Inland Waterway Transport and Port Development in the Lao PDR

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1. INTRODUCTION

- **Name:** Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR)
- **Area:** 236,800 sq km
- **Population:** 6.5 million
- **Capital:** Vientiane
- **Neighbors:** China, Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam.
- **Rivers:** Mekong River flows through Laos about 1,898 km
- **River port:** 29 ports
The Lao PDR is among the world least developed countries and also the land-lock country in the South East Asia Region only one of the Forty land-locked countries in the world.

The policy of our country is to transform the country from landlocked to land-linked, particularly in the Greater Mekong Sub-region.

Mekong river is an international river connecting to six countries in Asia (China, Myanmar, Laos, Thailand, Vietnam and Cambodia) and it is very important for navigation and waterways transport in Laos.
Inland Waterway Transport had been playing an important role, since several hundred years ago but it was a traditional mode of transport for our earlier generation.

After the construction of the Road No.13N and No.13S was completed then the waterway transport is reduced its performance from year to year;
Nowadays, only the section from Houei Sai to Luang Prabang and Houei Sai to Guan Lei (China) are still important routes for cargos, passengers and tourism.

Main commodities are passengers, tourists and cargos such as agriculture products, fruit, logs, construction material (fuel, sand, rock, steel and etc)...
1. Road transport is easier than waterways transport for a few cargos.

2. Lack of tools and equipment for loading and unloading, storehouse, landing facilities as: pontoon (jetty), ramp at the ports;

3. Limitation of passage during dry season (shallow water level, sand bars and rapids, narrow channel);

4. Difficulties in rainy season with high current flow, turbulent and many hot spots along the rivers;

5. The skippers did not pass school or University

6. The number of cargos is large

7. The unit cost is higher than road transport
2. River Ports in Laos

- There are 29 existing ports located along the Mekong river.

- Some port are located along tributaries such as Nam Tha, Nam Ou, Nam Soueng, Nam Khan, Nam Ngum, Nam San, Nam Kading, Xe Bang Fai, Xe Bang Hieng, Xe Don and Xe Kong.

- Many river ports are still in their natural condition without concrete ramp often difficult to berth throughout loading and unloading.
River port with Ramp
River ports without ramp
3. Navigation Channel Improvement

- The Navigation Channel in the Mekong River and its tributaries are still in their natural state as: narrow navigation channels, with sandbars, reefs, rapids and rock outcrops which are making navigation unsafe and dangerous for navigation.

- In 2001-2004 the navigation channel has been improved from Kouan Lei Port (China) to Borkeo Province over a distance of about 333 kilometers by rock blasting and removal of 11 scattered reefs most seriously hindering navigation. Some 57 navigation marks have been installed, 19 name plates of localities and 6 sets of winching facilities.
Aid to Navigation

- After the Waterways Department has been established in 2008, and improved the waterways transportation corporate with MRC under the NAP.

- Early 2009, the aids to navigation system has been installed between Louang Prabang and Vientiane.

- Condition survey for hot spot and dangerous area between Houay Sai to Pakse.

- Installation of aids to navigation in dangerous area along the Mekong river between Houay Sai and Vientiane.
Landing facilities

- Installation 24 sets of landing facilities along the Nam Tha, Nam Ou and Mekong river.
- Installation 2 water gauges of low water to navigation.
- Pilot project on GPS vessel guidance system in Mekong river from Houay sai to Louang Prabang
4. Future Plans

1. Setting up the waterways transport strategy plan.
2. Improve the navigation channel and installation of aid to navigation along the Mekong River from the north to the south.
3. Set up the navigation safety system (AIS) to connect from port to ship.
4. Set up the training course to the skipper in the training center
5. Upgrading the navigation training and research center into waterways institute or school.
6. Construction new river ports with warehouse and equipment as: Xieng Kok (Luang Namtha), Pak Beng (Oudom Xay) and Khok Chong (Luang Prabang).

7. Improvement some ports along the Mekong River with concrete ramp, install pontoon that can be easy to berth and get off/out from the boat;

8. Providing facilities equipment for loading and unloading throughout landing facilities at the port.

9. Capacity building to the staffs of waterways department for survey and navigation lock design.
Conclusion

- Lack of recourse person and engineering of waterways
- Lack of fund to improve the river works
- Need the assistance and support from neighboring countries and from other international donors.
Thank you very much