (1-6)	Justification, comments
Production efficiency (input/output) • Which alternative solutions are there (measured against comparable projects/programmes in the country or region/sector standards) with regard to ... (cont.)	16,67%	... the structure of the development measure (e.g. project, programme, programme-based approaches; representation in regions)?	4	There were too many components. In addition, some of the components did not fit well with the others in terms of the project objective. This cause a lack of overview and understanding of the project among the partners. The alignment with MRC that was considered in the beginning was not realised and the alignment with the National Mekong Committees did not provide the desired influence in national processes. The lack of local technical and administrative structures hindered the project.
Avoiding the cost of inadequate harmonisation or alignment	50%	To what extent are the objectives and outputs/activities of the development measure coordinated with or complementary to those of others, or designed for task-sharing (joined-up German development cooperation, programme-based approaches)?	1	The broad scale effects of the project were enhanced considerably through efficient coordination with GTZ-WSMP, DED and DWHH.
		To what extent is there adequate coordination between donors? In what ways is this encouraged or hindered?	4	There was no coordination with international donors such as DANIDA, SIDA, ADB and WB that implemented projects in the same sectors in the region.
		Which (time-related/ financial) transaction/follow-up costs does the measure engender for the partner? Could these be reduced? How?	4	It caused some opportunity costs to partner institutions, by requiring participants to leave their workplace, especially in the case of the ILT.
		To what extent does the project/programme make use of national/subnational systems for planning, implementation, financial management, procurement, M&E?	3	The project made use of the partner countries' systems by cooperating with national educational institutions.

DAC Criterion 5:	Sustainability
Description:	In this section, the key questions in the Guidelines on evaluating the success of projects/programmes aim to help ascertain whether the preconditions have been met and are in place for the changes introduced and proven within the lead executing agency, intermediaries or target groups (direct and indirect results) to be upheld after the conclusion of external support, and whether there is even perhaps an option of scaling these up, whether this be financed by the partner country or by the international donor community. There are two forms of dissemination: horizontal (e.g. a sustainable system of local value chains is introduced not just in province A, but also in provinces b, c and d) and vertical (e.g. the Ministry of Agriculture provides the legal and administrative basis for countrywide introduction of the new approach for sustainable management of value chains).
Guiding question:	Are the positive results durable?

Caclulation of rating of criterion:	2,6
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Guiding Question	Weight	Sub weight	Sub guiding question	Rating (1-6)	Justification, comments
To what extent do results (knowledge, approaches, instruments, methods or concepts) for the target groups, partner institutions and partner country continue beyond the end of assistance?	70%	20%	Individual level	2	Most alumni still apply the acquired knowledge and skills in their daily work. The careers of all interviewed ILT alumni were enhanced or they were entrusted with more responsibilities.
		40%	Institutional level	3	Institutional level is focus of projects objective, however due to the lack of direct capacity building activities at an organisational level as well as a lack of support during the crucial transfer phase of individual learning effects, the sustainability of the projects results on this level is rather limited.
		10%	System level	3	Difficulty of attribution gap, but some broader changes can be traced back to the project's activities, e.g. strengthened local capacities, common understanding of WSM and changes in the legal framework.

Guiding Question	Weight	Sub guiding question	Rating (1-6)	Justification, comments
To what extent is knowledge spread and are results replicated?	10%	To what extent is knowledge spread and are results replicated?	2	Alumni work as professors, trainers and consultants and actively disseminate the knowledge acquired in the training. Various institutions have further used and modified products and results of the project for context- and content-specific application.
To what extent are networks established and still active in use today?	10%	To what extent are networks established and still active in use today?	2	Presence of informal and formal active networks, promoting dialogue and cooperation between individuals and institutions.
To what extent are the requirements for sustainability met?	10%	How does the exit strategy of the project/programme support the intended sustainability? Were important framework conditions considered? To what extent are (organisational/political, human, financial) resources and capacities available in the partner countries for maintaining the results achieved?	3	No exit strategy. Some important framework conditions were not thoroughly considered. However, the project did take planned steps for the continuation of its desired results and there are human, organisational and political capacities and resources available for maintaining the results achieved.

