



MEKONG
INSTITUTE

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A Message from
Executive Director
Dr. Watcharas Leelawath



2015 was a highly successful and groundbreaking year for MI. With great satisfaction we can look back at an eventful period, during which MI implemented six projects and organized over 230 activities in the GMS region, which reached over 3,300 participants, thereby progressing above and beyond our work plan. The participants almost equally represented the public and the private sector (51% & 49%), mirroring MI's approach of fostering both alike.

One particular highlight of the year 2015 was the 3rd Mekong Forum. I am proud to say that the forum brought together almost 150 participants, consisting of senior policy makers, business and civic leaders, as well as academia and development practitioners involved in the GMS and AEC, to discuss the future of the region under the topic "Modernizing the GMS towards the post-AEC 2015". In general, the year 2015 saw the continuation of the strong cooperation with our valued partners, as well as the emergence of new partnerships, like the collaboration with Yunnan Power Grid Co., Ltd. (YNPG), which enabled the pioneering 'GMS Energy Policy Research and Power Professional Training & Research Program'.

On a different note, 2015 also marked the inauguration of MI's new annex. With 37 trainings, workshops and seminars held on MI premises in 2015 alone, the modern two-story building is bound to become a buoyant hub for capacity development in the GMS region.

In addition to these highlights and developments, last year was crucial with regards to MI's strategic approach. Emerging from the successful completion of the 2011-2015 Strategic Plan, MI was able to formulate the new Strategic Plan to guide its actions in the period from 2016 to 2020. Responding to a comprehensive assessment of MI's needs and challenges, MI formulated a new roadmap to progressively grow and reach its ambitious goals in the future. This roadmap will enable MI to further establish its position as the distinguished capacity development center in the GMS and to mature in its role as a regional hub for policy dialogue, networking, and communication.

As a result of this transitional process, MI's framework has been restructured in correspondence with the goals, which were identified in three regional development themes. Next to the Trade and Investment Facilitation Department, which will remain unchanged in its highly relevant role, the Rural Development Program is reshaped into the Agricultural Development and Commercialization Department, acknowledging the substantial interdependencies between agriculture and trade. As the third pillar, the newly founded department Innovation and Technological Connectivity complements MI's new threefold setup. Together, these three pillars will enable MI to engage with the broad range of crosscutting issues in regional development. Furthermore, the installation of MI's internal monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) system is a substantial achievement of the transitional year 2015. I am convinced that MEL will benefit MI sustainably and contribute to increasing its efficiency, productivity, and transparency.

All in all, our accomplishments of 2015 have guided the way for 2016, the year of our twentieth anniversary, to be a highly successful one. Finally, I would like to express my sincerest gratitude towards our development partners and implementing partners, who through their continuous commitment and support enable us to advance and pursue our mission. I am certain that together we will succeed in making the coming year a remarkable milestone in the history of MI.

Interview with the Council Chairman

U Tun Tun Naing

2015 was an eventful and active year for MI. How do you personally rate MI's performance in its 19th year of existence?

When looking back at MI's performance during 2015, I do so with a great sense of accomplishment and satisfaction. First of all, 2015 marked the successful completion of the 2011-2015 Strategic Plan, representing a milestone in the history of MI. Moreover, the numbers of activities and participants reached an all-time high, successfully addressing the increasing need for capacity development in the GMS. With the formulation of the new Strategic Plan 2016-2020, MI has positioned itself well to continue this positive trend and to keep meeting the needs and challenges of the countries in the GMS.

On a personal note, 2015 was also my first year as Chairman of the MI Council. It was a great honor to accept the chairmanship. I would like to thank Mr. Songkane Luangmuninthone, Director General of the Department of Economic Affairs as well as Mr. Virasac Somphong, Deputy Director-General from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lao PDR for their dedicated commitment in the previous years. Their leadership and guidance were of a remarkable nature and highly appreciated. I am delighted to assume the responsibilities as Council Chairman and to fulfill this position with the highest principles and standards.

2015 marks the formulation of the new Strategic Plan 2016-2020 and with it a restructuring of MI's programs. How do you evaluate these changes with regards to the challenges that are lying ahead?



*U Tun Tun Naing, MI Council Chairman, Permanent Secretary
Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development
Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar*

I am convinced that through the new alignment of its thematic areas, MI positions itself excellently in light of the challenges and opportunities arising in the GMS and the AEC. The new foundation of the three pillars, being Agricultural Development and Commercialization, Trade and Investment Facilitation, as well as the newly founded Innovation and Technological Connectivity department, takes into account the interdependencies of the issues that MI will engage within the future. Jointly, these programs will also be able to address cross-cutting issues such as gender equality, environmental sustainability and labor mobility.

Interview with the Steering Committee Chairman Dr. Narongchai Akrasanee

With MI's twentieth anniversary approaching, what is your assessment of MI's evolution during 2015 in the context of the bigger picture of the organization's history?

The fact that MI has been active for nearly 20 years shows its importance for development in the region. From this point in time, MI can look back at a proud history of fostering capacity development in the GMS and constantly advancing to meet the evolving challenges faced by its member states as well as the region as a whole. Considering this progress, 2015 was a very successful year in line with MI's positive development, and it reached more participants through more programs than ever before.

2015 saw the establishment of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC). What do the resulting challenges and opportunities mean for the work of MI?

MI has equipped itself well to support the GMS in these times of change and to support its member states in preparing for the opportunities and challenges arising from the AEC. These include factors such as economic competitiveness, the capacity to produce effectively and sustainably, logistical expertise and strong cooperation, as well as the optimization of policies. Through the three thematic areas of Agricultural Development and Commercialization, Trade and Investment Facilitation, and Innovation and Technological Connectivity, MI can offer guidance and develop the capacities needed in the GMS, both in the public and the private sector.



*Dr. Narongchai Akrasanee, MI Steering Committee Chairman,
MFC Asset Management Plc. Bangkok, Thailand*

MI also aims to foster dialogue and exchange between the various actors involved in the development and modernization of the GMS. How can this be achieved?

There are various means of promoting exchange and dialogue. In 2015, we saw an extraordinary example as MI hosted the 3rd Mekong Forum. By bringing together senior policy makers, business and civic leaders, academics, and development practitioners from all over the GMS, MI enabled participants to discuss and address the future of the region and the implications of the AEC for its development through an exceptional plurality of opinions, insights and expertise.

