

Governance and stakeholders in IWRM along Vietnam's Red River

Pham Thi Bich Ngoc, Researcher, Vietnam Institute for Water Resources Research, ngoc_phamthibich2004@yahoo.com

Anders Hiort-af-Ornas Professor, Department of Water and Environmental Studies, Linköping universitet, andershiort2004@yahoo.com

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Summary

The study departs from three projects with different goals and ambitions for stakeholding. They are all success cases. They represent pre-design, design and implementation phases. The projects are The National Hydropower Plan Study (NHP) was carried out country-wide during 1995 – 2004. The Second Red River Basin Sector Project, Part A (2RRBSP Part A) took place 2003 – 2006. The Nam Pui Resettlement Project was carried out 2006 – 2007. They all concern relations between authorities and civil society expressed in stakeholder interactions. The purpose is to focus on different key governance issues. The first two projects relate directly to water resource management, and the third project to security and natural resource management (where water is significant).

The study deals with the three projects as case studies in two dimensions. The first group of three sections treats the projects as empirical cases. Each project is introduced, highlighting how stakeholders have been involved, including design for this purpose. Lessons are learnt. The second group, another three sections, reverses the perspective. It addresses three issue cases where each of the projects is allowed to represent one key issue for stakeholder involvement at project levels. Lessons are learnt.

There are lessons for up-scaling and out-scaling, but these are touched on only very briefly in the current paper. Its aim is to bring up lessons learnt beyond project level for civil society and for good governance. The conclusion therefore concentrates on lessons relating to the set of issue cases. These are used to address structures for stakeholder-friendly project design in the realm of natural resource management.

Introduction

This paper concerns potential and limits to stakeholding in natural resources management. The dominant focus is on water resources, with regards to governance and security. Three projects with successful stakeholder participation, all located in the Red River basin in the northern Vietnam, are addressed with regards to stakeholders' influence over projects' outcomes. The National Hydropower Plan Study (NHP) was carried out country-wide during 1995 – 2004. The Second Red River Basin Sector Project, Part A (2RRBSP Part A) took place 2003 – 2006. The Nam Pui Resettlement Project was carried out 2006 – 2007.

In the first case the water sub-sector is energy production, with secondary impacts on irrigation agriculture, water supply & sanitation, transport, and flood control. Involvement by all stakeholder categories in nine river basins in Vietnam created a good platform for dialogue on benefits and drawbacks, for decision-making about technical design and site selection of hydropower projects. The paper gives an analysis of how realistic this involvement in a decision-making process in terms of stakeholders' competence and their decision-making power.

In the next case the objective has been to assess and optimize poverty reduction effects from investment in upgraded irrigation and drainage infrastructure by making water sector priorities and possible interventions in IWRM. The stakeholder process had two gradients; one going from province level upwards in scale in a build-up of consensus about priority sub-sectors and suitable interventions, and one downwards from province towards commune and village in a process of identifying specific potential sub-projects for investment. The paper accounts for how broad stakeholder categories were mobilized actively through an intricate decision-making process. It won the support of the Government after being turned down by the donor for not being innovative enough.

In the third case land slide and rock fall had threatened Nam Puoi village, Van Chan district, Yen Bai province to the extent that villagers requested to be resettled. The process began with village stakeholders taking the initiative to resettle by contacting commune leadership. The effective interaction process between the villagers and local authorities at commune, district and provincial levels built consensus on a resettlement plan. The villagers were happy with resettlement, and local administration was satisfied with having learnt a new way of good governance. Both district and province authorities appreciated the stakeholder involvement in decision-making. It is a success story, but only at the price of intense facilitation. The paper assesses how to build on the experience more widely to reach sustainable good governance when dealing with natural resource tenure.

The ways stakeholder influence in these three cases are summarized in **Table 1**. It gives an overview of the degree to which stakeholders have been involved plus the obstacles they experienced.

TABLE 1. Stakeholder influence in the three projects

<i>Project</i>	<i>Stakeholders' capacity to provide information in pre-design stage</i>	<i>Stakeholders' active involvement in decision-making</i>	<i>Stakeholders' involvement in implementation</i>
National Hydropower Plan (NHP)	A listening process with much attention to information from stakeholders, including feedback into project data base	Involvement in analysis modeling in principle, but short-comings for some stakeholder categories to understand issues in reality	No involvement
Second Red River Basin Sector Project,	A major portion of all regional decision-makers mobilized with active	Good governance performed. All stakeholder categories have involved	Government overruled ADB decision by supporting the sub-project

Part A (2RRBSP)	contributions.	with high level effort into the identification of priority interventions in IWRM and design for implementation	over regular budget instead of intended development budget
Nam Puoi resettlement	Initially complete break in communication. After facilitation excellent communication, including initiatives from villagers	Facilitation opened for active involvement, which in turn won respect in local government	The active involvement in the resettlement process led to success, and also to valuable governance experiences at district and province levels

These are three success stories for active stakeholder involvement. The projects are different in many ways, not least scale, but they all had stakeholder presence from the start. Differences in involvement have to do with variations in project design. The NHP Study was primarily looking for information access plus communication about the project. Its target was fact-finding and not implementation. The 2RRBSP Part A aimed for the identification of potential sub-projects for investment through a weave of stakeholder participation. The Nam Puoi project implemented a stakeholder driven resettlement process. The prime goal for this paper is to build on these experiences and address stakeholders' capacity not only to provide information but also their involvement in decision-making.

