

SEA for the Quang Nam Hydropower Plan, Vietnam

Source: OCED (2012)

The Plan and SEA: The provincial hydropower plan incorporated close to 40 hydropower projects, including 8 large projects (60-225 MW). By the time the SEA was completed, the number of planned projects had increased to over 60, with proposals continuing to come in.

The SEA of the Quang Nam Province Hydropower Plan was the first SEA undertaken in Viet Nam. It was conducted on a plan already approved (ex-post assessment) to gain experience.

Key issues: The SEA resulted in four critical strategic concerns in the basin: integrity of ecosystems, water supply, impacts on ethnic minority groups, and economic development. The SEA concluded that the pace and scale of the proposed hydropower developments were at a level that could not be sustained. While the hydropower plan would bring national benefits (energy and income), these benefits would not be captured within the basin locality unless measures such as a river basin management fund were established.

The SEA made a number of recommendations relating to the integrated management of the basin, including a proposal to develop an “intact rivers” policy to secure the maintenance of one or two complete river sequences (from headwaters to sea) free of barriers to ensure a full sequence of habitats and fish migratory routes.

Influence of the SEA: Since its completion, a number of SEA recommendations have been implemented. These include a freeze on all hydropower development within the Song Thanh Nature Reserve located high in the catchment, the trial of benefit-sharing mechanisms for hydropower by the Electricity Regulator of Vietnam, the restructuring of the River Basin Organization, and the development of an updated river basin plan.

Additional lessons from an ex-post assessment:

- The relevance of strategic assessment processes for hydropower planning was highlighted.
- Ex-post assessment can still be effective in identifying opportunities for enhancing sustainability.
- Adding social and economic assessments to the SEA increased its acceptability within government, which tends to give emphasis to meeting immediate economic objectives.
- Even though time-consuming and intensive, the involvement of government stakeholders and consultations with communities clearly contributed to the success by increasing stakeholder ownership.