MI in 2015



① January 23
Enhancing Provincial and Local Chambers of Commerce Capacities in Trade and Investment Facilitation along the GMS North-South Economic Corridor



② February 26-27
International Shipping on the Lancang Mekong-River



③ April 27-May 8
Training on ASEAN GAP and Product Certification



④ June 29
Launching of the Lower Mekong Food Security Database



⑤ July 8
Mekong Forum 2015

6

September 1-2
Regional Multi- Stakeholder Policy Consultation Workshop
on Cross-Border Contract Farming



7

September 9-10
3rd International Silk Seminar
and Business Matching



9

December 16-17
GMS Energy Policy Research
and Power Professional Training
and Research Program

8

October 26-November 6
Certified Logistics Master Program

Integrating Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar

2015 was the “bridging year” for MI to transition from its current goals to the objectives of the new strategic plan, as well as align it with NZAP’s future projects with MI. The previous 3-year project on “Capacity Development for Integrating CLMV Economies into AEC” certainly contributed to the strengthening of the foundation for inter-regional and cross-border trade in the CLMV countries in various ways. However, in terms of integrating

Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, and Vietnam (CLMV) into the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), because of the project’s limited scope and given time, impact remains limited and not all needs and demands of the region were addressed. To further contribute to the progress made, MI conducted activities in the current areas where it has achieved the greatest impact based on its evaluation of the CLMV.



Improving Good Agricultural Practices & Postharvest Practices

To increase cross-border agriculture trade and investments, the former Rural Development (RD) Department, now Agricultural Development and Commercialization Department (ADC), focused on product quality and safety by improving GAP and postharvest practices in the CLMV. Activities conducted also promoted appreciation for the public-private sector partnerships in technology transfer and market access for smallholder farmers.

In the past year, three researches, two training programs, five workshops, one forum, one SLV, and one stakeholder perception study were conducted. Overall, around 300 participants were trained in GAP. For postharvest practices, over a hundred participants

were trained and its dissemination workshops produced three posters of postharvest practices for chilies, grapes and lettuce.

The activities enabled various participants from governments, private sectors, and academic and research institutions to share their experiences and challenges in promoting GAP and postharvest practices. They were also able to apply their knowledge and skills in their own countries. The Stakeholders’ Perception Study also brought to light how stakeholders perceive the incentives and disincentives of GAP adoption and their understanding about food safety and quality standard.

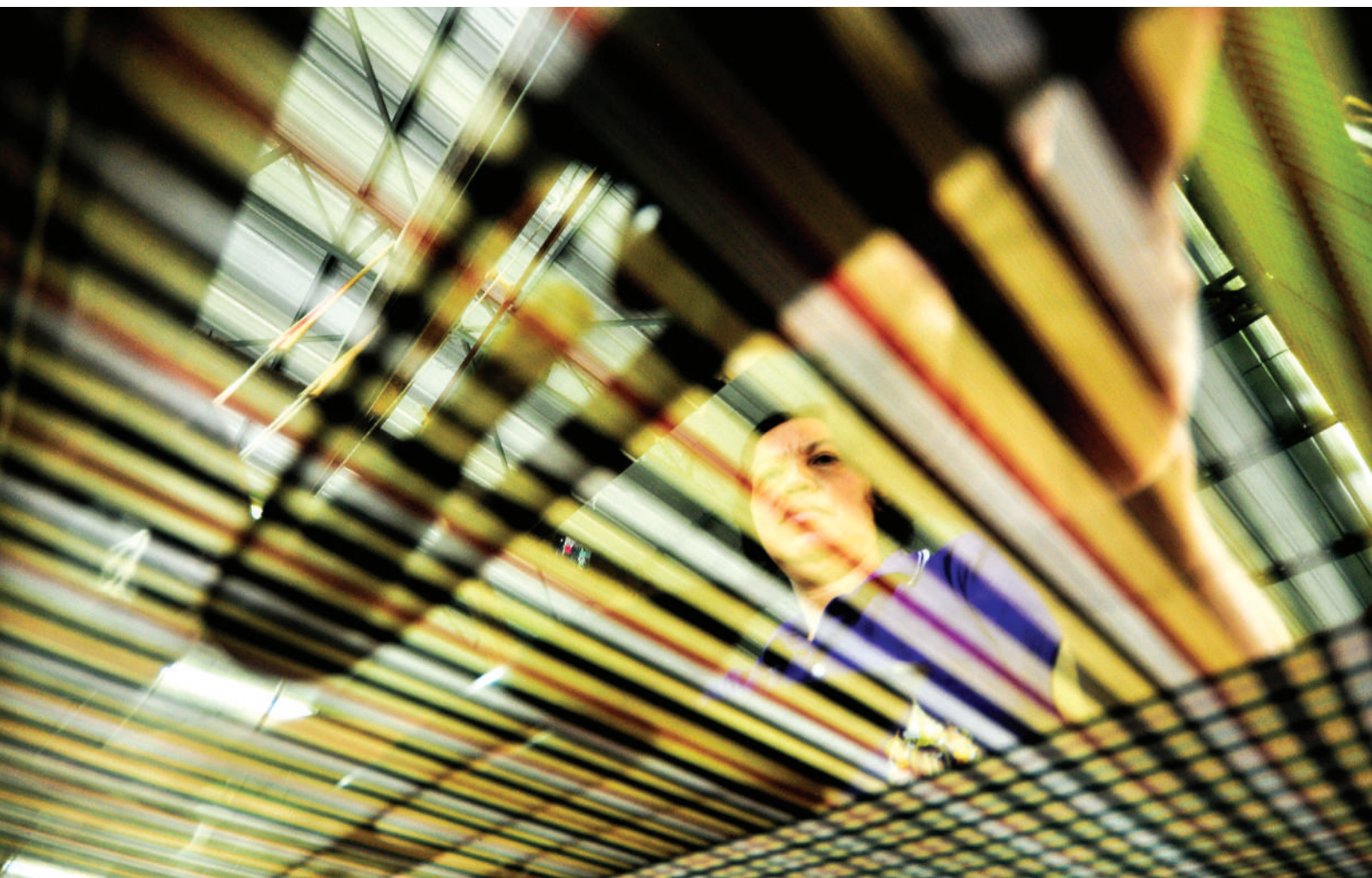


Improving Cross-Border Contract Farming

RD (now ADC) was also responsible for carrying out the second high-level outcome of increased cross-border contract farming management policies and good contract farming practices. All the activities were designed to promote a greater understanding of cross-border contract farming policies and practices to enhance cross-border trade. Four national workshops, four researches, one SLV, and one multi-stakeholder dialogue were conducted.