Three project cases of resource management and stakeholder approaches

This section makes a brief introduction of the three projects. In terms of planning they stand for pre-design, design, and implementation phases. The aim is not to make full presentation of the projects, only of their ways in which they operate together with stakeholders.

The National Hydropower Plan Study and stakeholding

The NHP Study covered nine river basins in Vietnam and Red River forming one of them. The study was an inventory of possible locations for hydropower production. It has involved stakeholders both for information/database formation and for mobilization of peoples' attention to key issues; beneficial and detrimental.

The hydropower sector holds a potential for more resilient future development by increased involvement from stakeholders. Implementation should benefit a region more widely than in the past. Planning for hydropower production then needs to connect with socio-economic development towards sustainable regional development. Technical requirements, budgets and funding remain limiting factors for stakeholders. Involving in decisions also calls for an understanding and agreed ways to resolve conflicting expectations. In this way opening up hydropower projects for indirect effects naturally also leads to more demand focused stakeholder participation. It harmonizes with Vietnam's decentralization policy.

Communication with stakeholders typically comprises technical information and a feedback of socio-economic data in the format of impact assessments (Cf. Hjort-af-Ornäs,

2007). The major impacts at community levels must be mitigated but nevertheless often lead to conflict. Approaches to conflicting needs among stakeholders, as proposed in the World Commission on Dams (WCD, 2000), concern ways to agree on formulas for conflict resolution before they become acute. The NHP Study has sought to establish a platform for conflict resolution through a series of awareness raising commune / district workshops. Specific conflict management is referred to feasibility and planning stages.

Active stakeholder facilitation in the NHP Study has included transforming key issues raised by stakeholders into assessment parameters. The dialogue and selection process for indicators has also built awareness through gradual involvement in shaping scenarios for development alternatives, especially at regional levels. By making an inventory of all major hydropower potential in the country, the study has demonstrated a growing involvement of stakeholders by the technical planners since they got constructive feedback for design. As the constructive results appeared, they opened up an interest among stakeholders for the process. It has also stimulated interaction across stakeholder boundaries. The methodology success was that environmental and social considerations were integrated into all cases studied, about 50.

Originally, the first stage design of stakeholder participation in the NHP Study has been limited to national workshops held before each project phase (four phases in Stage 1 as well as in Stage 2) plus one river basin workshop at the end of each stage. Due to the participatory approach, village and commune studies were carried out in two villages per potential site; implemented in the form of workshops with conclusions highlighting different topics. This experience from Stage 1 stakeholding was regarded to be so constructive both by the Client and partners, that an enlargement was agreed.

A full chain of stakeholder interaction was designed in Stage 2, with the involvement of about 200 persons including political leadership, administration authorities, sector interest, mass society organizations at commune, district, regional and river basin levels. Stakeholder selections were carried out by the electricity company in the interaction with district and province administrations. The Table 2 summarizes the stakeholder involvement covered all UNCED (1992) stakeholder categories in the four interaction series.

The process began with the national workshops with participation by representatives of the national administrations focusing on the study design, methodology and the selection process for indicators. The workshops with directly affected came early in the Study design and were held in province centers with participants from all affected districts and communes in the respective river basin (in all 87 persons). Four regional development workshops were carried out late in the Study life-span with the participation of all provinces and districts that might be indirectly or directly affected (in all 110 persons). Ranked positive expectations as well as major concerns were established both in these regional workshops and in those with directly affected communes. The participation by villagers took place as integrated components of the Study. The 100 field studies formed a rapid screening of all sites; in all about 50 options for Stages 1 and 2. Interaction with local authorities and villagers took the form of open interviews with key informants,

targeted group discussions and winding up workshops with an agenda to specify anticipated negative and positive anticipation.

TABLE 2. Stakeholder categories involved in the NHP Study

Stakeholder category	National workshops	River basin workshops	Provincial workshops	Village group work
Women	Womens' Union	Womens' Union	Womens' Union	Assessment participants
Children and youth	Nil	Youth organisation	Youth organisation	Direct participation
Indigenous people	Political representatives	Political representatives	Participation	Participation
NGOs	Selected NGOs	Provincial representatives	District level representatives	Commune representation
Local authorities	National line ministries	Province level representation	PPC, DPC and CPC authorities	People's Committee
Employees, unions	Nil	Farmers' Association	Farmers' Association	Nil
Business	Represented through line ministries	Representation	Female SMEs	Nil
Technology, science	Professionals from EVN	Nil	Nil	Nil
Land users	Nil	Farmers' Association	Farmers' Association	Direct participation

This initiative to broaden the stakeholder involvement has been intended for the Study to get feedback but also to create the platform for exchange of information and develop informed consensus-building meetings about positive expectations and negative concerns. Participants could establish a network for future consultation processes with upcoming projects and a basis for future internal interaction in those cases where projects went ahead. Awareness raising was an additional side effect. By sensitizing more stakeholder categories, participants could better comprehend the implications of hosting a hydropower project and provide sustainable information.

