



MEKONG
INSTITUTE



Study on the
IMPACT OF PROJECTS

Supported by Chinese Government for
Lancang-Mekong Regional Development

SUMMARY REPORT



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SUMMARY REPORT

Study on the Impact of Projects Supported by Chinese Government for Lancang-Mekong Regional Development





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Last but not least, we would like to express our greatest thanks to the consultant for his professionalism and contribution to the study.





Acronyms

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
CLMV	Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Vietnam
CT	P.R. China, Thailand
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
GMS	Greater Mekong Subregion
HCB	Human Capacity Building
MI	Mekong Institute
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
Lao PDR	Lao People's Democratic Republic
LMC	Lancang-Mekong Cooperation
LMCSF	Lancang-Mekong Cooperation Special Fund
P.R. China	People's Republic of China
SCADA	Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition
TAMS	Text Analysis Markup System

Executive Summary

This report is an evaluation of the impact of Human Capacity Building (HCB) projects conducted by MI between 2016-2020 funded by P.R. China. The objectives of this program align with the strategic plan of MI, the cooperation framework of Lancang-Mekong Cooperation (LMC) and the strategic purposes of Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). This report provides an independent evaluation of these programs to assess the extent of their intended changes and results. It identifies the barriers and enablers to those results, presents lessons learned and provides future recommendations to the development partner for future project investment.

This evaluation synthesized three theoretical models to address the objectives of this work. This framework included the commonly used metrics of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) evaluation's best practice standards for international development project evaluation, a secondary framework for the evaluation of HCB projects

analyzing results at the personal, organizational, sectoral, and community level, and finally a psychological self-assessment instrument adapted to the objectives of the study. A mixed methods approach was adopted to interrogate the research questions with quantitative and qualitative data collection yielding clear findings against the study's goals. 20 respondents contributed to the qualitative data collection while 107 respondents contributed to the quantitative data collection. Collection and analysis of this data was conducted between November 2020 and January 2021.

The results of the project are presented linearly. Qualitative findings are grouped by the themes emerging from the data using the DAC/HCB evaluation model. Likewise, quantitative findings correlate with the psychological self-assessment instrument. Additionally, 9 short case studies or impact stories are included in the report's outputs to further flesh out the findings and recommendations provided by the overall evaluation.



Summary of Findings and Recommendations

This report shows that the MI projects funded by the Chinese Government are achieving the intended results at the personnel, workplace/organizational, sectoral and regional levels of analysis. Positive unintended results can also be identified. Overall, the HCB interventions of MI are considered by alumni participants to be demonstrably affecting their work, their team or organization's work following their training, the shape and nature of planned interventions that emerge from both, with impact at the regional level in elevating the sustainable development of the Lancang-Mekong Region thus alleviating poverty.

Quantitatively 16 metrics were developed to assess participant's perspective on the effectiveness, impact and sustainability of the interventions. All 16 metrics demonstrate a significant distribution and intensity towards these units of analysis at all levels of engagement (personnel, organizational, sectoral and regional).

Qualitatively respondent data further reinforces quantitative findings and demonstrating the following. MI's HCB interventions, across each of the different components, effectively build and sustain participant confidence, experience, knowledge and skills. A core impact is the increased human capacity

and development of mid-level leaders in their respective field. Cited obstacles to further impact include a more robust participant selection process by the MI secretariat and a review of the shape of HCB trainings to incorporate a greater focus on experiential learning with broader professional expertise and inputs.

Secondarily participants utilize their increased capacity, commonly sharing knowledge and/or growing their international collaboration across their respective sector and region. This in turn contributes to wider sectoral and sustainable development practices and outcomes. At this level, MI can foster greater alumni networking and collaborative opportunities with potentially greater financial investment in seeding projects that flow from each specific HCB focus.

At the wider regional level, impact stories are clearly influenced by MI's HCB interventions. A multiple set of outcomes outside of the control of MI also have effect on these outcomes but there are clear elements of higher-level impact where the results would not have materialized without the key investments of MI's HCB inputs through the projects funded by Chinese Government.

