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## ■ TRAINING/WORKSHOP/SLV ACTIVITIES

### MI Holds Structured Learning Visit (SLV) cum Business Matching for Agribusiness Group

Twenty small and medium enterprise (SME) owners and business development service providers from the 11 project provinces in the Southern Economic Corridor joined the Structured Learning Visit cum Business Matching last September 10-16, 2017. The event aimed to expose the participants to successful industry clusters in Thailand and explore areas for business collaboration and development. The SLV cum Business Matching is part of MI's project on *Enhancing Competitiveness of SMEs in the Southern Economic Corridor (SEC) of ASEAN Mekong Subregion*. [Read more.](#)



Participants of the SLV cum Business Matching pose with staff members of the Trade and Investment Facilitation Department.

### MI Provides Platform for Sharing of Experiences on Women Empowerment

Nineteen participants from Asia, Africa, the Pacific, Central America and Southeastern Europe shared their experiences in the International Training Program on *Gender Equality and Women Empowerment: Sharing Thailand's Good Practices and Experiences*. Held last September 11-22, 2017 at MI's Residential Training Center, the training served as a venue for the participants to share experiences on gender equality and women empowerment, and at the same time learn from the lessons and good practices of Thailand. [Read more.](#)



MI continues to push for an enhanced GMS power connection. Seen here is MI Executive Director, Dr. Watcharas Leelawath with the training participants.

### Training Program Highlights Safety in Power Equipment Operation

MI organized the Professional Training Program on *GMS Power Equipment Operation & Maintenance and Safety Management* on September 11-22, 2017. The training, co-organized with the China Southern Power Grid Co., Ltd (CSG)/Yunnan Power Grid Co., Ltd., brought together 31 technicians working in power grid equipment operation and maintenance. Held at the YNPG Baiyun Training Center in Kunming, China, the training informed participants of the advanced power technology and the power equipment operation and safety management experience of CSG. It also featured a six-day structured learning visit to sites showcasing the quality of China's power equipment. [Read more.](#)



MI Executive Director Dr. Watcharas Leelawath stressing the importance of enhancing industry skills and strengthening business networking.

### MI Organizes Regional Training cum Business Networking on Sustainable Transport and Logistics Planning

MI organized a two-week Regional Training cum Business Networking on *Sustainable Transport and Logistics Planning and Management* from September 25 to October 6, 2017. Commissioned by the Trade Policy and Strategy Office of the Ministry of Commerce, Thailand, the training was designed to broaden knowledge on the effective implementation of logistics procedures and services. About 50 mid-level, senior and management-level officials, academics and logistics operators from Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Vietnam and Thailand attended the training. Other attendees were officers from the Trade Policy and Strategy Office and the Department of Trade Negotiation, Ministry of Commerce, Thailand. [Read more.](#)



Promoting food safety. An MI alumnus and officer from the PPC delivers a session on the use of agricultural chemicals to Lao farmers.

### Lao Farmers Learn Safe Agricultural Use from MI Alumni

About 60 farmers from Saithany and Hadxayfong Districts in Lao PDR joined the localized trainings on the safe use of agricultural chemicals on September 28-29, 2017. Officials from the Plant Protection Center (PPC) under the Ministry of Agriculture delivered the trainings, which were part of the action plans they developed in the New Zealand Aid Programme-funded training on *Assuring Food Safety through Pest and Agricultural Management* early this year. The trainings were geared to address the indiscriminate use of chemical fertilizers among Lao farmers by increasing their knowledge on topics like the importance of labeling and risk reduction, and thereby improve their farming practices. It is hoped that the trainings will serve as a springboard for further information dissemination on safe agricultural use. [Read more.](#)

### MI Trainees Hold National Workshops on Women Entrepreneurship for Export Business

Four national workshops were organized by participants and cooperation partners of MI's Regional Training Program on *Promoting Women Entrepreneurship for Export Business* conducted in July this year. The national workshops were part of the training participants' action plan implementation, and were held on August 24-26, 2017 for Myanmar; September 5-6, 2017 for Lao PDR; September 20-21, 2017 for Vietnam; and September 29-October 1, 2017 for Cambodia. A total of 100 women entrepreneurs attended the four national workshop held in Ho Chi Minh City, Yangon, Vientiane and Phnom Penh.



MI trainees in the regional training program adapted the workshop modules based on the local participants' needs and served as resource persons. Bankers and freight forwarders were also invited to share about the export business. MI staff provided technical assistance during the workshops and interviewed selected participants on opportunities and challenges for women-led enterprises in their country especially those in the export business. [Read more.](#)



Women entrepreneurs share business practices and showcase their products at the national workshops organized in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Vietnam.

