

Interactive comment on “Enhancing capacities of riparian professionals to address and resolve transboundary issues in international river basins: experiences from the Lower Mekong River Basin” by W. Douven et al.

Anonymous Referee #1

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General comments: The paper describes the outcome of an evaluation of a capacity programme dealing with cooperation and conflict resolution mechanisms in the context of transboundary water management (with a focus on floods). The capacity development programme focused on experts from the Lower Mekong Region. The limitations of the study are clearly identified by the authors.

The paper is well written (some suggested edits are included in the attached pdf), the approach in assessing the programme is technically sound, and the results are

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analysed adequately. However, in order to go beyond a report of the evaluation of a capacity development programme (of which there are many around the world) and to increase its significance for the readership, I would suggest that the analysis needs to be considerably expanded in a couple of direction.

First, the programme itself focused on Lower Mekong riparian countries. However, the Mekong Basin, as noted in the paper, encompasses other countries, including China. Some are not party to the MRC and I suspect that this is the reason of the focus of the capacity development programme. However, if we address issues of cooperation and conflict resolution, focussing on experts coming from only part of the basin does not address the broader issue of basin-wide cooperation: Lower Mekong experts could indeed agree on many things (which would already be a great achievement in the current context – e.g. the debates over the (Xayaburi and other dams in the planning) but cooperation with Upper Mekong countries is required when addressing basin-wide cooperation. I would therefore suggest that the outcomes of the evaluation of the capacity development programme also be analysed in this context, i.e. what can be achieved when experts from other regions of the basin are not beneficiaries of the programme? What would be an ideal situation and how would a programme be designed if this situation could materialise?

Second, the discussion could also be enriched by a brief presentation of similar initiatives in the region. Who is involved in similar capacity development programmes and how? What were the connections, if any (e.g. complementarity)? How can interactions be increased in a 3rd phase of the programme? How can links be established with Upper Mekong countries? Overall, the discussion would be made more comprehensive by looking beyond the evaluation of the capacity development programme.

Specific comments: In the introduction, you mention that "Due to climate change floods and droughts are expected to become more extreme in the future (MRC, 2010)". Although this is still under investigation and there are some inherent uncertainties, perhaps a more important factor is infrastructure development on the Mekong River and

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its tributaries which could have both positive and negative outcomes in terms of flood and (agricultural) drought regulation. This could also be mentioned/discussed.

You also mention specifically the Lower Mekong Basin countries as potentially increasingly affecting the river through infrastructure development in the context of their development. I would argue that most of the riparian countries have a role in terms of infrastructure development either directly (e.g. building of dams), or indirectly (financial stakes in the building of dams, access to electricity generated by these dams).

Technical corrections: Introduction: The sentence "This may lead to sub-optimal river management, as certain interventions in upstream tributaries with positive impacts downstream may not be economically feasible if considered in isolation." is not clear.

In the sentence "At the same time, trans-boundary agreements may divorce from the local situation and institute ecological degradation and provide increasing risk for human security", please clarify what you mean by "institute ecological degradation". Do you mean "generate". If so, do you see this as a systematic problem and why?

I would suggest you specify what you mean under "water-wise".

Your transition sentence "Hence, the importance of capacity building as a touchstone for trans-boundary water management." refers back to well informed citizens but the capacity development programme you have as a case study addresses professionals/experts. Citizens are generally informed by awareness campaigns, not the specific capacity development activities you discuss in the paper.

References: A reference check was made and discrepancies mark in the pdf.

Figures: There is a problem with the labelling and order of Figures 1 & 2 The font in Figure 1 is too small

Table: Table 5 has the exact same title as Table 4.

Please also note the supplement to this comment:

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<http://www.hydrol-earth-syst-sci-discuss.net/9/C1138/2012/hessd-9-C1138-2012-supplement.pdf>

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