The activities enabled participants, who were senior policy makers, private sector representatives, donors, academic experts and development practitioners, to be more aware of the cross-border trade facilitation framework. Their knowledge and skills on coordinated cross-border management were also found to be very useful in managing agricultural trade. The SLV in particular illustrated how various CF arrangements were key to linking small-scale farmers to market. The linkages among different stakeholders were also

strengthened as a result of common understanding on the benefits of CF and difficulties faced in meeting contractual obligations from the national workshops. From the multi-stakeholder dialogue, policy recommendations were produced and submitted to related government agencies in the CLMV. The proceedings were disseminated widely and utilized by collaborating partners as the basis for developing future regional development projects and initiatives.



Integrating CLMV SMEs into Regional and Global Value Chains

To increase the number of CLMV SMEs integrated into regional and global value chains, the Trade and Investment Facilitation (TIF) Department conducted modular training programs on product market intelligence, SME cluster linkages, and trade events promotion to provide SME clusters with opportunities to participate in inter-regional and cross-border trade and increase their capacity.

Three modular training programs and one workshop were conducted in 2015. By conducting these trade promotion activities, MI linked 16 SME clusters in seven product categories, and identified top 60 exportable products in the GMS and conducted market analysis. The outputs have been used to update the GMS product market identification web portal (www.gmspmi.com). Overall, participants gained knowledge and skills regarding trade event management, including event categories and tactics for designing and organizing events. Country-specific actions plans were also developed to identify top 10 exportable products and conducted market analysis by using the tools and techniques learned during the activities. The workshop in particular provided insights on the issues and resulted in specific recommendations for the development of MI's programs to strengthen human and organizational capacities in the CLMV countries.

Enhancing GMS-Centered Research by the Young GMS Professionals

The Young GMS Professionals Program is unique compared to other training programs offered by MI. It offers young professionals the opportunity to work closely with MI's professional staff in a learning-working environment for a longer period of time compared to regular trainings. This has also been considered as one of MI's successful programs as a capacity-building institution.

2015, the YGMS program was successfully implemented with two applicants from Cambodia and one from Vietnam. The following joint case studies were produced:

For the Mekong Institute – New Zealand Ambassador's Scholarship Program (MINZAS), 12 outstanding Master degree students from the CLMT countries were selected. A roundtable meeting was organized in September, where the scholars presented their research findings and the invited field experts provided valuable recommendations to improve the quality of their research outputs.

From the batch of 2015, two papers from the MINZAS program have been accepted and published in two outstanding publications:



Mr. Sokchan Phoeurn :
The Incentives and Disincentives of Smallholder Farmers in the Adoption of Good Agricultural Practices (GAP): A case study in Siem Reap Province, Cambodia



Mr. Visal Vong :
Logistics Master Program in the GMS



Ms. Phan Thanh Thanh :
Agriculture and Rural Development Issues in CLMV

International Journal of Development Issues



Does microfinance reduce poverty in Lao PDR?

By: Inpaeng Sayvaya and Phouphet Kyophilavong

Journal of Gender, Technology and Development (Sage Publishing)



Female CEOs, Firm Performance, and Firm Development: Evidence from Thai Manufacturers

By: Thananut Singhathep and Piriya Pholpirul

Fostering Inclusive and Equitable Growth in the Greater Mekong Sub-region

Since March 2013, MI has been implementing the project “Capacity Development for a More Inclusive and Equitable Growth in the Greater Mekong Sub-region”, funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). Commonly referred to as the Regional and Local Economic Development - East-West Economic Corridor (RLED-EWEC) Project, the project aims to improve the livelihood of smallholder farmers and the economic status of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in six twin provinces along the East-West Economic Corridor of the Greater Mekong Sub-region (EWEC).



In the fiscal year 2015, RLED-EWEC has organized 176 activities, reaching 1,861 participants, thereby fostering development in the three project sites. These activities improved business performances and nurtured an enabling environment toward

regional and local economic development, enhancing capacities of smallholder farmers and groups, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs), Business Development Service (BDS) Providers, and local economic development government officials.

Main Achievements in the Fiscal Year 2015

(March 2015 to February 2016)

Farmer progress:

As a result of 122 capacity development activities conducted at the farmer level, 768 smallholder farmers have earned in total \$111,953 in additional income, 1,442 farmers have improved their technique and knowledge relating to cultivation and now have better market access for their products, improved agriculture inputs are more accessible to 653 farmers and 22 farmer groups were established, with 8 of them actively providing information-sharing, technical support and market linking services to their member households.

SME development:

Twenty-nine enterprises involved in the project have offered 18 improved value chain services and inputs to farmers, while with project support, eight enterprises have improved their facilities and market access and eleven have enhanced the quality of their products. Specifically, in Myanmar, two maize distributors and three maize traders have, in total, netted a profit of \$10,992.

Enabling environment:

268 government officials from more than 20 different departments of the three project countries participated in 54 activities aimed at improving the enabling environment. The participants improved their professional skills and increased their knowledge relating to the production of rice, maize and coffee, farmer group strengthening and management, market development and cross-border trade procedures, policies and regulations. As a result, there has been a notable increase in the government services extended to private enterprises and farmers. In Vietnam, for example, the formation and operation of the Khe Sanh Coffee Association, was promoted.



Facilitating Cross-Border Trade and Investment along the North-South Economic Corridor

Among the three economic corridors in the Greater Mekong Sub-region, the North-South Economic Corridor (NSEC) forms a north-south axis connecting Yunnan Province of China to other Mekong countries. It facilitates transport and logistics even further south to Malaysia and Singapore. As one of the flagship investments under the GMS Economic Cooperation Program initiated by the Asian Development Bank, NSEC is currently mainly transport the low value goods. However with the growing trade and the positioning of Kunming as a logistics hub between China and ASEAN, NSEC has a great potential to form a major transport gateway between China and the GMS.



Funded by the ASEAN China Cooperation Fund (ACCF), MI implemented a one-year project in 2014-2015 on “Enhancing Provincial and Local Chambers of Commerce Capabilities in Trade and Investment Facilitation along the GMS North-South Economic Corridor – Route 3A and 3B (R3A&B)” to increase economic development on this corridor through trade and investment facilitation and public – private partnership initiatives in the long-run, and to support inclusive and more equitable development along the NSEC.