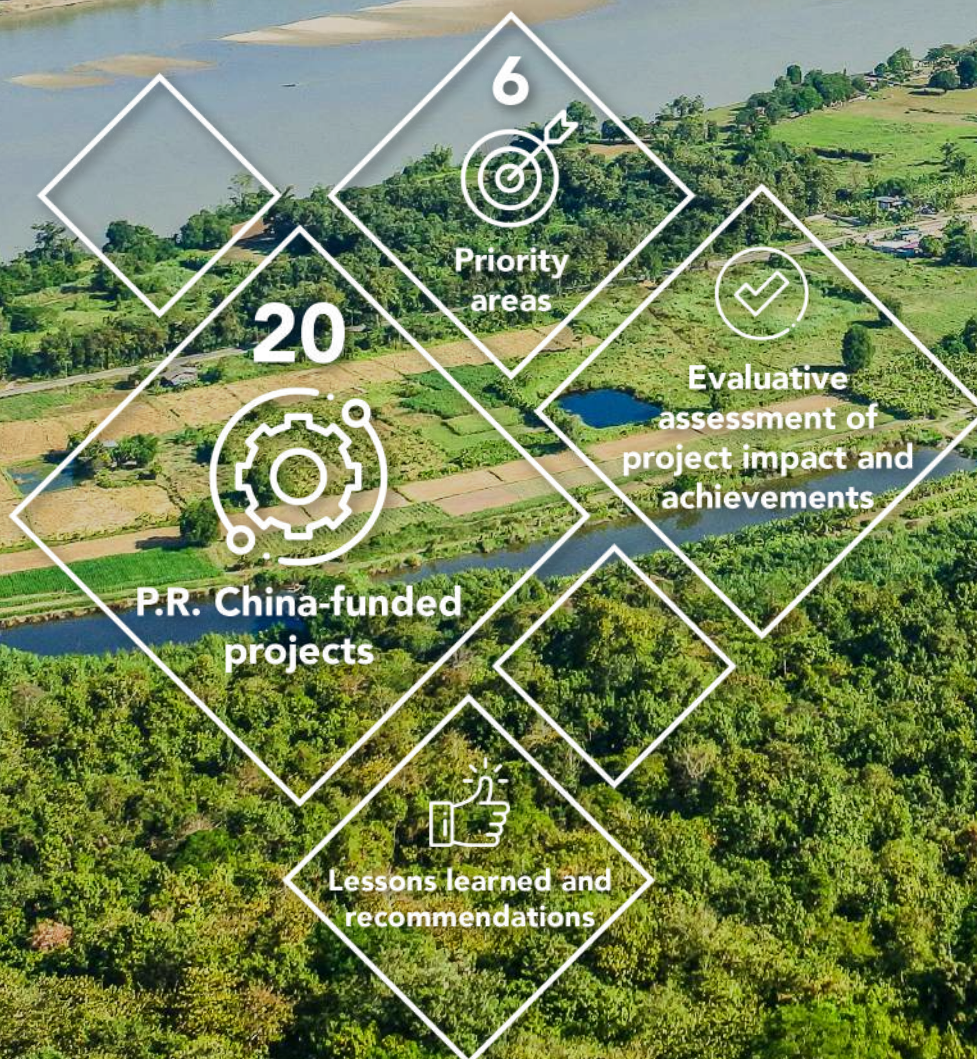
In summary, the HCB interventions conducted by MI:

- Create a greater context for collaborative work, cross-cultural understanding and networked relationships across the subregion which then supports greater sustainable development practices and poverty alleviation.
- Increased economic activity and poverty alleviation in the projects conducted by MI's alumni participants.

To further create a greater enabling environment and remove barriers to maximize these considerable results MI can:

- Evolve greater efficiency in its participant selection and diversification process.
- Further invest in projects following HCB interventions to seed activities that reinforce learned knowledge/experience/skills.
- Innovate more creative ways to transfer knowledge to ensure inputs are more engaging and practical for participants.
- Provide systematic alumni follow up and further opportunities for exceptional participants.

Chapter 1: Introduction





Background and Introduction

The Lancang-Mekong Region/Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) is an area with immense economic potential and rich natural resources. As many as 70 million people are living within the Mekong River Basin area and 260 million reside across the region. This region is experiencing some of the fastest sustainable and equitable economic growth in the world. However, the region is hindered by poverty, environmental degradation, a lack of human resources, and differentiated social development and governance structures.

Considering the emerging development needs for this subregion, the P.R. China invests heavily in the Lancang-Mekong Region, because it believes that the success of one-member country rests on the strength of all. Since 2005, P.R. China has escalated its support and remains committed to securing prosperity and harmony in the region. Specifically, the Chinese Government has supported regional cooperation and development in the Lancang-Mekong Region by working with MI to implement development projects to increase interconnectivity in the areas of agriculture, transportation, energy, people-to-people exchange, facilitation of trade and investment, and technology and innovation.

