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Exploring sustainable hydropower tools in the Mekong Basin

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DIALOGUE ON “MAKING HYDROPOWER MORE SUSTAINABLE?” A SUSTAINABILITY MEASUREMENT APPROACH LED BY THE HYDROPOWER SUSTAINABILITY ASSESSMENT FORUM TYRANNY OF ONE-SIDED PARTICIPATION, 2 MAY 2010 (PHOTO BY JANET PONTIN, CPWF)

Key Message

The HSAP has proved to be a useful tool for dialoging on sensitive issues such as sustainable hydropower. Each of the elements of the Protocol, when broken down, provide opportunities to scrutinise issues in the Mekong among different stakeholder groups.

Summary

Sustainable hydropower development is a comparatively new concept in the Mekong Region and so far there have been no internationally accepted standards for, or common understanding of, it as an approach to improving water governance. Tools such as the Hydropower Sustainability Assessment Protocol (HSAP), Rapid Sustainability Assessment Tool and Environmental Flows embody important new concepts that, if well utilised, can contribute to improved governance.

From 2009, AusAID has provided support to M-POWER and the Challenge Program on Water and Food to use the HSAP as a dialogue tool to raise awareness on ways in which to advance sustainable hydropower. So far, we have held over ten multi-stakeholder dialogues, trialled part of the HSAP in three countries, and represented Mekong issues in high-level discussions among industry experts, governments and civil society. This work tells the journey of how a tool, developed by a multi-stakeholder forum, has provided the space and entry point to discuss sensitive water-related issues in the Mekong.