



ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE FAR EAST

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Broadbeach, Queensland
Australia

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE FOR CO-
ORDINATION OF INVESTIGATIONS OF THE LOWER
MEKONG BASIN

(February 1958 - March 1959)

INTRODUCTION

1. The Committee for Coordination of Investigations of the Lower Mekong Basin was established jointly by the Governments of Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and the Republic of Viet-Nam in October 1957 in response to the decision taken by the United Nations Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East at its thirteenth Session in March 1957. In accordance with the statute of the Committee, a report ^{1/} was submitted to the Commission at its fourteenth Session in February 1958. The present report describes the activities of the Committee in the period from February 1958 to March 1959.

PROGRAMME OF INVESTIGATIONS ADOPTED BY THE COMMITTEE

2. The main function of the Committee, as set forth in its statute, is to promote, coordinate, supervise and control the planning and investigation of water resources development projects in the Lower Mekong Basin. With a view to accomplishing speedy and orderly development of the water resources of the Lower Mekong Basin, the Committee, at its second Session in February 1958, adopted a five-year programme of investigations which was prepared by the United Nations Survey

/MISSION

1/ Report of the Committee for Coordination of Investigations of the Lower Mekong Basin to the 14th Session of the Commission (E/CN.11/475, 24 February)1958.

Mission ^{1/} in January 1958 at the request of the four riparian Governments.

3. The programme called for the collection of essential engineering and related data and the planning of projects in the main river as well as in the major tributaries. In the first two years, efforts were to be directed toward the collection of basic data in the main river. The works involved (1) the establishment of a system of hydrologic stations at the key points along the main river as well as on the major tributaries (2) the levelling of the main river from Burma border to the sea (3) the aerial mapping of three reaches of the main river (4) the execution of detailed topographic, hydrologic, geologic and other survey and investigations of promising sites on the main river and (5) the undertaking of special studies of agriculture, mineral resources, power market, transport and general economics. After sufficient data had been collected in the first two years, planning of projects in the most promising sites on the main river was to be undertaken in the third year.

4. Along with the investigations in the main river, a reconnaissance survey of the major tributaries was also to be taken up in the first two years, with a view to locating promising project sites and exploring way and means for the use and control of water in the tributaries. After the completion of the reconnaissance work in about two years time, the various kinds of investigations (such as levelling, mapping, surveys and investigations) designed to be carried out in the main river as described in the previous paragraph were also to be introduced in the major tributaries in the third and fourth years of operation, ~~which is~~ to be followed by planning of projects in the fifth year. It was envisaged that as soon as the planning of projects in the main river and the major tributaries was completed, a skeleton plan for the development of water resources in the Lower Mekong Basin would be worked out.

5. The total cost for the five-year programme of investigations was estimated by the United Nations Survey Mission at 9.2 million dollars. The breakdown of the cost estimate for various items of work and the schedule of operation over a five-year period is reproduced in table 1. This programme has been adopted by the Committee and forms the basic plan for carrying out the investigations. /TABLE I

^{1/} United Nations Survey Mission - Programme of studies and investigations for comprehensive development, Lower Mekong-Basin January 1958 (TAA/AFE/3).

TABLE I

PROGRAMME OF INVESTIGATIONS

(Figures show expenditure in thousand U.S. dollars)

1st priority group

-----2nd priority group

Item	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	Year
1. Reconnaissance of major tributaries	<u>120</u> (Japan)	<u>120</u> (Japan)				
2. Hydrologic observation	<u>1,140</u> (USA, France, New Zealand, 320)	<u>240</u>	<u>240</u>	a/ 320	a/ 320	WMO
3. Survey and mapping						
(a) Levelling	<u>370</u> (USA)		<u>170</u>			
(b) Aerial mapping	<u>340</u>	<u>330</u>	<u>540</u>	<u>530</u>		
(c) Supplementary spot levelling	<u>310</u>	<u>300</u>	<u>180</u>	<u>180</u>		
(d) Detailed topographic and hydrographic survey		<u>150</u>		<u>190</u>		
(e) Flowage damage survey		<u>50</u>		<u>50</u>		
(f) Construction material survey		<u>50</u>		<u>90</u>		
(g) Geological investigation & borings		<u>240</u>		<u>470</u>		
(h) Soil survey		<u>60</u>		<u>130</u>		
(i) Hydrographic survey	<u>30</u> (USA)	<u>30</u> (USA)				
4. Related and special studies	<u>200</u> (TAA, FAO)	<u>200</u>	<u>100</u>			
5. Preliminary planning						
(1) Promising reaches of the main river			<u>900</u>			
(2) Other reaches of the main river and major tributaries and skeleton basin plan					<u>900</u>	
6. Advisory service to Co-ordination Committee	<u>50</u> (TAA)	<u>50</u> (TAA)	<u>50</u>	<u>50</u>	<u>50</u>	
Annual expenditure	<u>2,560</u>	<u>1,820</u>	<u>2,180</u>	<u>1,690</u>	<u>950</u>	
Accumulated expenditure	<u>2,560</u>	<u>4,380</u>	<u>6,560</u>	<u>8,250</u>	<u>9,200</u>	
a/ Operation and maintenance by countries concerned.						