MI is an intergovernmental organization founded by the six member countries of the Lancang-Mekong Region. These countries include Cambodia, P.R. China, Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR), Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam. MI provides, implements and facilitates integrated human resource development, capacity building programs and development projects related to regional cooperation and integration. MI's current strategic plan 2016-2020 is a demand-driven approach developed through consultation with institutional partners, collaborating agencies and other key stakeholders and is based on the broad developmental needs of the Lancang-Mekong Region.

Investment by the Chinese Government into MI for this purpose, specifically addresses the needs of the Lancang-Mekong Region, aligns with MI's current strategic plan 2016-2020 and LMC's cooperation framework, and falls within the parameters of the BRI. Within the past five years the Chinese Government has funded MI to implement twenty projects in total (eight from Central Government, four from Yunnan Provincial Government and eight from Lancang-Mekong Cooperation Special Fund (LMCSF)) (See Annex 1). This wide array of technical HCB is focused on fostering interconnectivity across the Lancang-Mekong Region/GMS that alleviates poverty through broader economic integration across a range of sectoral areas including agriculture, trade and investment, energy, water resource, technology and innovation, and people-to-people exchange and regional government cooperation.

This study report is an evaluative assessment of the impact and achievements of these projects and provides recommendations for Chinese Government funded projects implemented by MI in the future. Since the projects funded by LMCSF are ongoing and yet to complete, the impact study on those projects will be conducted upon the completion of the projects in the future.

Objectives

The Chinese Government have supported MI to conduct this evaluation report to study the impacts of those projects funded by the Chinese government for regional development in the Lancang-Mekong Region. The study's objectives were defined accordingly:

- To evaluate the extent of intended changes and results (i.e. outputs, outcomes and impacts) that have occurred due to the implemented projects supported by Chinese Government
- To identify the enablers and barriers that affected the achievement and/or non-achievement of the projects' objectives
- To identify lessons learnt from the implementation of the projects
- To provide recommendations for Chinese Government funded projects implemented by MI in future.

	Agriculture	Trade and Investment	Energy, Technology and Innovation	People-to-People Exchange	Regional Government Cooperation	Poverty Alleviation	Water Resource
Areas							
Funding Agency							
8 Projects funded by the Chinese Central Govt.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
4 Projects funded by Yunnan Provincial Govt.		✓	✓	✓		✓	
8 Projects funded by the LMCSF	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓



Limitations of the Study

There are several limitations to this study. First, the evaluation was conducted remotely because of the global difficulties with travel in late 2020. This means that the power and effect of research conducted on the ground, and where necessary with translation with key informants could not be done. The difficulties of remote data collection were evident with difficulty of internet connections, time zones, and confusion with different applications to record and collect data.

Second, there is the clear concern in research that respondents are positively self-referential when they can choose to provide data for such evaluative research. Where they experience positive outcomes, they are more likely to respond to requests for their perspective or opinion where disinterested, disgruntled or passive participants that would express negative perspectives will not respond to requests for their perspective or opinion. This may cause a positive tendency in the data collected rather than providing a fully balanced account of the projects.