Results from all levels of stakeholder interaction are given in the NHP Study reporting (SWECO 2004). Naturally, the awareness level about hydropower consequences was initially low. The Study impact from stakeholders' viewpoints was limited to building awareness about magnitudes in how a hydropower project would impact on village life. The project teams' inputs were not sufficient to start up an awareness process; more facilitation was clearly needed. This was also the message from the NHP Study to later project planning. Such implementation, within policy and safeguarding principles, still seemed open-ended to the field teams.

The Second Red River Basin Sector Project Part A and stakeholding

The case introduced in this section is the Second Red River Basin Sector Project Part A (2RRBSP Part A). Its prime concern has been poverty reduction through Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) in the Red River Basin, northern Vietnam. Also

other cross-cutting issues have been addressed; institutional capacity building, public awareness, and gender.

Stakeholder involvement is highlighted in the study by a combination of two processes: from the province level upward initially, and then from the province level downward into local community involvement. Firstly, the stakeholder involvement process was used to successfully set up a procedure for consensus-building in 25 provincial workshops, followed by clustering into five sub-basin workshops and finally by stakeholder interaction with the national-level administration to identify priorities and possible solutions for IWRM in the whole basin. The stakeholder categories included provincial administration, along with provincial departments related to various water sectors, together with relevant society organizations. Consensus was built around principal project level goals that should be set within IWRM for each province, each sub-basin and the whole Red river basin. All issues and solutions were prioritized through a ranking methodology based on three criteria; economic, poverty and environment. In the end of this first process, the highest priority issues identified by stakeholders were irrigation agriculture, water supply and sanitation, flood control, and environment/biodiversity.

Secondly, once these sectors had been identified, other stakeholders became deeply involved in the process of water-sector planning in these priority water sub-sectors. This process was developed and successfully implemented beyond the anticipation of most, given the large scale. The facilitation process nevertheless allowed stakeholders to interact in a transparent way, by building capacity and awareness and by setting up a rigid interaction process, with decisions taken stepwise. This method proved very empowering for participants because it even allowed consensus to be reached in highly resource-competitive situations on a strictly logical basis.

In this stakeholder process, the case studies were carried out stepwise within two selected provinces in the northern Upland and then in smaller sub-basins until the commune and village levels were finally reached. Active stakeholder involvement has taken place in each step with interaction across stakeholder categories, with local governments and technical experts. Informed decisions have been made about priorities and water-sector planning. Local authorities and stakeholders at the province, district, commune, and village levels have been decision-makers, drawing on technical experts to provide specialized assessments. Given the poverty reduction target, the facilitators' roles have been to integrate a number of sustainable development goals; water availability, economic effective, poverty reduction effects and environmental implications. They have succeeded to combine their perspectives on water resource management, and so taken responsibility for IWRM applications (a full account of the process is given in Pham Thi Bich Ngoc and Hjort-af-Ornas 2008).

The facilitation process was carefully implemented, with the aim of helping stakeholders to elaborate on and refine their priority IWRM issues, define and assess a wide range of options, and select preferred options in the water-sector planning process. This process was developed and successfully implemented in a way that exceeded expectations, given the originally Red River scale and the amount of resources involved. The implication was

that all parties in the Red River basin agreed to channel resources into a few well-financed proposals. This method proved very empowering to participants because it allowed consensus to be reached, even in highly resource-competitive situations, on a strictly transparent basis, following an agreed set of criteria. This strength was respected by the government who decided to support the proposals that emerged over regular budget, for want of interest from the regional bank to do it.

The Nam Puoi Resettlement Project and stakeholding

The resettlement in Nam Puoi, the third project assessed in this paper, follows up at village level decision-making. Nam Puoi village is located in Nam Bung Commune, Van Chan District, Yen Bai Province, northern Vietnam. The poor and ethnic minority village (Dao people) is situated under a steep mountain towering 350m above it. Villagers have reluctantly learnt to live with the land slide and rock fall threat for many years.

The initiative to move came from the villagers who during August to October every year have been afraid to sleep at night because of the threat of rock-fall. While all stakeholders were already aware of the situation, the initiative by the villagers became the final driving force for the resettlement decision. They immediately won support from the commune, anchored at both district and province administrations. Still, this seemingly straight-forward resettlement process, successful in the end, proved complicated and with most of the general resettlement concerns appearing (Pham Thi Bich Ngoc and Hjort-af-Ornas 2007).

The facilitation brought the different stakeholder categories together (villagers, Chia Se project staff, administration staff at all levels, consultants in technical and facilitation, and the donor) and improved the limited communication. Stakeholders built consensus about solutions to all raised issues (i.e resettlement site selection, village layout, plots design, house movement and allowances, roofs and tiles, grave relocation, water supply, sanitation and health, public infrastructure) in relation with all socio-cultural aspects for Dao people (e.g. lunar calendar, road location, grave respect, village and house designs). In order to support villagers commune administration became a bridge between village and higher administrations, in critical times through the independent facilitation team.

Thanks to active stakeholder involvement and proper facilitation, several faulty decisions have been avoided in the Nam Puoi resettlement. Without them the resettlement would have ended up on an unsuitable site, far away from forest and pasture, with a village design, totally insensitive to local culture, and with a vulnerable water distribution system. These prevented mistakes were due to standard technical thinking without specifying solutions through consumer interaction. Village representation had been left passive, with the argument from administrations that villagers don't understand technical issues, and from their side they saw no point in learning to give advice since they would get no response. Villagers found their resettlement desire within reach through proper involvement at all stages of resettlement plan. The monitoring capacity of stakeholders was built gradually through the interaction between the administration, Resettlement Committee and the villagers. As stakeholder interaction opened up it became obvious in administrations both that villagers could contribute with specific assessments, and that

this made resettlement plan more effective and less expensive. The mutual trust between stakeholders grew quickly, and the Resettlement Committee could act effectively. In the end there was broad satisfaction with the resettlement process.