/IMPLEMENTATION

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME

6. The governments of the riparian countries, when considering the establishment of the Committee for Coordination in 1957, recognized the urgent need for the establishment of a programme of investigation and also for funds for the implementation of such a programme. At the first Session in October/November 1957, the Committee requested the Executive Secretary to negotiate, on its behalf, with governments and agencies interested in extending assistance for the development of the Mekong Basin. At the same Session, the Executive Secretary conveyed to the Committee the wish of the Government of France to participate in the financing of studies on the development of the Lower Mekong Basin for which it was appropriating a sum of 60 million francs out of its 1957 budget. The Committee gratefully accepted the offer of the Government of France and decided to utilize the sum on equipment immediately needed for hydrologic observation.

7. At the Fourteenth Session of the Commission held in Kuala Lumpur in March 1958, the Prime Minister of New Zealand, on behalf of his Government, made an offer of a sum of 100,000 dollars to assist in financing a part of the required studies and investigations. The representative of the United States of America announced the offer by his Government of a sum of two million dollars (which was subsequently increased to 2.2 million dollars) for the collection of basic data and provision of necessary equipment and engineering services to enable the Committee to undertake, without delay, the programme of studies and investigations. The representatives of the four riparian countries gratefully accepted these offers. They also expressed appreciation of the assistance which would be forthcoming in 1958 from the United Nations Expanded Technical Assistance Programme of the order of 200,000 dollars. The Commission welcomed these efforts and adopted a resolution^{1/} urging the United Nations

/to give

^{1/} ECAFE resolution 25 (XIV), 12 March 1958.

to give highest priority to this Mekong project when the Special Fund was established. This resolution was noted with satisfaction by the Economic and Social Council at its 26th session in July 1958. 1/

8. The Coordination Committee, during its third session in May 1957 carefully considered the items of investigations that could best be carried out with the aid offered from various sources. With the concurrence of the donor governments, the Committee decided that French aid, New Zealand aid and a major part of the U.S. aid would be used for hydrologic observations as listed under item 2 in table 1, which includes the establishment of a system of hydrologic and meteorological stations, provision of survey launches and equipments, training of personnel and operation of the stations for a limited period of time. The rest of the U.S. aid would be utilized for completing a continuous levelling of the main river from Burma border to the sea (item 3a in table 1, first priority group) and hydrographic survey of navigable channel (item 3i in table 1). All operations under the U.S. aid programme were to be carried out by a U.S. engineering firm.

9. Under the Expanded Programme of Technical Assistance, the FAO and UNTAA would provide experts to undertake the various special studies relating to agriculture, forestry, fishery, minerals, transportation, flood control and general economics (item 4 in table 1). UNTAA would also provide three top ranking engineers to serve on the advisory board (item 6 in table 1) and WMO would provide a hydro-meteorologist to assist in the work relating to hydrology and meteorology (item 2 in table 1).

10. During the same session, the Executive Secretary conveyed to the Committee the offer of the Government of Canada to depute an expert, at their cost, to study the scope and cost of aerial survey of the lower Mekong basin (item 3b in table 1). The Committee gratefully accepted this offer with the understanding that investigation by the Canadian expert would not commit either the Canadian Government or the riparian countries in any way.

1/ After the ECOSOC Resolution E/RES/ 679(XXVI) 10 July 1958.

11. After the conclusion of the third session of the Committee in June 1958, the United States International Cooperation Administration was actively engaged in the selection of a competent US engineering firm to undertake the agreed items of investigations. In the meantime, UNTAA, FAO and WMO deputed experts to the field to undertake the various special studies. The Canadian expert on aerial survey completed his investigations in October 1958.

12. In December 1958, the Committee held a special session in Bangkok which was attended also by representatives of all donating countries and of the United Nations and specialized agencies participating in the programme. The Committee considered in more detail the programme of investigations and gave special attention to coordinating the detailed items of work on hydrologic observation (Item 2 in table 1) which involved aid and equipment donated by three countries, namely France, New Zealand and U.S.A. as well as the services of experts from the United Nations and the specialized agencies. It decided that French aid be used for the purchase of part of the hydrologic equipment, New Zealand aid for the purchase of part of the survey launches and US aid to take up the rest of the programme. WMO would depute experts to assist in the work on hydrologic observations. The Harza Engineering Co. International selected by United States ICA to carry out the US aid on the Mekong project, was to prepare a programme of operations for hydrologic and meteorological observation, levelling and hydrographic survey for 1959, which was to be considered by the Committee later.

13. During the special session, the Permanent Representative of Japan to ECAFE reiterated the offer of his government, which had already been communicated to the Executive Secretary, to undertake reconnaissance survey of the major tributaries of the Mekong basin which was included in the recommendations of the United Nations Survey Mission (item 1 in table 1). The reconnaissance would be carried out by a team of Japanese experts for a period of two years

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and at a total estimated cost of 240,000 dollars to be borne by the Japanese Government. The Committee gratefully accepted the offer.