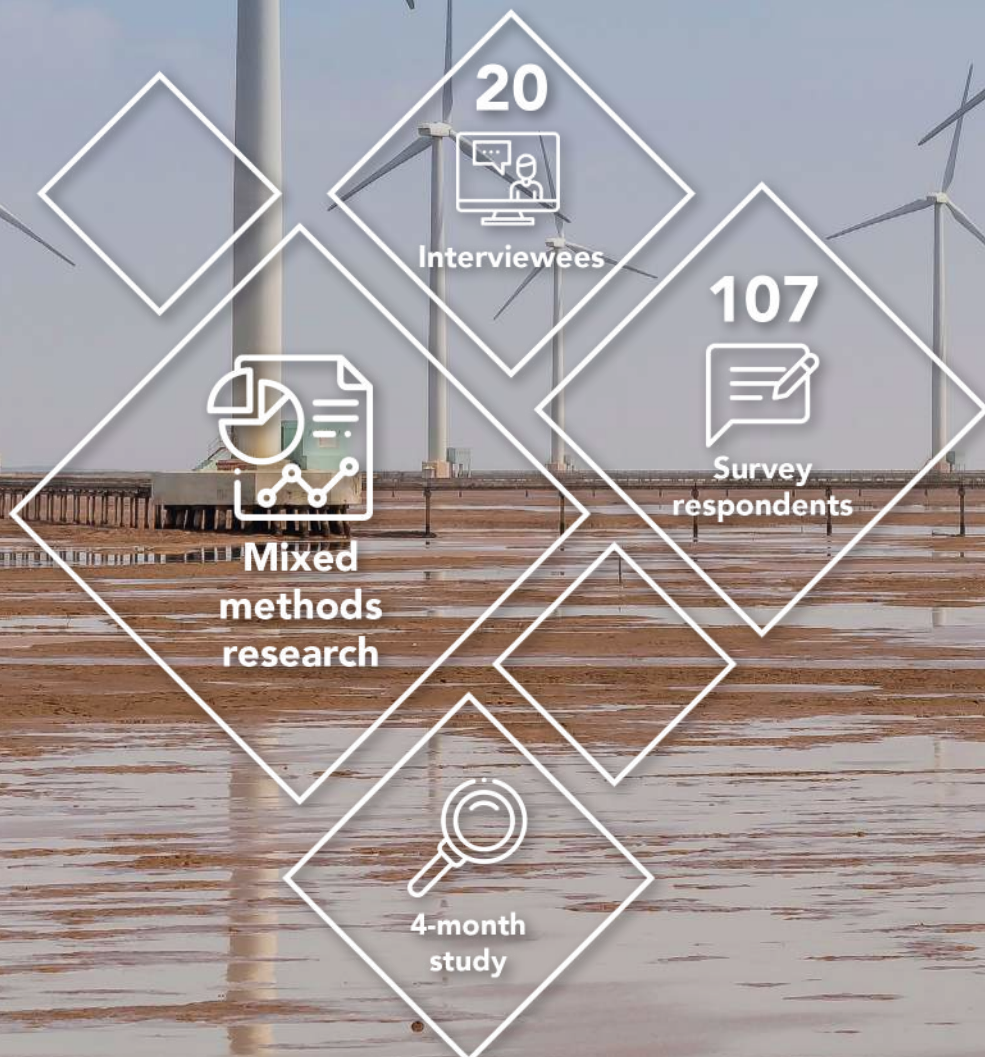
Third, there is a limitation in this evaluation with regard to the scope of the participant sample and the timeframe which the data was collected for analysis. The qualitative data reached saturation insofar that no new instances or events were emerging from the data collected around half way through the data collection. This was consistent even where eliciting responses to the request for qualitative interviews was difficult.


Finally, the last limitation of the study was the singularity of perspective from the respondents. While this is essentially the focus of the study, the experience and outcomes perceived and presented by the participants, without a verification of the outcomes from external objective parties, means the findings of this evaluation can only stand on the merits of the participants themselves. This is not problematic, in some cases noted external documentation is used to verify findings, but to strengthen the study further qualitative research around the effectiveness, sustainability and impact of the projects would mean a more robust certainty in the findings if further verified with secondary sources or documentation (which may or may not exist). This limitation does not discount the findings, only seeks to ensure the results of this evaluation are understood in this context.

Ethical Considerations

The main ethical considerations of this research have been in the protection of Human Subjects in research and evaluation projects. The research has been conducted and adhered to the framework and guidance of Protecting Human Subjects stipulated by the US National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects in Biomedical and Behavioral Research. The main concern in this research has been to ensure the anonymity of respondents through blind coding responses and removing indicative data from the analyzes or reporting of findings. Respondents were coded by number and not their name, transcripts have been anonymized and after data transcription recordings deleted. The quantitative data collection did collect participant indicative data and this data was also removed from the MI Survey Monkey account following the completion of this evaluation.

Chapter 2: Methodological Approach





This study will be conducted from early October 2020 to January 2021. A cross sectional study design will be required to conduct the impact study¹. The chosen procedure to engage this evaluation will be a mixed methods research approach that utilizes both quantitative and qualitative data². This approach is beneficial for three reasons. First, mixed methods research provides relatively more comprehensive data because statistics or numbers are complemented by qualitative narrative. Second, because different methodologies are deployed, there is greater opportunity for triangulation, cross referencing and assessing convergence or divergence of data in responses. Third, mixed methods study approaches often add insights and understanding that may otherwise be missed. However, mixed methods research approaches can be more time consuming and make the overall design of the research more complex or challenging³.

Conceptual Frameworks for the Study

Three combined conceptual frameworks/indices will be utilized to guide and structure this study.

First, the commonly used framework from the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) DAC for evaluation studies will be drawn upon to structure this assessment of the projects⁴:

- Effectiveness: The degree to which the program achieved its objectives and/or results including any differential results across groups.
- Impact: The degree to which the program has generated significant positive or negative, intended or unintended higher-level effects.
- Sustainability: The degree to which the net benefits of the intervention are likely to continue.
- Efficiency: The degree to which how well resources are used.
- Coherence: The degree to which the intervention fits to other sectoral, institutional, national or regional interventions.
- Relevance: The degree to which the intervention is doing the right things.

