

2.4 Mechanism for SLB Management and Administration

Up till now, management and administration of the SLB has been overseen by the SLB Committee. The Committee has not been authorized to propose, let alone administer, budgets. Rather than acting in a proactive manner, the Committee has to make requests to, and to coordinate among different government agencies to get things done. Most governmental agencies have their own missions and commitments, which are scarcely coordinated. It is thus sadly understandable that the committee cannot work proactively nor forcefully, but has to compromise after compromises. Most time and efforts have been spent on passive actions, and not timely responses to problems when they arise. Furthermore, the majority of committee members who are usually high ranking government officials from various government departments/ministries tend to adhere to their respective agencies' policies, rather than complying to the Committee's resolutions. The "People" sector of the Committee, which is the minority, can play only a small part in the decision making process, and are often regarded as rubber stamps for legitimacy. More recently, the Government has made an effort to enhance the Committee's efficiency by issuing a Cabinet's resolution on 17 February 2004 authorizing, in principle, the Office of Natural Resources and Environmental Policy and Planning (ONEP) to screen and approve interagency budgets for SLB development. In this process, ONEP has to coordinate with 22 departments in 9 ministries.

However, the present management and administration mechanism of the Committee is not significantly different from that of the previous form. There are 39 members in the present SLB Committee consisting of 26 high ranking official members, 4 academics and 9 representatives from the "People" sector. There are 2 subcommittees: the Sub-committee for Monitoring and Assessment and the Sub-committee for Promoting Public Participation and Public Relations. Working in committee style, all decisions of the SLB Committee and both Sub-committees must be conducted at meetings. If meetings are not held, there is no decision. Or, if there are abrupt changes in committee components, the meetings, hence decisions, must be postponed. Such delays lead to inefficiency in tackling problems and often dire consequences. The size and nature of the Committee render it extremely difficult to convene meetings on demands. The expenditure for each meeting is also unnecessarily high, since most members, especially high-ranking officials from Bangkok, will have to fly in to meeting venues in the Basin. Moreover, allowing a large number of observers to its meetings to demonstrate meeting transparency has created some uneasy atmospheres for open and straight forward discussions among certain committee members.

Ways for improvement: In this study, 3 models have been proposed to enhance efficiency of the SLB management and administration mechanism, as follows:

Model 1: This model proposes the establishment of an Office of SLB Development and Rehabilitation (SLBDR) which will assist, and report to, the SLB Board. Its principal missions are: (1) to screen proposed projects, and submit to the local level SLB Board for further perusal, (2) to establish an information system and a monitoring system, for assessing project performance, and (3) to set up working groups on Legal and Complaints, Public Relations and Public Hearing and Budget and Fund Raising. During initial state, the Government may establish the SLB Fund to accumulate and manage money from community organizations, donation, fees and relevant government budgets (such as budgets for rural development and decentralization). The Fund management should be autonomous as well as flexible yet accountable.

Model 2: This model proposes the establishment of an organization, as recommended by the National Water Resources Committee which will have hierarchical representatives; from village (Muban) water user group, to Tambon, District, Province and Basin levels. In each level, there will be 3 principal working groups. These are the Action Plan Working Group; the Data & Information Working Group; and the Public Relations Working Group. This model simply treats the SLB as one of 24 basins nationwide.

Model 3: This model is the outcome synthesized from suggestions from public meetings held in SLB during the course of this study. The concepts on which this model is based are:

- (1) Key stakeholders in SLB must be sufficiently represented in the SLB Board. Representatives must be chosen under selection process acceptable by community networks. All legitimate groups, organizations and networks in SLB should be encouraged to register. Examples of the networks are traditional Fisherfolks' network, Industrial Entrepreneurs' network, Farmers' network, Shrimp farmers' network, Aquaculturists' network, Green movement network, etc.
- (2) The SLB Board shall consist of around 20 members. This size is considered sufficiently efficient. The key responsibility is to screen and approve the projects, as well as to administer the budget in accordance with the SLB Management Plan.
- (3) For efficiency as well as transparency in management and administration, there must be formality that will enable the SLB Board to publicly display their responsibilities. For example, there must be channels that allow the public to work with the committee via networks of which they are members. The public should also be given opportunity to join an open forum, "the SLB Forum," whereby the following important activities are held:

- An annual meeting, whereby all organizations/networks report their past year activities, allowing the forum to exchange notions and dialogues, as well as being a mechanism for these organizations/networks to be audited.
 - Meetings for problem remedies, or for public inquiries on specific SLB public conflicts.
- (4) Representatives from the government sector should be reduced to one per ministry; they are expected to coordinate with relevant departments within their respective ministries. (Fig. 4)
- (5) The component of the SBL Board (Model 3) are:
- **People Sector** referring to beneficiary groups (Resource users) and the development groups such as community networks of environmental protection and non-government organizations.
 - Each interest group must be represented by its own network. If the network does not exist, or it is weak, it must be developed. The beneficiary groups can be associations, networks, clubs, etc. and they must register, and be approved, so that the public is not confused as to which groups or organizations are representative and which are not.
 - The network of interest groups will elect their members to be a representative in the SLB Board.
 - **Government sector** consisting of representatives from central, regional and local government agencies;
 - **Expert sector** consisting of representatives from universities, other academics and experts.

Balance should be maintained between each sector for representation.

- (6) An SLB Development Agency (SLBDA) must be established. The Agency will be the key organization responsible for SLB development. It must be an autonomous body, which reports to, and overseen by, the SLB Board. The SLBDA structure should comprise at least 3 divisions: SLB Research Administration Division; Finance/Policy and Project Monitoring Division; and Community Administration Division (Learning networks and SLB Forum).

