

MEKONG  
INSTITUTE



# FOSTERING DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY IN THE LANCANG-MEKONG COUNTRIES

## Background

The COVID-19 pandemic has deepened digital divide in Lancang-Mekong countries, resulted as an urgent concern for day-to-day technology with digital connectivity and e-commerce platforms are emerging as important drivers to connect Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Lancang-Mekong Countries to domestic and global markets. At present, MSMEs in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, and Vietnam face several challenges that delay their adoption of technology and digital tools, including limited knowledge about available technologies and their applications. One of changes in MSMEs sectors caused by pandemic crisis is rapid shift towards electronic services and digital payment systems across all businesses and many of them are related to enhancing cross-country trade and collaboration.

Regional cooperation can make digital technology more affordable by enabling quality infrastructure and cross-border connectivity. The Lancang-Mekong Cooperation (LMC) as one of mechanisms has played an important role in enhancing the overarching efforts towards development in the region through connectivity tools and digital transformation brings new tools as 'digital connectivity' to provide opportunities for the region to cope with the current crisis and to overcome longer-term development challenges.

There is urging to upgrade MSMEs stakeholders in better utilizing and transformational potentials of digital connectivity for the SDGs. This will be best achieved when governments, the private sector, civil society, and other stakeholders work towards a common goal to narrow the digital gaps and create a more inclusive development as a part of pandemic recovery support.

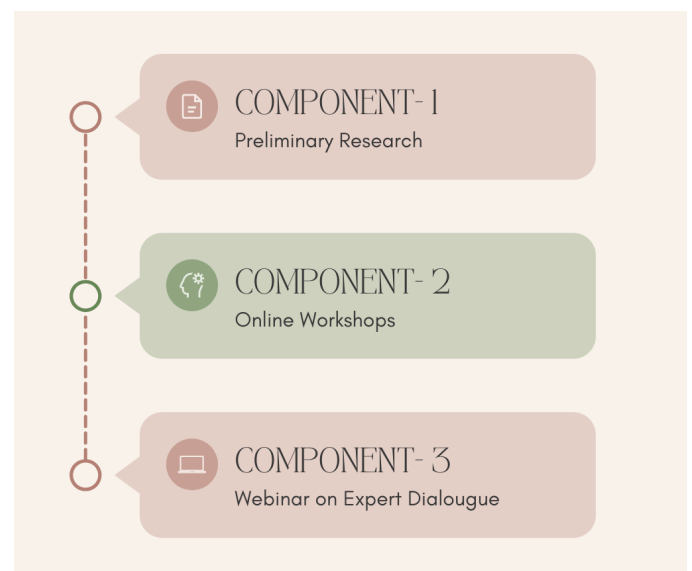
To accompany the use of digital services and innovative technologies in MSMEs, MI aim to empower people and business to seize a human-centered, sustainable and prosperous digital future in global context by increasing investments in human development, dialogues, and learning platforms which can involve more public-private actors in building more resilient and making more sustainable regional economic development and integration.

With the support of the People's Government of the People's Republic of China, Mekong Institute (MI) is implementing one year project on "Fostering Digital Connectivity in the Lancang-Mekong Countries" to identify challenges and opportunities and share the experiences on digital connectivity in MSMEs sector and enhance the key stakeholders' capacity by introducing digital platforms, with focus on successful experiences in applied digital technologies for sharing among Lancang-Mekong countries in the links of digital connectivity which contribute to SDGs and LMC.

Along the initiative's three components (preliminary research, online workshops, and expert dialogue), a series of online workshops will be organized with a focus on experience sharing and specific topics to raise awareness of the existence of these digital solutions and demonstrate how governments can effectively support MSMEs in leveraging digital services. Finally, an expert dialogue will be held to determine what needs to be done as emergency responses or actions to reduce digital gaps and enhance 'digitalization connectivity' for MSMEs, as well as to identify potential future actions to facilitate regional cooperation and advances the SDGs despite pandemic in the Lancang-Mekong countries.

## Approaches

The project will be including three components



# COMPONENTS ACTIVITIES

1

## Preliminary Research

To conduct an evidence-based data in order to gain better understanding of the current state, issues, and challenges of digital connectivity in the Lancang-Mekong countries' MSMEs.



2

## Online Workshops

Based on the outputs of the preliminary research, the online workshop series will be tailored and conducted to equipping and promoting digital connectivity for MSMEs in Lancang-Mekong countries.



1



Let's Know You: Digital Connectivity in the Lancang-Mekong Countries

2



Let's Discover: Facilitating Fintechs and Digital Payment Inclusion for MSMEs in Lancang-Mekong Countries

3



Let's Do It: Financial Access and Support Policy to Empowering MSMEs in Lancang-Mekong Countries

4



Let's Share it: Report of Action Plan Implementation

3

## Webinar on Expert Dialogue

This is the 'let's communicate module', to determine what needs to be done or could be done as emergency responses or actions to reduce digital gaps and enhance digitalization connectivity for MSMEs, as well as to identify potential future actions to facilitate regional cooperation.



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