Annex III: Glossary

Action plan

Action plans are guidelines that are developed through stakeholder dialogues under the supervision of a watershed committee. Action plans define a strategy towards prioritising local watershed problems and defining necessary actions. As part of their implementation, action plans are integrated into socio-economic and development plans at district or province level.

Capacity building

Capacity building encompasses advanced professional training, personnel and organisational development so as to achieve a given set of objectives. Capacity building focuses on strengthening partners' capacity to plan and finally to implement lasting development strategies and policies (InWEnt 2006).

Capacity development

Capacity development focuses on development of existing capacities rather than developing new ones. Capacity development can be described as a process through which people, organisations and society as a whole are enabled to shape their own development and adapt it to changing conditions and frameworks (GIZ 2012).

Critical watersheds

A watershed is considered as critical when vital functions are already or likely to become critically endangered as a course of human intervention. In this case, the need of watershed management is considered urgent.

Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM)

IWRM describes a process in the development of water, land and related resources to strengthen and maximise economic and social welfare without endangering the sustainability of ecosystems.

Integrated Watershed Management (IWSM)

IWSM is a multi-stakeholder process to manage land, water and other related natural resources, to bring about sustainable balanced economic, ecological and social benefits within the hydrological boundary (MRC-GTZ WSMP, 2011).

Mekong River Commission (MRC)

The MRC is an intergovernmental body with the objective to "promote and coordinate sustainable management and development of water and related resources for the countries' mutual benefit (MRC 2011)." In this regard, the MRC provides up-to-date information and policy advice to its member countries. The work of the MRC becomes especially important in the light of water as a trans-boundary resource.

National Mekong Committee (NMC)

Each riparian country has a National Mekong Committee that is generally inter-ministerial. The NMCs play a very important role in implementing and coordinating MRC activities and assist in the formulation of policies. NMCs act as national focal points for the MRC and line ministries while liaising with donors.

National Working Group (NWG)

The objective of the NWG is to harmonize sector policies while developing guidelines for cooperation between river basins, councils and watershed committees. Members of the NWG represent all relevant ministries working on water-related issues.

Watershed Committee (WSC)

As mandated institution, the WSC oversees management in the watershed and or sub-basin. The main activity is to identify areas of existing impacts on watershed functions in a participatory manner, to then define guidelines and strategies that could be adopted to manage these adverse impacts. It has the task to integrate identified watershed issues, perspectives and guidelines into commune, district and provincial development and resource protection plans.