14. With all these operations in progress, the Committee considered it desirable to have an Executive Agent of the Committee to be responsible for the day to day administration of the entire programme. Representatives from countries and specialized agencies giving aid to the Committee were requested to maintain close liaison with the Executive Agent, when appointed. The Committee requested UNTAA to make available the services of a suitable Executive Agent together with necessary supporting staff.

15. In February-March 1959, the Committee held its fourth session in Vientiane, Laos. During the session, the Executive Secretary conveyed the offer of Her Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom of assistance from Colombo Plan funds up to 20,000 pounds sterling for the purchase of a launch and meteorological equipment, which was accepted by the Committee with gratitude.

16. The Committee passed a resolution requesting the Government of Canada to assist in undertaking the first priority phase of the survey and mapping of the main stem of the river as proposed in the report prepared by the Canadian specialist, Col. G.S. Andrews.

17. At the same session, the Committee reviewed the contract between ICA and the Harza Engineering Co. International and adopted a detailed programme of work for levelling of the main river, for the establishment of a system of hydrological stations and execution of hydrographic survey of the river. It was scheduled that operations would start immediately with the funds made available from France, New Zealand and the United States of America.

/18. Prior to

18. Prior to this session, work on the reconnaissance survey of the tributaries had been commenced by the team of experts sent by the Government of Japan.

19. The Committee further considered detailed reports prepared by FAO on agricultural development in the Lower Mekong Basin and by WMO on meteorological and hydrological investigations, and also a paper on the need for a manpower study prepared by ILO. It decided to formulate at its next session in June 1959 a request to the United Nations Special Fund for assistance after the studies conducted by experts from UNTAA were also available. Meanwhile, it decided to request UNTAB for the services of one hydro-meteorologist from WMO to assist the Executive Agent.

20. The Committee carefully considered question of the responsibilities of Executive Agent and his working relation with ECAFE. It decided that the Executive Agent would advise the Committee for coordination of Investigations of the Lower Mekong Basin and, through the Committee as might be appropriate, the Governments of Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and Viet-Nam, on the administrative and technical coordination of plans for the overall development of the basin. He would assist the Committee in carrying out the day to day coordination of the engineering, economic, agricultural and other studies undertaken at the request of the Committee by the United Nations and specialized agencies and also under bilateral programmes, and would report to the Committee at regular intervals on the progress of the work. In the performance of these duties the Executive Agent would maintain close liaison with the ECAFE secretariat and be subject to the direction and guidance of the Executive Secretary of ECAFE in regard to policy matters.

/ 21. CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION

21. In reviewing its work, the Committee wished to express satisfaction at the significant progress of the Mekong project already accomplished within a relatively short period of time which fully demonstrated the spirit of international cooperation not only among the riparian countries but also among member governments of the United Nations, as evidenced by their generous contributions to the implementation of the programme. It wished to thank the United Nations, the UN TAB and specialized agencies and also the members of the Advisory Board assisting in the implementation of this gigantic task. It wished to commend particularly the good offices of the ECAFE secretariat.

22. Considering that Mr C.V. Narasimhan would soon formally vacate the office of ECAFE's Executive Secretary, the Committee specially recalled his personal contribution to the progress of the Mekong scheme, and unanimously adopted the following resolution:-

THE COMMITTEE FOR COORDINATION OF INVESTIGATIONS OF THE LOWER MEKONG BASIN

RESOLVES to place on record its profound appreciation of the untiring efforts on behalf of the Committee of the Executive Secretary of ECAFE, Mr C.V. Narasimhan, now under orders of transfer as Under Secretary for Special Political Affairs, United Nations Headquarters, New York;

HOPES that Mr C.V. Narasimhan will continue to take interest in the implementation of the Mekong programme of investigations and that his good offices will be available to the Committee at all times, and especially in regard to the obtaining of financial assistance both under bilateral aid and under multilateral aid, from the Special Fund, the United Nations and the specialized agencies;

REQUESTS the Secretary-General of the United Nations kindly to make available the services of Mr. C. V. Narasimhan as may be necessary in the interests of the Committee, including in particular his attendance at future meetings of the Committee as often as possible.

/ANNEX

ANNEX Part B. Section II of Economic and Social Council
Resolution 679 (XXVI) on Annual Report of the
Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East
The Economic and Social Council

Notes with satisfaction resolution 25 (XIV), of 12 March 1958, of the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East on the Development of the Lower Mekong Basin, and the statute and rules of procedure of the Committee for Co-ordination of Investigations annexed to the annual report of the Commission, and especially the contributions from the Expanded Programme of Technical Assistance and directly from Member Governments of the United Nations towards the implementation of the programme of investigations, as well as the co-ordinating role of the secretariat of the Commission servicing the Committee.

1029th plenary meeting
10 July 1958