Comprising of three components, namely the modular trainings, structured learning visits and synthesis and evaluation workshops, the NSEC project implemented all its planned activities and the project objective has been achieved.

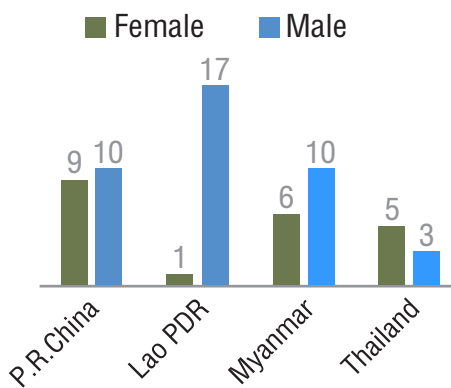
Through the project, a network has been developed among the CCIs and trade promotion agencies in four countries (China, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Thailand) along the corridor, allowing them to provide better services to SMEs.

By participating in MI's modular trainings, SLVs, and trade events, the provincial CCIs and governmental agencies fostered collaboration facilitating trade and investment along the corridor; SMEs expanded their business networks and catalyzed successful business cooperation.

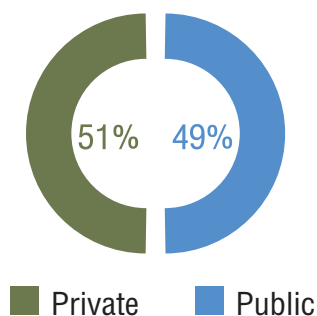
By implementing the project and obtaining feedback and recommendations, MI continued its efforts to promote trade and investment along the corridor to improve the capacity of SMEs.

All these pave the way for the regional integration to a prosperous and peaceful community. A better developed GMS NSEC will contribute to the ASEAN community development.

Participants by Gender



Participants by Sectors



Key Results Achieved:

NSEC B2B platform and business database:

A web portal (www.nsecbiz.com) was developed. As of December 2015, the database received a total of 254,309 visitors.

Fostered and expanded business network:

The network among CCIs and trade promotion agencies along the NSEC has been developed and expanded through modular trainings and workshops, on-site trade events, SLVs and NSEC B2B E-business Platform.

Enhanced capacity of CCIs and trade promotion agencies:

Participants have acquired knowledge and skills by attending MI's trainings, SLVs and trade promotion events. Participants expressed that they learned cross-border formalities and procedures through SLVs. They have also learned the progress of the CBTA implementation in each country along the NSEC.

Catalyzed successful business cooperation:

A joint venture project is planned by investors from China, Lao PDR and Thailand to grow vegetables in Lao PDR for exporting to neighboring countries. A recycling agri-business model from Thailand SF Company inspired Chinese investors to conduct similar business in China.

A second phase long-term project was proposed, which aims to increase inter- and intra-regional trade and investment and foster the prevalence of e-commerce. The project is expected to cover 22 provinces in P.R.China, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam (CLMTV) along the three sub-corridors of the NSEC.



Training the Logistics Masters of Tomorrow

A region's ability to position itself powerfully within world trade and to benefit from international business is strongly determined by its capacity and expertise in the field of logistics. Since 2014, MI's "Certified Logistics Master Program" aims to significantly improve the present landscape of logistics service providers (LSPs) in the GMS, which is still shaped by rather low and at times unpredictable performance, typically limited service range and a lack of international network and competitiveness.

In order to tackle the shortage of staff specialized in logistics in the GMS, MI has organized the "Certified Logistics Master Program" under the Mekong-Republic of Korea Cooperation Fund. The program compensates for the lack of regional level educational institutions offering courses on logistics, which are urgently needed in order to achieve economic integration of the region and to foster the sustainable regional development.

In 2015, the first of three planned modular courses was completed and 29 of 30 participants were awarded as Certified Logistics Master (CLM). The certificate was jointly awarded by MI, GMS Freight Transport Association (FRETA) and Khon Kaen University (KKU). Through the implementation of action plans and internal knowledge sharing, their impact has been multiplied, improving LSPs in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Vietnam and Thailand (CLMVT). Moreover, the program facilitated business cooperation among LSPs in the region for investment and cross-border logistics services. The completion report shows a high satisfaction with the training (93.33% were satisfied or very satisfied) as well as strong relevance for the participants' work (83.33% considered it very relevant or highly relevant). Thus, 2015 represented a highly successful start of the program.

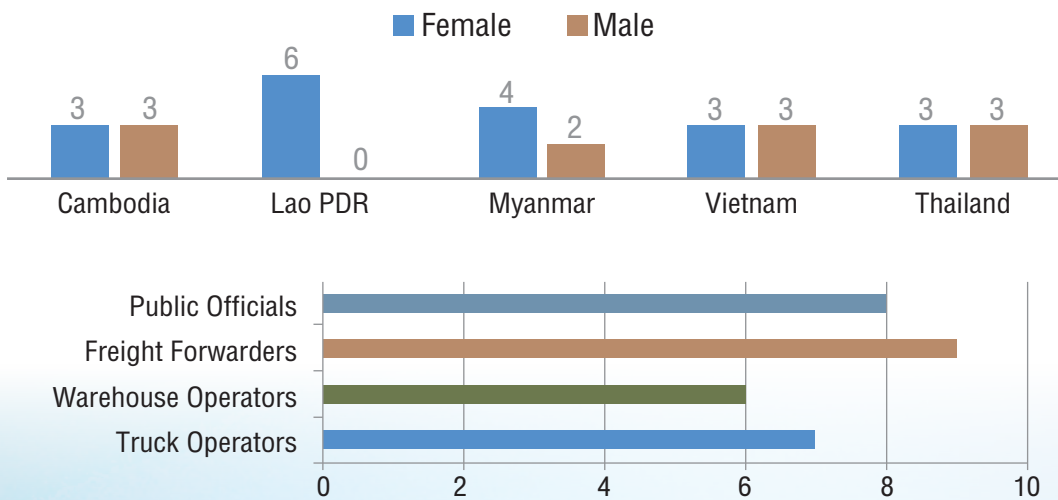


Modular Training Cycle:



With the second modular training, which started in October 2015 and third modular training, which will be conducted in May 2016, a total of 90 local LSPs along the GMS economic corridor from CLMVT will have completed the program. Furthermore, a Training of Trainers (ToT) program targeting 20 of the successful participants will be conducted during the 3rd phase of the project. As a result, the training will be replicated at the local level to further benefit at least 150 logistics practitioners on the ground.