## ■ EWEC (SDC) PROJECT ACTIVITIES

### EWEC Laos Project Partner Gets a Visit from Lao PDR President

Saibua Rice Mill, one of EWEC's project partners in Khammouane enjoyed the privilege of a special visit from Lao PDR President, H.E. Bounyang Vorachit last September 24, 2017. Mr. Bounyang Chanthavisouk, rice mill manager, discussed the rice production operations and showed the President around his rice processing facility. Saibua Rice Mill is one of RLED-EWEC's project partners to have applied GMP standards and is aiming to get certified in 2018.



Lao PDR President H.E. Bounyang Vorachit (fifth from left) and delegation during their visit to Saibua Rice Mill.

President Vorachit commended the efforts of Saibua Rice Mill and of the rice sector in Khammouane to raise their standards and increase quality and productivity. With the Lao Government's goal of improving its rice system and boosting production to 5.0 million tons in 2020, Khammouane Province is positioned as one of the country's major rice production hubs and value chain models.

### Myanmar Team Holds Workshop on Project Phase-end Review and New Phase Dissemination

Representatives from relevant government agencies as well as local businessmen and members of the Kayin Chamber of Commerce and Industry attended the workshop on the project phase-end review and new phase dissemination on September 8, 2017 at Hpa-an Township, Myanmar.

State Minister, H.E. Saw Myint Oo of the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation delivered the welcome remarks. Dr. Thet Thet Mar, team lead of the Myanmar Field Office, shared the achievements of the project's first phase and introduced work plans for the next phase. Participants likewise discussed areas for cooperation, and offered the suggestion of including other potential crops like soybeans, sugarcane, and black sesame in the next phase.



Celebrating a successful project run. EWEC Myanmar Team and participants during the project phase-end review workshop.



Productive discussion. Mr. Qinfei Zhu conversing with maize farmers on their production issues and challenges.

### MEL Leads Monitoring of Operation of Maize Farmer Groups in Myawaddy

Mr. Qinfei Zhu, MI's Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Specialist, joined the Myanmar Field Office team last September 18-20, 2017 for the monitoring of project operations of maize farmer groups in Inn Gyin Village, Myawaddy Township. The team reviewed the draft intervention result chain and discussed the development of intervention projects, adoption of the business linkage models, as well as the feasibility of piloting the impact evaluation. Mr. Zhu also met with some farmers and local brokers to discuss crop production, market access, and challenges in maize production, among other things. In another meeting with Mr. Myo Zaw Nyein, staff at Awba Group in the Kayin State, the two discussed key concerns such

as payment system, distribution channel and planned future activities. After the visit, Mr. Zhu remarked about the promising success of the project in Myawaddy particularly in light of the development of the tripartite models.

## ■ EWEC (SDC) PROJECT ACTIVITIES

### MI, Awba Company Organize Farmer Field Day

About 189 farmers and farmer representatives from 12 villages in Myawaddy joined the farmer field day last September 21-23, 2017. Participants visited demonstration farms in the village tracts of Htee Mal Wah Khee, Mae Pa Lei and Hpa Luu Gyi.

Part of MI's ongoing collaboration with the Awba Group, the farmer field visit had a three-pronged objective: introduce farmers to the business linkage models; show the difference in yield between traditional and Awba cultivation practices; and encourage the formation of farmer groups. After the demo farm visits, the participants expressed great interest in forming farmer groups in their respective villages and enjoying the benefits such a group provides. The demo farm owner also thanked MI and Awba Group for their continued support to the maize farmers of the Myawaddy District.



Participants in rapt attention during the farmer field day in Myawaddy.



MI's Dr. Watcharas Leelawath and Mr. Nguyen Quanh Chinh of the Quang Tri People's Committee, Vietnam marking continued partnership with MoU Signing.

### Project Steering Committee Meeting and MoU Signing at MI

Leaders from provincial agencies of Myanmar, Lao PDR and Vietnam joined the Project Steering Committee Meeting at the MI Headquarters last September 13-15, 2017. They reported on the progress of their project's pilot phase in their respective provinces, shared phasing out objectives and work plan, and presented ways forward and project recommendations. To cap the event, Dr. Watcharas Leelawath, Executive Director of MI and Mr. Nguyen Quanh Chinh, Vice-Chairperson of the Quang Tri People's Committee, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the project's second phase. The next phase is expected to run until July 2019.



Local capacities further strengthened. A trainee from the ToT training leads a meeting with coffee farmers.

