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Laos : Towards an IWRM project in Nam Ngum Basin

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During a study tour in France organized by the Loire-Brittany Water Agency, the Lao delegation led by Mrs. Khempeng Pholsena, Minister to the Prime Minister, President of the Water Resources and Environment Administration (WREA) get acquainted with the French experience in water resources governance and management.

Mr. Jacques Oudin, Honorary Senator, Chairman of "International Cooperation" of the Loire-Brittany Basin Committee, then accepted an invitation from the Lao authorities to discuss modalities for cooperation on a pilot basin project in the Nam Ngum Basin, where a study was recently carried out with financing from the French Development Agency, to establish the conditions for planning water management.

The French Water Agencies Rhine-Meuse and Loire-Brittany will finance the project under decentralized cooperation and will share their technical expertise for the benefit of the Lao party, with support from the International Office for Water.

The Nam Ngum River Basin, a major tributary of the Mekong River, covers about 8,000 km² and is of vital importance to Lao PDR.

The challenges related to hydropower production are very significant as well as environmental degradation (soil degradation, water shortages, reduced fish stocks, deforestation ...). The project aims to initiate a process of Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) with the Lao authorities through the development of tools and methodologies suited for the Nam Ngum Basin. Lessons learned will be disseminated at national level.

At completion of this 2-year project, Laos will have practical experience of development and testing of tools such as : planning, empowerment of local stakeholders, financing mechanisms.