Participants:



Integrating the Energy Sector

Energy resources are unevenly distributed among the GMS member countries and the quality of the sub-region's power transmission infrastructure varies. Regional energy connectivity is hindered by a lack of trans-boundary power connections. However, GMS countries have agreed on a roadmap for expanded cooperation to enable a more interconnected energy sector and the eventual establishment of an integrated regional power market.

To support the movement towards inter-connectivity, in November 2014, MI signed a Cooperation Framework Agreement with China Southern Power Grid Co., Ltd. (CSG), initiating a six-year partnership program which covers professional training, research, and collaboration to promote energy connectivity in the sub-region.





Cooperation
Framework
Agreement Signed

2014.11



TENA Survey to
GMS Power
Authorities/Utilities

2015.7



Workshop on GMS Energy
Policy Resesearch and Power
Professional Training &
Research Program

2015.12

2015.12

Professional
Training for Resesource
Persons



Training of Trainers

Training on Planning
and Construction for
GMS Power Grid and
Power Interconnection



Prosect
Synthesis and
Evaluation
Meeting



MI and CSG/Yunnan Power Grid Co., Ltd. (YNPG), with support from the People's Republic of China, implemented a project entitled 'Capacity Building on Greater Mekong Sub-region Energy Policy Formulation and Power Grid Planning' from May 2015 to January 2016. The project included capacity development activities combining MI's regional platform with CSG's professional and technological management experience.

MI and CSG co-designed and implemented a series of human resource development programs and a research project on how to promote regional benefits such as enhanced connectivity, improved competitiveness and a greater sense of community. Participants from the six GMS countries learned about the energy sector and established personal connections. The program enhanced communications between GMS power sector participants and laid a foundation for the subsequent expansion of energy cooperation and power grid interconnection at the sub-regional level.



Mapping Food Security in the Lower Mekong Region



The year 2015 marks the completion of the Lower Mekong Food Security Donor Mapping database, a joint initiative of MI and United States Agency for International Development - Regional Development Mission for Asia (USAID/RDMA). Started in October 2013, the project seeks to improve donor coordination on food security projects in the Lower Mekong Region (LMR) by making available and proactively disseminating important information about donor priorities and programming in the food security sectors.

The project’s final outputs can be summarized into five: (1) A user-friendly database containing information on agriculture and food security development activities at the regional and national levels; (2) A publicly-available geographical donor map that visually maps the database list through the use of categorical filters; (3) Agriculture and food security snapshots designed for high-level government officials that market activity achievements, milestones and donor coordination; (4) Regular social networking tweets on relevant food security developments in the sub-region; and (5) Monthly newsfeeds that highlight food security projects and activities in the sub-region.

With almost 800 (and counting) project entries, and over 500 donors -- both local and international organizations -- listed by the end of the year, the database is now fully functional and continually thriving.

Introducing the Database and Its Features to MI

To fulfill the project’s overall goal of being sustainable, a “Training on Managing and Sustaining a Database System” was likewise organized at Mekong Institute on June 26, 2015 and was attended and participated in by 17 Mekong Institute staff and personnel, mostly from the RD, TIF and CKM Departments. The training introduced the database and its features and functionalities to key MI staff who are expected to undertake subsequent database management tasks in the future, and oriented them on the database’s administrator protocols and procedures.

Launching the Regional Food Security Database

Finally, the database launch was organized to formally present the Lower Mekong Food Security Database to USAID and donors and development organizations. The launch was held on June 29, 2015 at the USAID office in Bangkok, Thailand. Executive Director Watcharas Leelawath of Mekong Institute and USAID/RDMA Acting Director Carrie Thompson were present at the event.

The main highlight of the half-day affair was the presentation of the database’s features and functionalities delivered by project team leader and RD Program Manager, Ms. Maria Theresa Medialdia.

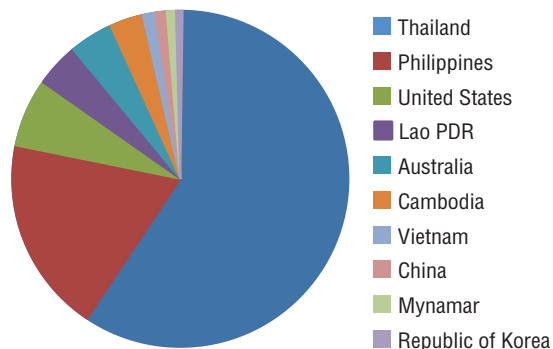
Maintaining the Database as a Relevant Regional Food Security Tool

Aside from adding new projects and partners, an initiative that MI took in continually updating the database is the writing of monthly newsfeeds and stories, and publishing social networking tweets.

By the end of the year, 63 articles have been posted in the database. These include news stories on food security and agriculture events and issues curated from various online news sites and donor and development organizations’ online news pages; blogposts on food security and agriculture issues concerning the region; and feature stories on selected food security projects in the database to highlight best practices and lessons learned.

The project team likewise manages a Twitter account (<https://twitter.com/foodinmekong>) for pushing out regular tweets about online conversations and postings concerning the food security and agriculture sector in the LMR. At the end of the year, 288 tweets have been sent out, with the account having almost 1,000 followers. The project’s Twitter account is also linked to the database, and the tweets are displayed on the site’s Homepage.

With MI’s continual management and sustenance of the database, the project is hoped to position itself as an important tool in coordinating food security efforts in the region for many years to come.



Page views per country (2015)
Since its formal launching on June 29, 2015 until the end of year 2015, the database has received a total of 30,496 page views. Below are the top 10 countries that visited the database.

KEY FEATURES

Sectoral classification of projects

Projects in the database are classified according to ten pre-identified agricultural sectors set by MI and the USAID.

Editor access

One of the key features of the database is that it provides editor access to nominated individuals from donor and development organizations working in food security and agriculture in the region.

Geo-map

Another major feature of the Lower Mekong Food Security Database is a Google Maps-based geographical map that plots the location of the food security and agriculture projects recorded in the database.

Advanced search capability

In addition to the search-enabled geo-map, the database also has optimized searching through an Advanced Search function on the Search bar.

Monthly alerts and notifications

On the database's homepage, a subscription form is available where editors and non-editors alike can sign up to join the Lower Mekong Food Security Database's mailing list for monthly alerts and notifications.