### Inception Meetings Kick Off Partner-led Linkage Models

Trainees from the Provincial Department of Agriculture and Rural Development and District Farmers' Association facilitated seven meetings on the Quadripartite and Direct Linkage Models to coffee farmer groups in Vietnam. Leading the meetings, the local facilitators introduced the linkage models to farmers in the communes of Tan Lap, Huong Son and Huong Tan in Huong Hoa District. By encouraging the models' adoption, it is hoped that the farmers can increase their income and reduce production costs. The meeting facilitators were participants in the Training-of-Trainer (ToT) training organized by the RLED-EWEC Vietnam Field Office in August. The meetings were designed to further build up local skills and confidence as well as encourage the increased adoption of the linkage models.

## ■ OTHER ACTIVITIES

### SME Innovation and Technology Emphasized in Khon Kaen Business Forum

As part of continuing efforts to promote innovation among SMEs, MI organized the two-day Khon Kaen Business Forum last September 25-26, 2017. Discussions centered around topics such as eco-innovation for Thailand 4.0, entrepreneurial education, e-commerce application, research and development activity and intellectual property rights. Over 180 One Tambon-One Product stores (OTOPs), SMEs, startups and experts attended the event.

[Read more.](#)



An engaging discussion with panelists during the Khon Kaen Business Forum 2017.



Dr. Watcharas Leelawath, Executive Director of MI, expressing MI's support to the new GMS Strategy and Action Plan.

### MI Supports New GMS Strategy and Action Plan

Dr. Watcharas Leelawath, MI Executive Director, attended the 2nd Greater Mekong Sub-region Agriculture Ministers' Meeting on September 6-8, 2017 at Siem Reap, Cambodia. GMS agriculture ministers presented and endorsed the Five-Year GMS Strategy and Siem Reap Action Plan for Safe and Environment-Friendly Agriculture Products Value Chain.

Speaking on behalf of research and training institutions in the region, Dr. Leelawath emphasized the critical role of research and innovation, human resource development and knowledge sharing and dissemination in the new GMS Strategy and Action Plan. He also reaffirmed MI's commitment to support the new strategy and action plan in collaboration with key actors and development partners.



Mr. Madhuriya Kumar Dutta sharing about MI's work on sustainable logistics in the GMS.

### MI Shares Initiatives in Sustainable Freight Transport and Logistics

Mr. Madhuriya Kumar Dutta, Director of the Trade and Investment Facilitation (TIF) Department, delivered a session at the Green Freight Asia Forum 2017 on September 20, 2017 in Singapore. Speaking before green freight experts, corporate representatives and academics, Mr. Dutta discussed the various measures in place to increase fuel efficiency of freight transport and logistics companies in the GMS, as well as MI's activities geared at promoting sustainable logistics in Asia and the Pacific.

[Read more.](#)

### MI Talks About Food Safety in GMS in Newspaper Interview

Dr. Watcharas Leelawath, MI Executive Director, was interviewed by Khmer Times' on the subject of food safety in the GMS and Mekong Institute's role and contributions. Emphasizing MI's mission of fostering connectivity through knowledge dissemination, he noted the Institute's training programs on food safety, organized in collaboration with the New Zealand Aid Programme (NZAP). Dr. Leelawath also reiterated the value of collective effort and inter-governmental cooperation in promoting enhanced food safety in the GMS. [Click here to read the rest of the interview.](#)



## ■ OTHER ACTIVITIES



Dr. Watcharas Leelawath at the ASEAN Economic Integration Forum (top) and the ITD Research Forum 2017 (bottom).

### MI Executive Director Serves as Panelist in Bangkok Forums

Dr. Watcharas Leelawath attended the ASEAN Economic Integration Forum in Bangkok on September 14-15, 2017. He served as discussant in the launch of the book, *Trade Integration within ASEAN: The Role of Non-Tariff Measures for Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Vietnam* by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), ARTNeT and AFD. Sponsored by the UNESCAP, the forum aimed to advance discussions on how research, policy and business can promote the ASEAN Economic Integration in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals.

He also served as panelist in the ITD Research Forum last September 21, 2017, also in Bangkok. Dr. Leelawath talked about the implementation of agreement frameworks under ASEAN and the potential ways to fully utilize these agreements. The event was organized by the International Institute for Trade and Development.

### MI Participates in Discussions on SME Business Development

MI joined over 300 SMEs last September 22, 2017 in Khon Kaen for a discussion on *Enhancing Business Development for SMEs (Strong/Regular Level)*. Mr. Sa-nga Sattanun, Program Manager at TIF Department, spoke about the importance of business expansion and networking opportunities within the country and the region. He also presented the business databases developed by MI. [Read more.](#)



Mr. Sa-nga Sattanun (second from right) with speakers and participants of the SME Business Development Forum.

## UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

Symposium on Global Food Safety: Production, Health and Market

October 5 - 6

Regional Capacity Building Program on Comprehensive Labor Migration Management in the Greater Mekong Sub-region

October 16 - 27



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