Three modes of stakeholder participation

The three projects just presented exhibit successful stakeholder participation. Ambition levels, but also capacity for stakeholding, have been different. This section addresses specific features in each project with regards to IWRM in order to prepare for next section on lessons that can be learnt. Three issues are brought up; (1) limits to stakeholder involvement in decision-making over a water issue of national interest, (2) integrating stakeholders of various significance when a project covers several water sub-sectors, and (3) respecting socio-cultural features in implementation decisions at community level.

The point of departure is that all three projects are success cases, and that they can be used to illustrate a few key concerns over stakeholders' involvement in IWRM. So this section moves from empirical case studies of three projects into three issue case studies. Obviously there are limits, depending on project size, the project's life cycle, and what kind of issues are addressed. Here we concentrate on IWRM in the Red River basin, but the I in IWRM may represent different approaches (see Pham Thi Bich Ngoc and Hjortaf-Ornas 2008), depending on project ambition; to integrate stakeholders' involvement or technical water sub-sectors. The three cases may represent involvement, technical integration, and interaction respectively. They are tied together in the final section of this paper.

Differences in perceptions are reasons why stakeholder analysis before interaction at all levels is so important. They involve in data formation, and their concerns spill over to data formation itself, and thereby the use of data and information when approaching a development process. The understanding of this interpretative element needs to be fed into the governance for regional development (Allan 2003; Vietnam Development Report 2004).

Involvement and competence: Stakeholder participation constraints in the NHP Study

One issue that stands out in stakeholder participation when working with the three projects was involvement. It relates to what can be realistic for stakeholders to demand; the boundaries for stakeholders' influence over project design. All three cases above have a common denominator; carefully structured interaction is a necessity for success. In the case of the NHP Study, stakeholder involvement has been made in a structured manner in the sense that different stakeholder categories have been involved. This is an approach not experienced before the NHP Study by at strategic level by the staff of the electricity company (The full study is available in internet).

In the past, internationally, stakeholders have often been unsystematically mobilized, as if assuming that quality is improved automatically merely through a widened discussion. In practical (project) life there has even been an element of easy-going, meet a check-list style list of demands for projects to live up to new policy demands (Cf. ADB 2004).

The lesson about stakeholder involvement from the NHP Study can be divided into two parts. Firstly, the study harmonized with the WCD (2000) recommendations to make sure that all stakeholder categories are actively included in a consultation process; based on the UNCED (1992) convention agreement. This issue has already been addressed above. Secondly, the study also included an assessment of the capacity from the stakeholders' side to influence decisions; their power and competence levels. The blunt question would be: Do the stakeholders have the capacity to involve seriously in decision-making at this strategic level, or are they best represented by politicians and technical experts?

An evaluation was done in interaction with all participants in the consultation process in order to build an understanding of leadership capacity: The project was looking for an establishment of a core network for capacity building and involvement in those cases where hydropower projects went ahead. For this reason the NHP Study also assessed the power to influence decisions found among those individuals forming the stakeholder category in the project.

Two involvement goals were met with the study; participatory generation of key data and inspiring a network to involve in future assessments in those cases where the study led over to project design. Meeting these involvement goals also means that the common aim with all stakeholder consultations, that is to raise awareness by building consensus around negative and positive effects of a hydropower project, was also met. The NHP Study went one step further, beyond safe-guarding policies, by addressing how to mitigate. It drew on the stakeholder involvement for regional or local development contributions by the hydropower investment. The stakeholders' involvement in development planning was therefore given attention in the evaluation of their experience of decision-making processes in rural development. This was assessed through an analysis of their capacity to influence decision-making (both objective and subjective). A Stakeholder Participation Model was worked out with survey-based individual analyses. The results dealt with the following three issues: (i) Degree of experience was assessed on an ordinal magnitude scale 0-5, ranking participating stakeholders internally; (ii) Potential power and capacity was also assessed on an ordinal magnitude scale 0-5 for all projects; (iii) Current involvement in development projects was similarly assessed.

Figure 1 below as an example shows how 86 stakeholders of five categories participating in the five river basin workshops in Stage 2 were involved in regional development; development projects, provincial decision-making, extension work, and others. The y-level score expresses how active individuals of the various key stakeholder categories in the workshops consider themselves.

Decision-making at provincial levels was actively attended by authorities at this level, of course, but also by Women Union and district representatives among the stakeholders. Farmers and ethnic minority representatives felt not involved at all. They were, on the other hand much experienced from extension work, along with district and province authorities. Women Union representatives felt involved in provincial level decisions but had notably little experience of extension. Their major activities fell in the category

“Others” in the survey, representing here primarily participation in other meetings. Active involvement in development projects also scored low for them; with ethnic minority, district, and province representatives surpassing them on an increasing scale. Noteworthy is that none of the Farmers Association representatives claimed to have any experience from development projects.