Multi-platform compatibility

The database was designed to make it compatible with popularly-used browsers (Chrome, Firefox and Internet Explorer) and smartphones and mobile devices.

Country and Sectoral Snapshots

Four country snapshots were written, discussing the general food security and agriculture situation in the countries, key issues and challenges in the agriculture sector, current and existing interventions, and priority recommendations to address the mentioned challenges.

The snapshots also included agricultural statistics presented as infographics.

Likewise, sectoral snapshots for the four countries were also produced, focusing on horticulture in Cambodia, livestock in Lao PDR, and rice in Vietnam and Myanmar. As with the country snapshots, the sectoral snapshots also present a closer look at the sector and its contributions and impacts on the overall food security and agriculture situation of the country, challenges and issues, notable donor and government interventions and projects, and recommended interventions and priority initiatives.



Sample Feature Story

Finding a Cure for the Disease that is Poverty

For people who at least have a basic background on economics or development studies, they know that poverty is not simple. It is a web of interconnected factors that feed on each other, therefore making it a complex, vicious cycle.

Take this, for example: a boy was born poor and malnourished. His parents have nothing to feed him, so he grew up frail and sickly. Because they are poor, his parents cannot afford to send him to school, so he grows up illiterate. Because he is weak and uneducated, he cannot land a job. And because no one would hire him, he remains poor, continually suffering from hunger, malnourishment, sickness and unemployment. He finds a wife, who gives birth to a number of children, and the cycle continues...



To learn about the 'Improving the Lives of the Poorest People' (ILPP) project in Cambodia and how it contributed to poverty reduction in the country, read the full article at <http://foodsecurity.mekonginstitute.org>

Further Activities

Thailand International Cooperation Agency (TICA)

Sustainable Rural Development - Participants from Myanmar, Lao PDR, and Thailand were exposed to several approaches in rural development including the challenges and opportunities and various strategies to address those challenges.

Strengthening Coordinated Cross Border Systems in CLMV - Participants learned about the urgency on knowing how to facilitate the ASEAN Single Window and improved their skills on coordinated cross border management in an inter-active and shared learning environment.

National Consultation Workshop on Cross-Border Contract Farming in Vietnam, Cambodia, and Myanmar - Shared the findings obtained from research on CBCF and discussed governance issues and difficulties faced by farmers and contracting companies.

Regional Multi-Stakeholder Policy Consultation Workshop on Cross-Border Contract Farming - Validated the regional issues encountered in CBCF and solicited insights on the policy recommendations

Research on Cross-Border Contract Farming (CBCF) in CLMV - Assessed the situation of cross-border contract farming with a focus on existing relationships and contract implementation, impacts of such contracts on smallholder farmers, and suggest recommendations to improve contract arrangements and enforcement in order to benefit smallholder farmers

The People's Republic of China

Yunnan Provincial Government

Project Monitoring and Evaluation in the Context of GMS Cooperation and Integration - Developed participants' capacity to monitor and evaluate sub-regional or trans-boundary development projects.

The Government of P.R. China

Research on Development Potential of International Shipping on the Lancang-Mekong River in China, Lao PDR, Myanmar, and Thailand (CLMT)

An inception workshop was conducted to validate the initial research findings from the desk research paper in 2014 as well as to discuss the methodology for the next step. This was followed by a field survey in coordination with national and local partners. The outputs of the survey were then integrated to the final draft of the research which were then are validated during consultation meetings in the four countries.

Chinese Government and China Southern Power Grid Co., Ltd. (CSG)

Capacity Building on Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS) Energy Policy Formulation and Power Grid Planning - Completed the following: Training & Exchanging Needs Assessment (TENA) to GMS Power Authorities in July; Professional Training for Resource Persons (RPs) by CSG/YNPG in July; Professional Training on Planning and Construction for GMS Power Grid and Power Interconnection in September; and the Workshop on GMS Energy Policy Research and Power Professional Training & Research Program and Project Synthesis and Evaluation Meeting in December.

Khon Kaen Provincial Government

International Silk Seminar and Business Matching - Introduced CSR best practices and provided a platform to showcase exquisite silk products and identify opportunities to engage private companies for their CSR outreach programs in the silk sector; enhanced business collaboration among the silk business community; silk business database (www.asiasilkbiz.com) provided a platform for information sharing and fostering business relationships among the silk business owners; and the Asia Silk Alliance (ASA) was formally launched.

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

Regional Training Workshop on Planning and Implementing Contract Farming Operations - Developed the capacity of participants in dealing with issues related to facilitating market linkages through contract farming operations and discussed responsibilities that include promoting or managing farmer-to-buyer linkages.

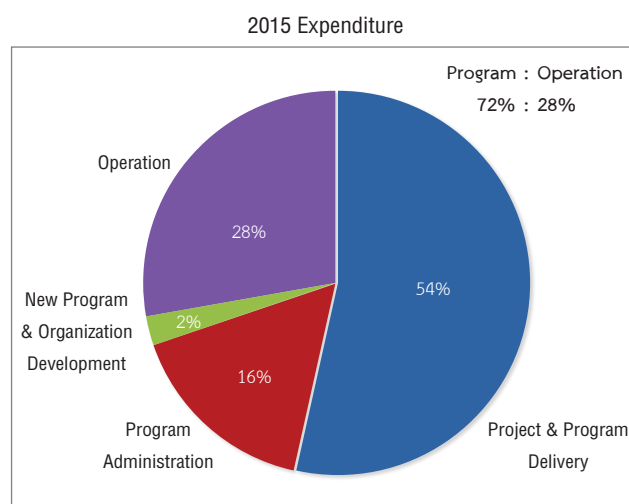
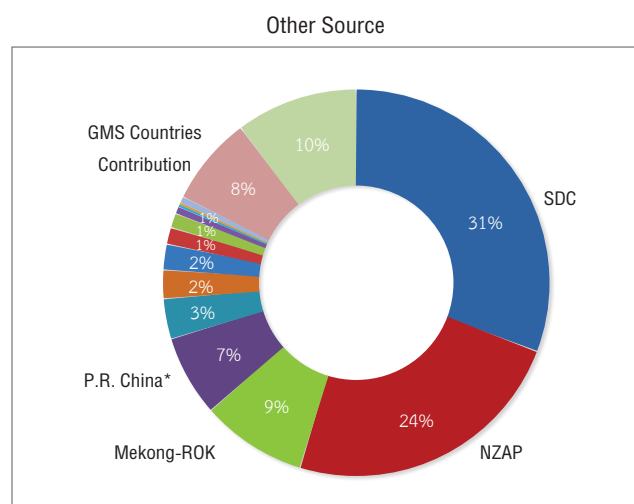
Mekong Institute is grateful for the commitment of its growing development partners, 2015 saw the greatest funding for projects and customized learning programs to date, amounting to USD 2.73 million, a 28.9% increase over the USD 2.11 million received in 2014.

