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Creating dialogue spaces in the Mekong Basin

KATE LAZARUS¹, KIM GEHEB², LU XING³ AND PECH SOKHEM⁴

¹ Mekong Program on Water, Environment and Resilience (M-POWER)

² Challenge Program on Water and Food

³ Yunnan University

⁴ Hatfield Consultants

katelazarus2008@gmail.com

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USING GRAPHIC FACILITATION TO ILLUSTRATE KEY DISCUSSION POINTS FROM THE DIALOGUE ON GOVERNANCE AT THE CONFERENCE ON “FROM LOCAL WATERSHED MANAGEMENT TO INTEGRATED RIVER BASIN MANAGEMENT AT NATIONAL AND TRANSBOUNDARY LEVELS”, MARCH 2011, CHIANG MAI, THAILAND (PHOTO BY JANET PONTIN)

Key Message

Multi-stakeholder Platforms (MSPs) and other dialogue spaces can be problem solving institutional innovations, which assist in democratising water management, managing conflicts, or making water management more efficient. In the Mekong Region, we are using a variety of tools to design innovative spaces to engage stakeholders for deliberation on important water management issues.

Summary

The creation of dialogue spaces can ensure that there are opportunities for diverse stakeholders to come together for deliberations on water management issues. Multi-stakeholder platforms (MSPs), as one form of a dialogue space, are widely promoted as an institutional setting for participatory water management. MSPs represent ways of managing increasing degrees of variety (diversity) and variability (dynamics). This diversity of views, stakes and interests can be articulated, tabled and discussed within MSPs, and other dialogue spaces, and, in turn, yield more integrated and sustainable outcomes, that are able to deal with the increasing complexity, diversity and the dynamics of water management.

Much of the existing dialogue about water in the Mekong Region remains removed from the public eye. We are critically reflecting on whether and how MSPs (and other types of dialogues) can bring water policy and policy-making into the public domain. To accomplish this, we are actively creating spaces for different stakeholders to engage in carefully designed forums, meetings, public hearings and negotiations revolving around a set of interconnected water resource management and policy issues. We are also reflecting on whether or not MSPs are problem solving institutional innovations, which assist in democratising water management, managing conflicts, or making water management more efficient.