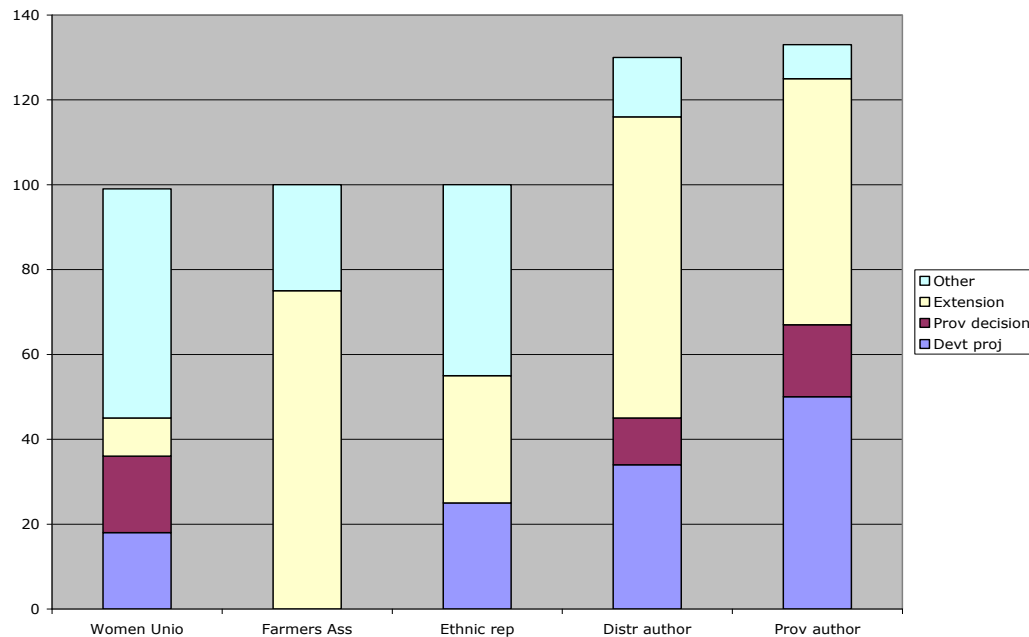


FIGURE 1. The involvement of the NHP Study stakeholders in different regional development activities

Even though the survey is small, it covers stakeholders who are key persons for involvement in many development projects. One observation from the assessment of the NHP Study is that involvement experiences vary. Building capacity is differently needed for stakeholders when they join a stakeholder group to involve as reference in hydropower planning. Facilitation is needed, not only for interaction between the individual and the project, but also between different stakeholder groups to deal with gaps in experience. In the case of the NHP Study this proved to be necessary in order to reach meaningful consensus on hydropower planning issues.

The Study covered the cost for facilitating the initial interaction. This approach is not sustainable since costs for regional development would become too high. The decentralization policy of Vietnam includes training of local administrations in facilitation. The Chia Se project provides one example, from a province where the aim is to build such capacity. Here, the Chia Se project aims to modernize administration towards empowering poor people (Embassy of Sweden www.swedenabroad.com). However, judging from the Nam Puoi case in the current study, it but seems to fall short of training interaction between different stakeholder categories, also other than the poor, judging from the Nam Puoi experiences (Pham Thi Bich Ngoc and A. Hjort-af-Ornas 2007).

This is the crucial message on involvement, illustrated with the major impacts from the NHP Study approach. The Study sought to establish a platform for gradual build-up and awareness as a means to make involvement sustainable. This side of the study was not successful since follow-up hydropower projects did not continue the process. Instead of going deeper into involvement capacity, new projects started their own processes all over again. The role of local government to control developers and facilitate stakeholder involvement is crucial.

Integration and consensus. Management of scale complexity in the 2RRBSP Part A:

The integration of stakeholders into project management can be very different from Participatory Rural Assessments in the sense that all affected people, not only end users of a project result, were involved. With the different interests present, the idea remained to build consensus among different stakeholders over priority water sectors for investment and interventions for IWRM. The 2RRBSP Part A illustrated successful stakeholder participation in the Red River region covering 25 provinces. The success here did not relate so much to information exchange but came closer to shifting decision-making power.

The 2RRBSP Part A, as described above, included an enormous area. It was felt by stakeholding through involvement of different scales both in terms of regional strategies (province, sub-basin, basin) and in terms of interventions in the form of proposed sub-projects (district, commune and village). Stakeholder involvement was different in the various parts of the project, depending both on purpose and scale. For example, the last part in its Upland Component, towards project design, was going stepwise within the two selected provinces into smaller and smaller sub-basins until finally reaching commune and village levels.

The aim in stakeholder involvement process was to identify and rank a list of potential sub-projects for investment. It illustrated stakeholder roles for integration of interests in water resource management. Integration was in focus in three main streams of stakeholder involvement (Figure 2), aiming at informed decision-making: (1) Local authorities and (2) stakeholders at province, district and commune/village levels being the decision-makers, drawing on (3) technical experts to provide specialized assessments. The final decision-makers, formed by (1) and (2), have succeeded in combining these three perspectives on water resource management, thus taking responsibility for an IWRM that targets poverty reduction.

As a separate stakeholder consensus building process at village levels, the significance of the water resource targeting was also checked. Technical water sub-sectors as well as potential development projects were identified and ranked by local stakeholders, once site selection had been established at commune levels. The result was to give high, not always highest, priority to water related projects.