Total other revenue for 2015 comprised of USD 250,000 contributions from GMS countries, USD 39,450 from other revenue and interest and USD 302,565 funding for MI Annex.

2015 SOURCE OF FUNDING

LONG TERM PROJECTS		Amount (USD)
Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)		1,026,306
New Zealand Aid Programme (NZAP)		789,190
Mekong-ROK-Certified Logistics Master Program		287,949
ASEAN-China Cooperation Fund (ACCF)		107,090
United States Agency for International Development (USAID)		47,810
	Sub Total	2,258,346
SHORT TERM PROJECTS		
The People's Republic of China		228,743
Thailand International Cooperation Agency (TICA)		80,320
Khon Kaen Provincial Government		69,707
Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) - Katalyst Project		40,651
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)		22,904
Ministry of Public Health, Thailand		6,609
International Institute for Trade and Development (Public Organization) (ITD)		4,671
Others		14,806
	Sub Total	468,410
	Total Funding	2,726,756
OTHER REVENUE		
GMS Countries Contribution*		250,000
Other Revenue (Interest and Donations)		342,015
	Total	3,318,771

Top Donors for Project Funding and Contribution



*Note: 5% the Government of P.R. China
2% from Yunnan Provincial Government of P.R. China

Note: The total amount of annual contributions from six member countries in USD 543,095 were received in 2015. This amount includes USD 250,000 for the operation in the fiscal year 2015 and USD 293,095 from the Royal Thai Government for the operation in the fiscal year 2016. The contribution of the Royal Thai Government for 2015 operation was already recorded in the financial report for 2014 fiscal year.

Cambodia

Mr. Chhorn Prasath, Permanent Deputy Director, Port Intelligent Unit, Ministry of Interior
 Strengthening Coordinated Cross Border Systems in CLMV



I expected to gain knowledge on cross-border security because I'm in charge of internal security, human smuggling and trafficking, and also illegal migrants. It was very useful for me to understand more how to deal with problems on the border and how to secure people to cross the border and strengthen the national security. Another point is when we talk about the cross border security, it must be related to immigration control. It was the reason I attended the course and it met my expectation very well.

P.R. China

Ms. Shi Jingmin, Project Officer, Foreign Affairs Office of the People's Government of Yunnan Province
 Project Monitoring and Evaluation for the Effective GMS Economic Integration

My work involves international project monitoring and evaluation and I think the training course met my expectation. It is hard for me to finish the work with high quality before the training. After the two-week training and field study, I learned how to do DMF planning, how to define the indicators, and how to gather and analyze data, as well as many other skills and knowledge. I learned much about project monitoring and evaluation. I will apply what I learned to my work and I believe it will make my work easier and more efficient. The training methodology, information market, and field study visit are the three things I like most.



Lao PDR

Mr. Alounsak Xayasouk, Technical Staff, Department of Agriculture and Forestry, Ministry of Agriculture
 Postharvest Management of Fresh Horticultural Produce Synthesis and Evaluation



After I go back to my country I will share with my colleagues the knowledge I gained from the training course which I think is very useful for my country. If I had the chance, I would like to organize the training course on the postharvest topic in order to share knowledge and teach people how to do the postharvest process I learned from MI.

Myanmar

Mr. Nay Lwin Hut, Assistant Director, SME Development Ministry of Industry
Product Market Identification (PMI) for GMS



Since my country is moving towards democracy and the market will be open to new opportunities the global market has to offer, I attended the training because it is important to gain information on the global market and ASEAN market situation. I can apply this knowledge because our SME department will conduct SME promotion events. I am very satisfied with the course because I learnt a lot on trade investment, the border market, relationship marketing, global market, and the supply chain.

Thailand

Patamasiri Hoonthong, MINZAS Scholars

Mekong Institute – New Zealand Ambassador’s Scholarship

In my honest opinion, the MINZAS research training course was very intensive and I even felt like crying at times. But after everything, I gained more than I expected. We enjoyed every second spent at MI. Not only did we share and exchange information and knowledge on our theses, we also learnt about each other’s culture since we were from different backgrounds. The teachers and trainers at MI have been very helpful and understanding. They were the ones that guided us academically. Our supervisors put a lot of effort on guiding and teaching us even though they were very busy. MINZAS training was a great and rare opportunity that we can hardly find anywhere else. MI taught and equipped us to have cultural sensitivity, compassion, endurance, and knowledge, which are all steppingstones for us to achieve our future goals.



Vietnam

Ms. Nguyen Thi Quynh Thuan, Head of the Department of Vegetable, Floriculture and Landscaping Institute of Agricultural Sciences for Southern Vietnam

Postharvest Management of Fresh Horticultural Produce Synthesis and Evaluation



First of all, I was impressed with the team organizers in MI since they were very kind and they facilitated in a generous way. I was so happy with the environment here too. Second, I lack background in post-harvest which I thought would have been very difficult for me but the resource person taught in a way that was easy to understand. The knowledge I gained from the course will be shared to my colleagues when I go back to my country.

MI Council Members

MI Council Chairman and Representative of the Government of the Union of Myanmar	U Tun Tun Naing Permanent Secretary Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development Myanmar
Representative of the Royal Government of Cambodia	H. E. Ms. Pen Sopakphea Secretary of State Ministry of Planning Cambodia
Representative of the Government of the People's Republic of China	H.E. Mr. Gao Shuxun Vice Governor The People's Government of Yunnan Province The People's Republic of China
Representative of the Government of Lao PDR	Mr. Songkane Luangmuninthone Director-General Department of Economic Affairs Ministry of Foreign Affairs Lao PDR
Representative of the Royal Thai Government	Ms. Suchada Thaibunthao Director-General Thailand International Cooperation Agency Ministry of Foreign Affairs Thailand
Representative of the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam	Dr. Hoang Viet Khang Director-General Foreign Economic Relations Department Ministry of Planning and Investment Vietnam
Representative from New Zealand Aid Programme	H.E. Mr. Ben King Ambassador New Zealand Embassy Thailand
Representative from Asian Development Bank (ADB)	Mr. James Nugent Director-General Southeast Asia Department (SERD) Asian Development Bank Philippines
Representative from Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)	Mr. Tim Enderlin Regional Director of the Programme for the Mekong Region Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) Lao PDR
Representative from the Academe Khon Kaen University	Dr. Kittichai Triratanasirichai President Khon Kaen University Thailand
Representative from the Academe Hue University	Dr. Nguyen Van Toan President Hue University Vietnam
Business Representative	Dr. Narongchai Akrasanee Chairman of Khon Kaen University Council Chairman of the Board of Directors, MFC Asset Management Plc. Independent Non-executive Director, AIA Group Thailand
Honorary Advisor	Dr. Tej Bunnag Assistant Secretary-General for Administration The Thai Red Cross Society Thailand
Honorary Advisor	Dr. Jean Pierre A. Verbiest Honorary Advisor to MI Council Thailand

