

## WHAT'S INSIDE

MI and Partners Craft MI Strategic  
Plan 2021-2025

MI Leads Job Interview Exercise  
for KKUIC Students

MI Strengthens CLMV Food Safety  
Culture

Message from the Executive  
Director

Chonthicha Faypen: MI in the Time  
of COVID-19



## TRAININGS/WORKSHOPS/SLV ACTIVITIES

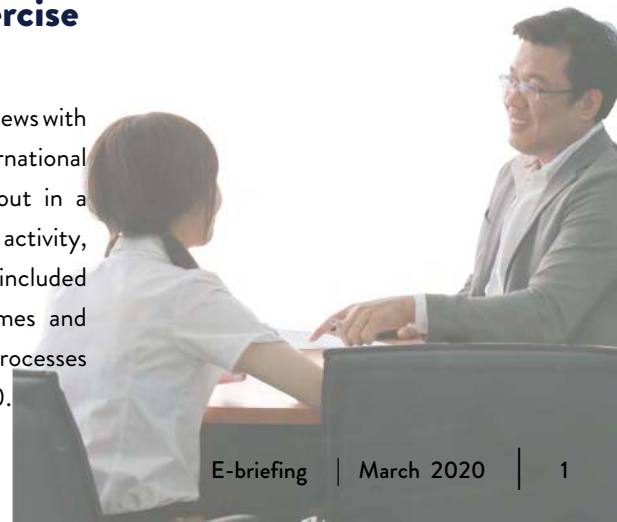


### MI and partners craft MI Strategic Plan 2021-2025

Last March 2 to 3, MI facilitated a workshop in Bangkok, Thailand with government and international development partners to identify human resource development priorities in the Mekong region for 2021 to 2025. The collaborative approach will ensure that MI's Strategic Plan will respond to the developmental needs of Cambodia, P.R. China, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam in the next five years.

### MI leads job interview exercise for KKUIC students

MI officials conducted simulated job interviews with students from Khon Kaen University International College (KKUIC) to help them stand out in a competitive job market. The four-hour activity, designed by MI and KKUIC officials, also included a feedbacking session on crafting resumes and understanding employment application processes at the MI office on March 2, 2020.





## MI strengthens CLMV food safety culture

MI organized the *Postharvest Safe Food Handling* regional training to strengthen capacities of 21 officers from government agencies, fresh produce companies, as well as research and academic institutions representing Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, and Vietnam in securing food safety, reducing fruit and vegetable decay, and maintaining quality of produce. This activity, which ran from March 9 to 13, 2020 at the MI Residential Training Center, was funded by the New Zealand Aid Programme under the PROSAFE project. [Read more.](#)

## MI staff advances proficiency in official letter writing

On March 17, 24 MI staff completed a one-day advanced training on official letter writing at the MI office. This is part of MI's internal mission to enhance its people's professional competencies to better service clients in the Mekong region.



## Message from the Executive Director

As we confront the challenges of the coronavirus pandemic, we are making the health and safety of our staff and training participants our top priority. With guidance from Thailand's Ministry of Public Health, MI will be closing its office from March 25 to April 24, 2020.

This is a necessary step to protect the welfare and well-being of our people and of those we serve. However, MI operations will remain uninterrupted as our committed 53-member staff will be working remotely to continue to provide technical guidance and support in promoting human resource development across the Mekong Region.

We will strive to minimize possible disruptions in our scheduled work program to meet our 2020 commitments to the governments of Cambodia, P.R. China, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam, as well as to our international development partners, alumni, and beneficiaries.

We will continue to update you on further changes in our operations. Thank you for your patience and understanding as we undertake this shared challenge.

On behalf of the MI team, we wish you and your family safety and good health in the days ahead.

**Dr. Watcharas Leelawath**

March 24, 2020

Khon Kaen, Thailand



# Safety in the Time of COVID-19

**Ms. Chonthicha Faypen** is MI's General Service Supervisor. She and the 12-member team under her unit have been working non-stop to enforce health safety guidelines and to keep MI staff and training participants abreast on COVID-19 developments. Get to know the work of MI's operations team—our dedicated frontliners—in keeping everyone at MI safe beginning in January 2020.

## How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected MI operations?

Normally, MI holds a hectic schedule. Every month, we host an average of 120 participants for a minimum of four trainings which spans for a week each. At the start of the pandemic, we rescheduled trainings, cancelled local meetings, and indefinitely postponed official missions outside of Khon Kaen.

When COVID-19 cases continued to escalate in Thailand, MI closed its office from March 25 to April 24, 2020 to further protect the well-being of our staff.

## What steps were taken to protect MI staff and training participants from COVID-19?

Our immediate action was to closely monitor the situation in the region. We then collected and released accurate information to staff and training participants. We took guidance from the World Health Organization, Thailand's Department of Disease Control, Khon Kaen University, Bangkok Hospital, and other partners on procedures that would help stop people from contracting and spreading the virus.

We enforced strict measures. Our team conducted hourly disinfection of offices, common areas, training rooms, and vehicles. We also provided provisions so MI staff and training participants wore masks in the premises, performed regular handwashing, practiced social distancing, engaged in temperature scanning, and reported travel histories.

When we had trainings, our team was especially careful in protecting the health of our participants from Cambodia, P.R China, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam. This included facilitating a pre-screening interview based on Rajavithi Hospital's form, conducting daily checks on their condition, executing stringent sanitation of their rooms, securing their insurance coverage, and having a 24-hour MI representative on call in case of emergencies.



## What was MI's experience in managing a crisis like this?

We have never confronted a crisis such as this before. We had to swiftly understand the dangers of the virus, while immediately responding to the needs of our staff and training participants in real time. With such a constant state of flux in information, it was imperative to be adaptive and flexible. This ranged from being creative in procuring dwindling health supplies such as masks to reassigning tasks so we could quickly carry out precautionary measures recommended by the Royal Thai Government.

Looking back, the speed in our team's mobilization was attributed to Dr. Watcharas Leelawath, our Executive Director. He placed premium on the safety of the MI team and training participants above all else. Under his clear directive and support from Mr. Rithy Buth, Director of Finance and Operations, we were able to expedite the implementation of new regulations and secure full compliance from everyone.

## What was the response of MI staff during this pandemic?

At MI, we treat each other like family. During this whole process, everyone held a social responsibility to help stop the virus from spreading.

Moreover, program staff were supportive to our General Service team. They minimized traffic in common areas, fastidiously stayed apart during essential meetings, and was generous in sharing COVID-19 updates from member countries in the GMS so we could operate efficiently. We truly worked together to protect ourselves and others.

## With the MI office closed from March 25 to April 24, how does the General Service unit provide support to MI staff?

On the operations side, we maintain a skeleton team to secure and sanitize MI premises on a weekly basis. We also have an internal hotline number for staff emergencies. In this perilous time, it is important to be accessible to one another.

## What is your advice to MI staff and their families during this time?

MI will always be in service to its people. As we move forward, let us remain vigilant in keeping ourselves and others COVID-19 free, and to be empathetic to those who are ill. By keeping safe, extending kindness, being socially responsible, and following the law, we will come out of this pandemic safely together.