The way the project addressed participatory IWRM resulted in the design of a process that can provide a mechanism for consensus building around priority issues related to

water. After initial input by technical experts, it demonstrated how an informed consensus-building could identify priority issues and interventions to solve the problems. Transparent and open interactions through a strictly formalized dialogue between stakeholders and experts became the key to both identifying and addressing conflicting resolutions. The first step was to agree on a set of criteria for decision-making.

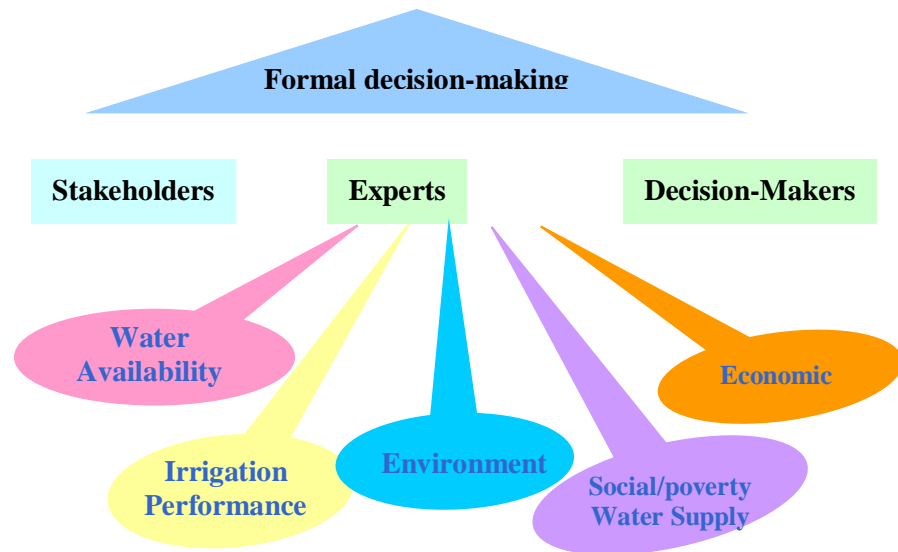


FIGURE 2. Stakeholder integration in 2RRBSP Part A

Different stakeholder views could argue the benefits and drawbacks of each proposal and then enter a negotiation process, following an already agreed procedure. Somewhat to the surprise of the participants themselves this straightforward approach to ranking interest conflicts proved very successful; interactive water resource management proved quite feasible.

Interaction and culture. Community led implementation in Nam Puoi resettlement project

The “cultural factor” is an often overlooked issue. In recent years the ethnic minority side has reached the development agenda, when applicable. But the range of cultural perspectives on water resources usually has to stand back for other considerations. The third project for the current study, the Nam Puoi Resettlement Project, is an example where this is not the case. Ethnic minority villagers (Dao people) controlled the resettlement issue, from first initiative and through planning and implementation. Technical Stakeholder involvement in this activity had been one very special feature. The site is within the Chia Se Project, concerned with decentralization and governance.

The process of resettlement in Nam Puoi has gone smooth with the involvement of all stakeholders. The facilitation was organized so, that each stakeholder category was first involved by interacting among themselves and then got involved in decision-making at all stages; planning, design, implementation, monitoring and management. This process brought out expectations and concerns of the various stakeholders together in the interaction process. Distrust and misunderstandings, including subjective views on shortcomings among others to understand all project dimensions, could be worked out gradually.

The involvement by all was carefully facilitated therefore all stakeholders met with active response on the efforts of villagers (Figure 3). Administrations saw their roles to provide services and advices on specific technical, financial and administrative issues. Through the emerging interaction, all administrative levels became partners with the villagers in the joint knowledge build-up over half a year. Assessment, design and implementation based on facilitation independently of both administration and development program has a number of lessons about decentralization and community driven approach. With the Chia Se Programme (Sida) in operation in the province, administration staff had trained in decentralization policy thinking. Villagers had also trained in participation, but neither side had practiced a rights approach.



FIGURE 3. Interaction process in Nam Puoi project

Their involvement in decision-making about key resettlement issues became a novel event for the established administration whose management style still was top-down. This administration culture was experience-based and focusing on village rights/responsibilities needs to be practiced. The Nam Puoi process turned into an excellent opportunity; villagers could speak out even when they might be wrong, and administrators could pay attention. All sides recognized this lesson learnt after the decision-making process.

IWRM, civil society and good governance

After several years of implementation and assessment we have learnt an integrative methodology has and developed it. of the essence is a step by step interplay between local based specific knowledge and universal technical experience. Integrated water resource management (IWRM) presumes stakeholder participation in the management of a common resource. The application for the Red River basin shows how this policy can be implemented; including success and difficulties. The three projects have been used in this study for highlighting three prime themes in IWRM with regards to both good governance and the role of civil society: (i) Involvement and competence; (ii) Integration and consensus and (iii) Interaction and culture.

These are key issues for stakeholder involvement in IWRM projects, seen both from local community and political leadership viewpoints. They concern power to influence decisions, the role of a contextual web of various stakeholders, and the significance to allow socio-cultural issues play its role. Depending on project design not all three issues

might be incorporated in both civil society and good governance behavior, but they need to be evaluated for each IWRM related project with a stakeholder profile.

