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## TRAININGS/WORKSHOPS/SLV ACTIVITIES



### MI and National University of Laos explore educational cooperation

Last January 10, MI representatives and senior members of the National University of Laos (NOUL) delegation—led by Associate Professor Somchanh Bounphanmy, NUOL Vice President, and Dr. Sithixay Xayavong, Acting Director from the Office of Research and Academic Services—explored research collaboration in trade export, tourism, water resource management and disaster risk management, as well as the need for training courses on technical writing to enhance policy development.

The meeting, held at the MI Training Center in Khon Kaen, Thailand, was the first of a series of discussions to strengthen research and capacities in the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS).



### MI and the Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry to strengthen business environment

Dr. Watcharas Leelawath, MI Executive Director, and Dr. Daovone Phachanthavong, Executive Vice President of the Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LNCCI), signed a Memorandum of Understanding last January 20, 2020 in Vientiane, Lao PDR. The partnership will combine MI and LNCCI expertise in policy development, research, and capacity building to enhance the trade and investment environment in Lao PDR and the GMS.





## MI and Thailand's Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives seal partnership for two rice projects

On January 23 in Bangkok, Thailand, MI signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Thailand's Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives (MOAC) to enhance agricultural sustainability in the Lancang-Mekong region. The two projects, which will run from 2020 to 2022, will see MI and MOAC's Rice Department work closely with partners from Cambodia, P.R. China, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam to develop and promote common rice production standards and to establish a center to monitor and forecast rice pest and natural disasters. [Read more.](#)



## MI and Mahidol University International College cement capacity building collaboration

MI and Mahidol University International College (MUIC) signed a Memorandum of Understanding last January 24 in Nakhon Pathom, Thailand. Represented by Dr. Watcharas Leelawath, Executive Director of MI, and Associate Professor Chulathida Chomchai, Dean of MUIC, the agreement covers collaborative research projects, information-sharing, and academic capacity building to support the GMS's development needs.



## MI and US Embassy officials discuss ways forward to a sustainable Mekong River

Last January 27, MI officials met with US Embassy in Thailand Chargé d' Affaires Michael Heath and Vice Consul Sarah Madden to share environmental trends and opportunities related to the Mekong River at the MI Training Center in Khon Kaen, Thailand. The meeting is part of MI's mission to help promote sustainable management of a river basin that provides drinking water, food, irrigation, hydropower, transportation, and commerce to more than 70 million people.



# UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

# FEBRUARY

# 24 - 28

Regional Training Program on Food Safety Risk Communication

### MEKONG INSTITUTE

123 Mittraphap Rd.,  
Muang District  
Khon Kaen 40002,  
Thailand

+ 66 (0) 43 202 411 to 2  
+ 66 (0) 43 204 041 to 2  
+ 66 (0) 43 203 656  
[information@mekonginstitute.org](mailto:information@mekonginstitute.org)





## WORKING TOGETHER: HOW DIVERSITY STRENGTHENS BONDS

Toru Hisada has been with MI for nearly four years, serving first as senior project coordinator, program officer, and then project consultant under MI's Trade and Investment Facilitation Department. Get to know the well-liked Japanese national who is committed to supporting the Greater Mekong Subregion's human resource development.

### How does MI promote trade and investment facilitation in the GMS?

The increasing openness of GMS economies and the diversification of their markets have led to deeper integration and cooperation in the region. To help GMS countries thrive in this new and competitive economic landscape, MI works with the public and private sectors in Cambodia, P.R. China, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam to address challenges and harness opportunities through capacity building activities, research studies, and policy support. In sum, MI helps create and sustain an enabling regional business and trading environment that is fair, efficient, and beneficial to all stakeholders in the value chain.

### What do you see are MI's strengths in human resource development?

MI's workforce is led by experts in the fields of agricultural development and commercialization; trade and investment facilitation; and innovation and technological connectivity. Moreover, MI staff is represented by 12 countries, including the Philippines, India, and Japan. Such diversity advances a wider range of creativity, skills, insights, and perspectives. These enrich program implementation and help strengthen partnerships with governments, international organizations, and funding mechanisms such as the Lancang-Mekong Special Cooperation Fund and the Japan-ASEAN Integration Fund.

### What advice would you give young professionals who would like to work in the GMS?

I encourage them to live in any GMS country and experience for themselves the opportunities, generosity, and hospitality that abound. Such experiences can broaden one's life and career for the better, as these did mine.

### Do you have any message to the MI team who you consider your extended family?

I am grateful for the opportunities my director, Mr. Madhurjya Kumar Dutta, provided and the support of my colleagues. From them, I have gained deeper technical knowledge and skills in promoting trade and investment, particularly small and medium-sized enterprise development. I am truly proud to be of service to MI and our alumni because MI connects people so they can better serve their countries, the GMS, and beyond. This kinship with my mentors, co-workers, and MI alumni will remain no matter where we are in the world.



# STAFF PROFILE

*Each month, get to know one of MI's 53-member team in our Staff Profile series.*