(7) The objectives of Model 3 are that:

- Issues and demands of each beneficiary group are borne by its network or interest group. Therefore, its problems will be recognized and solved;
- Demands of each representative in SLB Board will be taken up by the Board. In other words, the representatives' issues will be resolved by their group efforts. The network will in turn be accountable to its members, on the decisions made on their behalf.

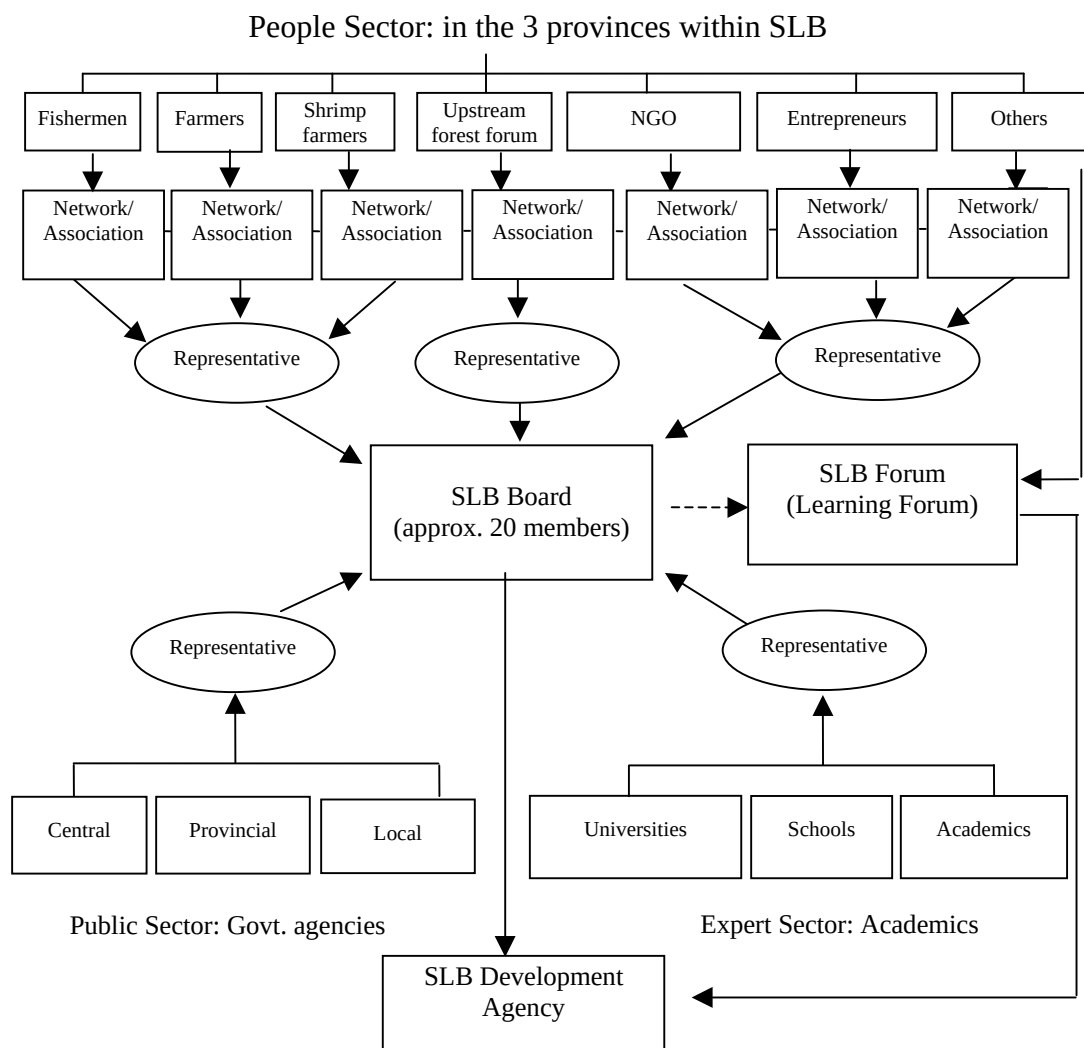


Figure 4 Component of the SLB Committee, Model 3

Representatives from government sectors will be selected from government agencies responsible for natural resources and environment management and social and economic development. Their principal roles are to:

- (1) implement the SLB Committee's policy, by transforming the policy into action plans, programs and projects;
- (2) propose ways and means for problem remedies;
- (3) submit policies which are assigned from the central government, which link to SLB development, to the SLB Committee for scrutiny and approval.

Organizations which are involved in SLB management and administration, such as local administrative organizations, conservation clubs, volunteer organizations, local agencies, are eligible to request financial budget from SLB Committee. The SLB Committee will then screen proposed projects for approval. The Government must allocate budgets in accordance with the SLB Master Plan, and the SLB Committee must administer the budgets according to the plan.

Given a large number of organizations/networks in the SLB and several decades of community participation development and experiences in knowledge sharing, Model 3 should be most feasible and suitable. It also suits and conforms to values and cultures of southern Thai people.

It is recommended that a sub-committee be appointed in the existing SLB Committee, to reform to the existing organization, which should be finalized within one year. It is also recommended that a task force of 5-6 persons be appointed to study, evaluate the existing organizations and networks. It should be noted here that in certain networks, such as the fishermen network, there has already been movements and public participation process. Their representatives have already been elected. The outcome of the study should lead to the drafting of the SLB Development Agency Act.