One issue limiting stakeholder friendly project structures is the leadership potential to decentralize decisions. Does this involvement in IWRM by governments, local, regional or national, represent a different approach to IWRM? Is there a political will to integrate stakeholders' interests as well as technical water sub-sectors? This issue is addressed below in connection with good governance and stakeholders in IWRM.

Another issue is the civil society response to decentralization in terms of facing up to the responsibility ascribed to stakeholders in a decentralization process. This is addressed in the next section.

Towards stakeholder-friendly project structures

A number of concerns have been derived from the case accounts above, relating to characteristics to stakeholder involvement in IWRM:

- Validation of consistency in stakeholder findings (illustrated with the NHP Study)
- Communication across stakeholder boundaries (illustrated with the Nam Puoi project)
- The project context and stakeholders' problem formulation (illustrated with the NHP Study)
- Stakeholders build consensus and manage conflicts (illustrated with the 2RRBSP Part A)
- Socio-culture, the stakeholders' motivation through facilitation (illustrated with the Nam Puoi project).

Each of these themes is raised in order to specify constraints that call for capacity building in IWRM in civil society.

I. Validation of consistency in stakeholder findings. The stakeholders' results are derived from one set of meetings only in the NHP Study. This was all that was possible within its time frame. There were huge differences between the district / commune workshops, depending on factors such as experience and leadership. Such variations form a vivid illustration of the difference between calling occasional workshops for stakeholder involvement and setting up of genuine stakeholder processes. The 2RRBSP Part A set up a more comprehensive stakeholder process where decision-making by stakeholders was part of project design. However, strict limits were set to the design of the interaction process. An example of full-scale stakeholder involvement in a project is the resettlement study of Nam Puoi (see Pham Thi Bich Ngoc and A. Hjort-af-Ornas 2007) for a more complete account). Here stakeholders got access to technical expertise step by step in order to build competence and awareness. This was achieved through massive facilitation (direct interaction rather than committee work), allowing for gradual convergence towards consensus over key issues; their threats and how to deal with that, but also potential for positive change. In return the stakeholder demands in resettlement came out clear and consistent.

II. Communication across stakeholder boundaries. This is an issue calling for special facilitation efforts in all three project examples. The situation in Nam Pui is a good illustration. The bottleneck in the Nam Pui case was communication across stakeholder boundaries. Each stakeholder category members had trained in interaction, but only among themselves and not so much with persons of other categories. This became apparent when they were confronted with an urgent issue that demanded a solution; whether in harmony or consensus or not. Once facilitation had broken the ice, however, the interaction was appreciated, and even seen as pioneering a new approach.

One goal for facilitation should be a process of mutual learning about contextual impacts of projects; on regional development, on poverty reduction and on the sustainability of the interconnectedness between project investment and sustainable development. This issue is cross-cutting also into good governance in next section.

III. The project context and stakeholders' problem formulation. The contextualization of hydropower projects, using them for illustration, will concern poverty, safeguarding issues, and also consequences of large-scale projects for regional development and energy access. Stakeholders participate in two dimensions; as partners in data formation (deeper understanding of general data through an interactive learning process) and as representatives of affected peoples' rights to mitigation and sharing of the water resource upgrading (within an IWRM frame whereby other options are considered as part of interaction). These activities must take the form of a process over time, since one goal is to build awareness through not only learning but also network building and development of scenarios about socio/cultural consequences as well as production/economic ones. These goals need deep involvement by stakeholders; defensive through upholding the various safeguarding principles, but also offensive by searching for ways to exploit the opportunity provided by the major increase in resource flows due to a hydropower project.

The current study has reported on how stakeholder participation won a significant role in a study appearing at a crucial period of time. There has been a build-up over the past years towards involving the affected people in quite a different way to the past. The NHP Study thus appeared originally when stakeholding was regarded with suspicion about bringing complication into a predominantly technical implementation process. Stakeholder participation emerged as a way to raise awareness and to inform about project plans. The element of getting feedback proved constructive to project staff, and as the NHP Study progressed into Stage 2 a full range of stakeholder involvement was welcomed also from the technical side; comments full of insight proved useful also for such basic technical issues as dam location and supply levels.

Such a development suggests a breakthrough in the sense that policy shifts role in hydropower implementation; from being a set of constraints that must be considered rather as a checklist into an instrument for proper management. This calls for good governance to go from safeguarding defensive thinking towards regional development strategies. With this broader, integrated, perspective in mind, a scenario opens up where hydropower production, in the example, turns into an issue in the interest also for

regional and local planning; even international. At present most stakeholders regard hydropower to be merely in the interest of the state, according to both the NHP Study and the 2RRBSP Part A. There seems to be potential for more civil society involvement in the hydropower sector through an upgraded stakeholder involvement, aimed at placing a project into strategic thinking.

IV. Stakeholders, consensus and conflict management. The process of stakeholder interaction in the 2RRBSP Part A, oriented to become participatory IWRM, was implemented over a period of one and half years. This time depth was essential since the ambition was to create a shift in responsibility in the water-sector planning process and in project formulation toward water users. When the participatory investment planning of IWRM in the pilot sub-basins of the Red River Basin was developed and tested, the goal was to build potential for being out-scaled into broad applications. In the accounted project example with five potential sub-projects ascribed priority for investment, the approach with a transparent method of helping stakeholders to rank a wide range of options and to select their preferred interventions was successful. It integrates technical analysis and the interpretation of results with “ownership” at local community levels. The process has awareness-raising and capacity-building as important features of the informed decision-making process.