MI Steering Committee Members

Steering Committee Chairman **Dr. Narongchai Akrasanee**
 Chairman of Khon Kaen University Council
 Chairman of the Board of Directors, MFC Asset Management Plc.
 Independent Non-executive Director, AIA Group
 Thailand

Representative of the Royal
 Government of Cambodia **H.E. Mr. Chea Chantum**
 Secretary-General
 General Secretariat for Population and Development
 Ministry of Planning
 Cambodia

Representative of the Government
 of the People's Republic of China **Mr. Li Hong**
 Permanent Representative
 Permanent Mission of China to UNESCAP
 Thailand

Representative of the Government
 of Lao PDR **Mr. Virasac Somphong**
 Deputy Director-General
 Department of Economic Affairs
 Ministry of Foreign Affairs
 Lao PDR

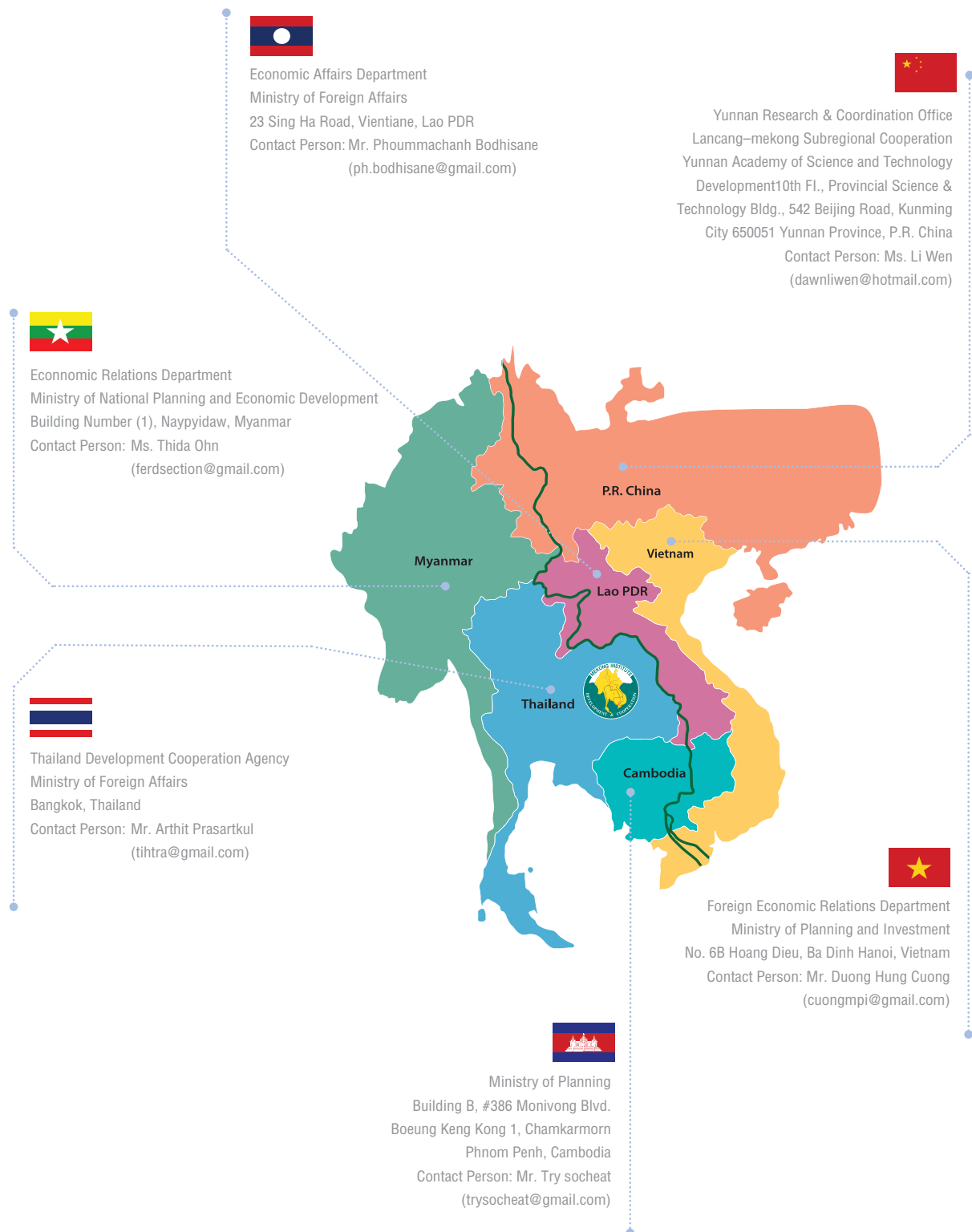
Representative of Government
 of the Union of Myanmar **Dr. Wah Wah Maung**
 Director-General
 Central Statistical Organization
 Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development,
 Myanmar

Representative of the Royal
 Thai Government **Ms. Sayan Kongkoey**
 Director of Thai Cooperation Branch I
 Thailand International Cooperation Agency
 Ministry of Foreign Affairs
 Thailand

Representative of the Government
 of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam **Mr. Dao Xuan Nang**
 Director
 Foreign Economic Relations Department
 Ministry of Planning and Investment
 Vietnam

Coordinating Across the GMS

To succeed in the mission and objectives stated in its charter, each of the six GMS governments assigned self-motivated officials to act as National Coordinating Agencies (CAs) for Mekong Institute. MI CAs liaise closely with MI staff to promote programs, recruit participants and evaluate impacts of learning and research projects in relation to GMS countries HRD planning and strategies.





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