Annex IV: Interview partners

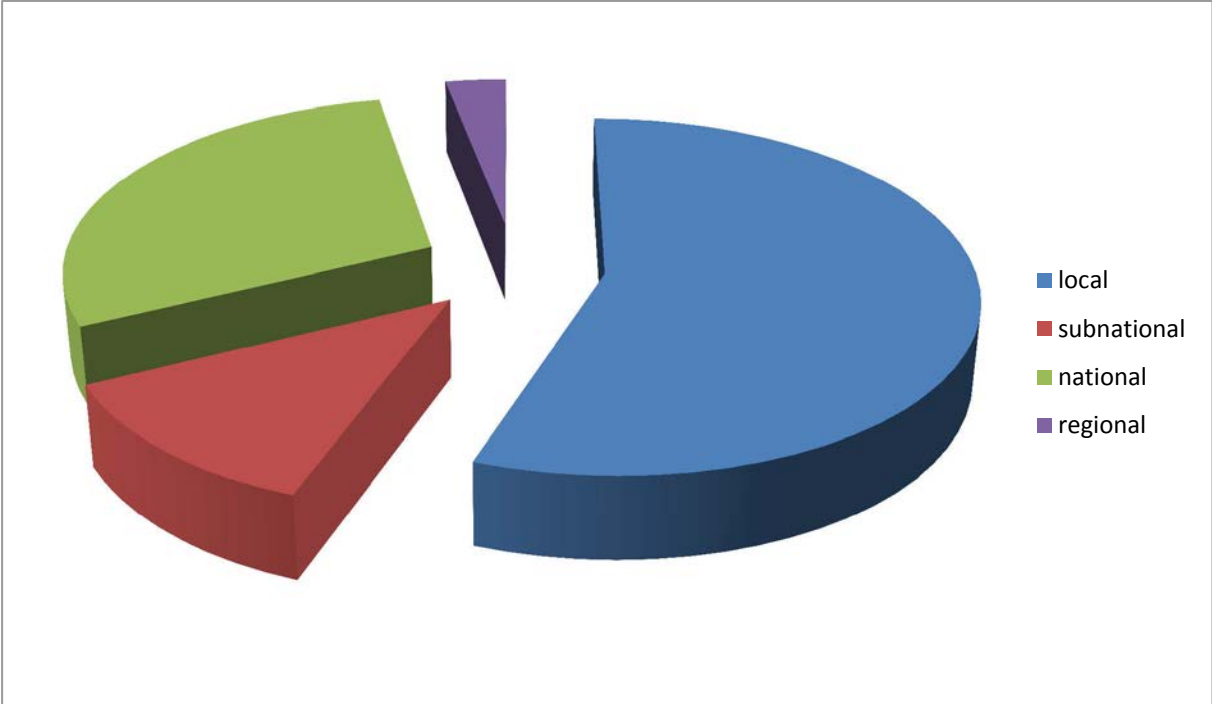


Figure 133: Interview partners GTZ according to level

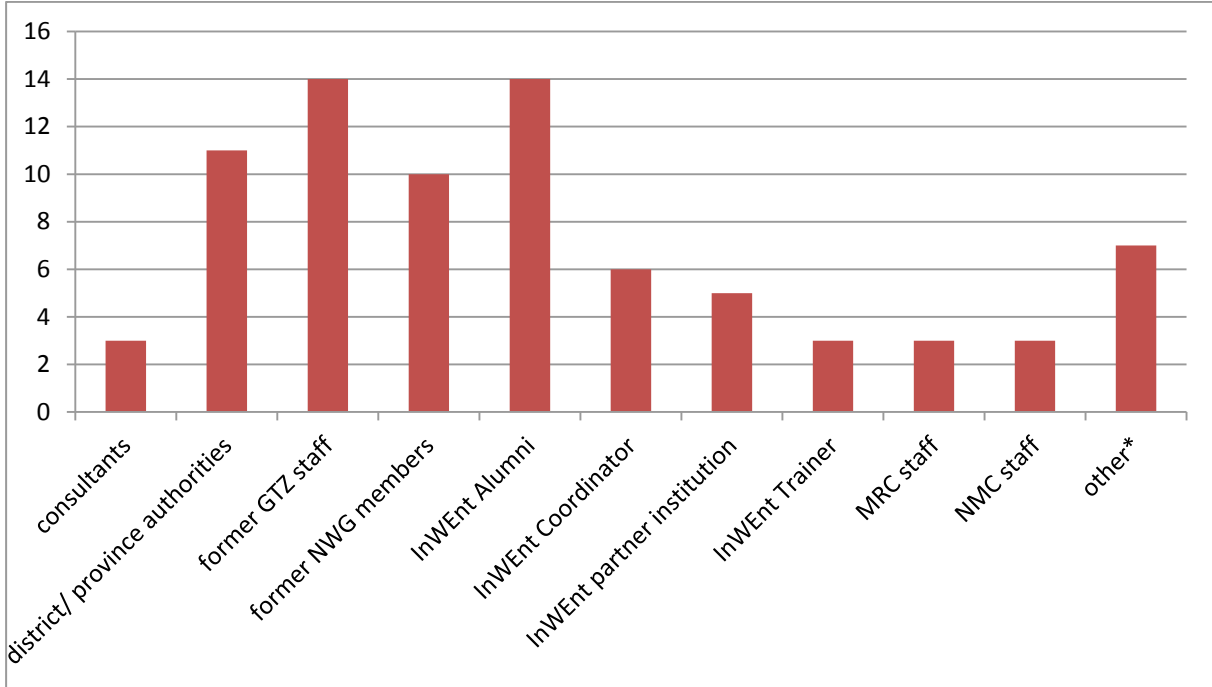
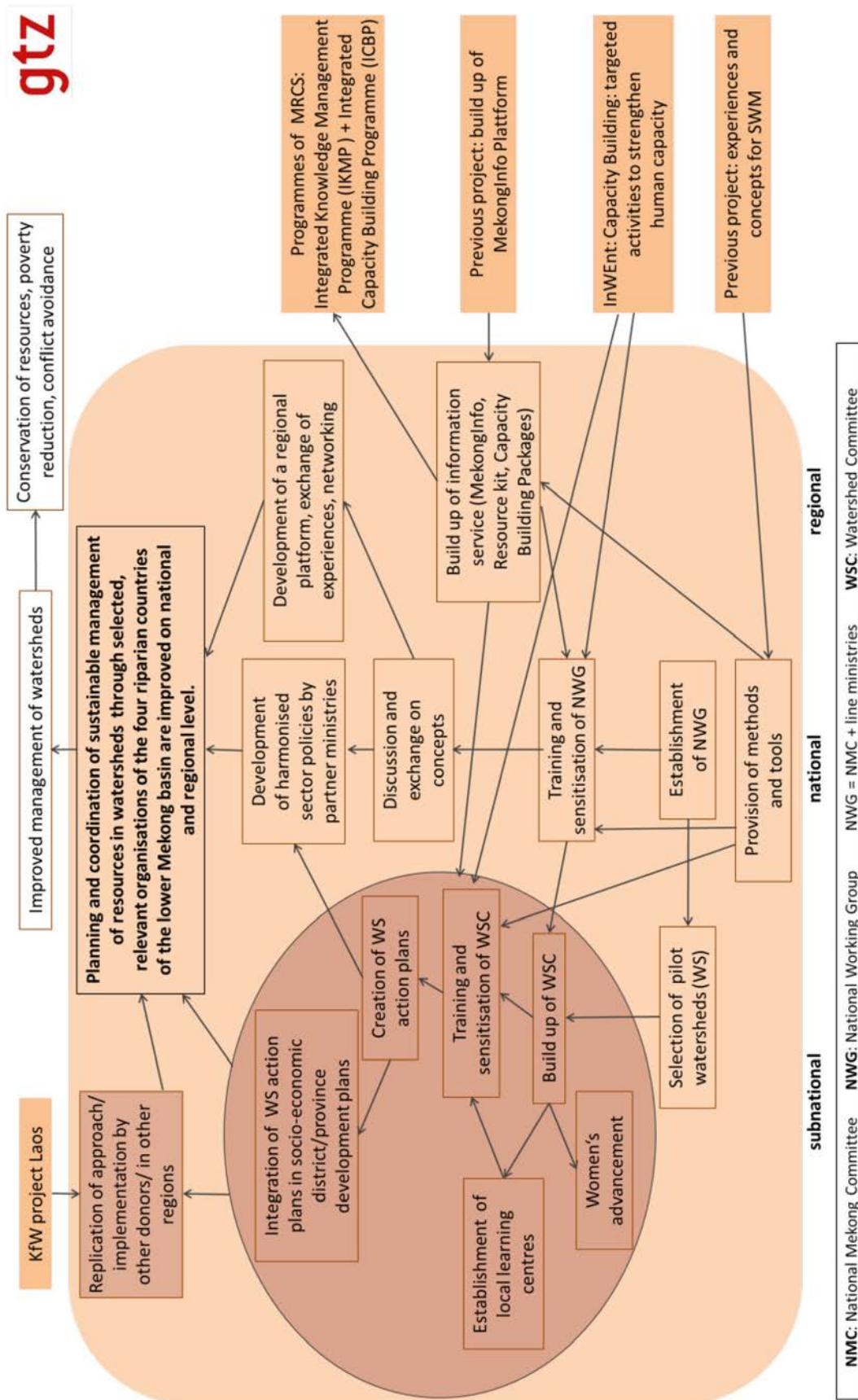


Figure 144: Interview partners GTZ and InWent project according to group

Annex V: Detailed results model of GTZ project



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