V. Socio-culture and the stakeholders’ motivation through facilitation. Contrasting the stakeholder participation in the NHP Study with the experience from the 2RRBSP Part A underscores the importance to establish a genuine interaction process. Even the small and isolated example from the voluntary resettlement of Nam Puoi village suggests a necessity of high-level facilitation. In this case of voluntary resettlement, service should be part of decentralization; as local administrations develop the skills to identify and interact with different stakeholder categories, they also build competence for good governance on this issue of resettlement. In the Nam Puoi Resettlement Project villagers could express their real opinions, see potential conflicts and seek consensus solutions on all major issues, including socio-cultural sides: Village site selection, village layout, plots (size, distribution mechanism, leveling), land certificate under the names of both husband and wife, house movement and allowances, roofs and tiles, graves relocation, water supply, sanitation and health, and public infrastructure: water supply, road, electricity, and school.

The implementation process shows interaction that later led to the decision to resettle. Support for this came from all stakeholder levels; commune, district, province, donor and nation. So this also illustrates the case for good governance, to be elaborated in the following section.

Good governance, a necessity for stakeholders’ involvement

Stakeholding must not only be transparent in its representation. There must also be a clear purpose (ADB 2004), such as in the current 2RRBSP Part A to prioritize first water sub-sectors and then potential sub-projects. The Good Governance role must be to lift sustainability priority water sub-sectors toward implementation for the technical side of the Project. The targeted interaction process is also the means of raising awareness and

introducing long-term thinking (United Nations 2000). Intensive facilitation can mobilize, and integrate, a range of stakeholders. The success to build consensus in the 2RRBSP Part A is noteworthy. Competition over development aid resources were laid aside, key issues were agreed on, and priority investment followed logically. Four responses by stakeholders should be highlighted as principles for how stakeholders can take responsibility:

- Clear goals from political leadership make it possible for stakeholders to rank issues
- Stakeholders need to agree internally on criteria for ranking before conflicts of interests become apparent
- Stakeholders need to reevaluate opinions through technical consultations; not by being told what solutions to prioritize but to fill knowledge gaps
- Also technical experts are stakeholders and need to involve themselves in the decision-making process.

The projects accounted for in this study all strive for good governance in that try to penetrate all stakeholder structural levels. Performance and targets vary, but all three projects have features in common with regard to good governance:

I. Provincial, Regional and National decision-making harmonize more easily if goals are clear, if needed competence for understanding and ranking issues is provided, and if the decision-making over resource allocation is transparent and not hampered with. The point is brought out in all three projects. In instances, such as in the NHP Study, there might not be a way build consensus over project goals with all stakeholders, but consensus can be built over procedures; including ways of addressing conflicts before they become acute.

II. Local Authorities' prioritizing processes have been carried out in a distinctly structured fashion in all cases. A selection process has been formed through the use of participatory methods, zooming gradually from selecting broad agreements. All selection techniques have been based on an early inventory with stakeholders from all priority sites (catchments, for example) for further planning. Full coverage inventories of potential sub-projects have been revisited and provided for local community assessments as one contribution to the selection process.

III. Local Communities have picked up the output from the authorities under (II), assessed and modified these proposals, and also added new ones. Two lines of action can be taken. Technical experts have interacted in the cases in a participatory manner. Usually, a series of local community workshops can be carried out with the involvement of many participants. In the Nam Pui case this is 400 persons (one third of them female headed households) in 17 villages in five selected communes. Such workshops are carried out in order to achieve informed decision-making to identify priority issues and possible solutions related to rural development in general and water development in particular. In this way, poverty reduction as viewed by local communities can be given high priority.

IV. Technical Experts provided participatory consultancy. Based on the local communities' assessments and selections, the technical experts have also established and assessed the priority sub-projects. In the 2RRBSP Part A five main criteria have been involved; water availability, irrigation performance, economic, environmental and water supply and sanitation/social/poverty. These have been combined into a systematic approach for internal technical ranking of the selected potential sub-projects. A formalized method to weigh the assessments carried out by individual experts was developed in all projects, and assessed and accepted by the stakeholders in a final evaluation workshop with informed consensus building based on all three contributions.

Conclusion: Management and planning with stakeholders

The study shows a number of similarities in stakeholder involvement for the three selected projects; (i) a participatory investment planning process in IWRM has broad applications; (ii) selection of potential sub-projects, designed and agreed upon in cooperation with stakeholders, can be made through a transparent method for shared responsibility, (iii) the process generates awareness raising and capacity building as a result of the informed decision-making process. It also demonstrates important differences in how stakeholders involve. Lessons learnt concern the extent to which good governance and stakeholder participation match each other, and what water related issues might not be suitable for stakeholder involvement.

The lessons learnt for good governance from the IV topics are (i) a participatory investment planning process has broad applications; (ii) selection of potential sub-projects, designed and agreed upon in cooperation with stakeholders, suggest a transparent method for shared responsibility, (iii) the selection process generates awareness raising and capacity building as a result of the informed decision-making process.

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