1 Rossi PH, Lipsey MW, Freeman HE. Evaluation: A Systematic Approach. 7th ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.; 2004.

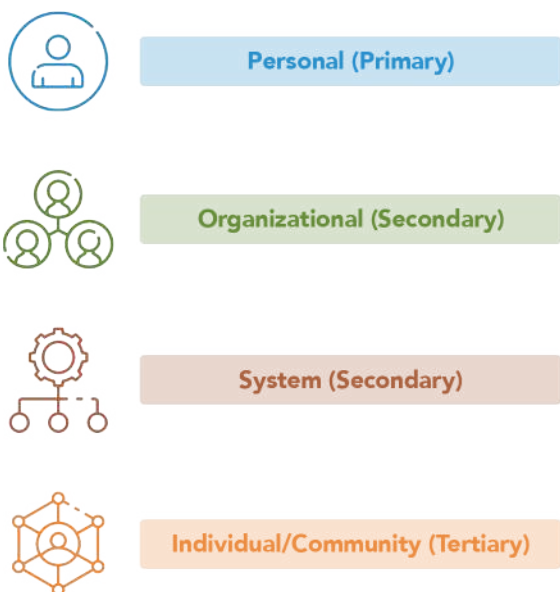
2 Quantitative and Qualitative Methods in Impact Evaluation and Measuring Results.

3 Creswell, J. W. (2013). Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches. Sage Publications, Incorporated.

4 Development Assistance Committee on Development Evaluation. OECD.

This study will focus on three of the DAC criteria, namely the effectiveness, impact and sustainability of the HCB interventions. It is assumed a priori that the coherence, relevance and efficiency of the projects being assessed in this evaluation study fit to the regional aims of the project protocols and are therefore equally relevant. Ongoing planning, budgeting, and process reporting of project activity and fund utilization provide annual appraisals of the interventions and satisfy the efficiency of each HCB project. This study therefore will evaluate the longer-term effectiveness, impact and sustainability of the said projects.

Second, where the interventions are primarily capacity building in focus this impact study will use the framework developed by La Fond and Brown (2003) that presents a framework for the evaluation of HCB interventions⁵. This study notes that HCB is a multi-layered and complex approach that is equally difficult to linearly track from activity to impact with multiple environmental and contextual factors that can account for effect on outcomes. Consequently, the intervention of HCB must be considered an intermediate outcome in and of itself which then is expected to lead to an improved and sustained level of performance in the job of each individual trained. These outcomes are contingent to the ownership and commitment of the individuals embedded in the HCB process and are enmeshed within larger systems and levels of relationships in these systems:



Where HCB activities can be seen as intermediate outcomes in themselves this study works on the assumption that the greatest level of assessing project effectiveness, impact and sustainability is in the personnel level of engagement. Where the participants of the projects delivered by MI have higher levels of responsibility in organizations and their relevant sector, a secondary level of impact and sustainability can be assessed. Finally, where interventions affect individuals and communities there are understandably multiple antecedents that lead to change that are beyond the scope of MI's influence. Such impact is tangentially referred to in the study but cannot be understood as directly affected by only MI's HCB activities.

Finally, this evaluation study then incorporates elements of Spreitzer's (1995) psychological empowerment in the workplace indices⁶, as a guide on employee's self-assessment in their job performance and harmonizes this index to assess La Fond and Brown's conceptual model noted above. These scales address self-motivation, determination, confidence and impact measurements as fundamental indices in Chinese Government funded HCB interventions. Rather than attempt to develop untested survey questions the study uses this index survey to interrogate La Fond and Brown's model with tested Likert scale questions with Cronbach's alphas ranging within the margin of reliability (.72). These three approaches are depicted in the following framework of **Figure 1** for the study design and analysis:

5 LaFond & Brown (2003) A guide to monitoring and evaluation of capacity-building interventions in the health sector in developing countries. MEASURE Evaluation Manual Series, No. 7. Carolina Population Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.
 6 Spreitzer, G. M. (1995). Psychological empowerment in the workplace: Dimensions, measurement, and validation. *Academy of Management Journal*, 38(5), 1442-1465.



**Development Assistance
Organization Evaluation Criteria**

EFFECTIVENESS
IMPACT
SUSTAINABILITY

EFFECTIVENESS
IMPACT
SUSTAINABILITY

EFFECTIVENESS
IMPACT
SUSTAINABILITY

EFFECTIVENESS
IMPACT
SUSTAINABILITY

**La Fond & Brown (2003)
HCB Interventions**

INDIVIDUAL/COMMUNITY
(Tertiary)

SYSTEMIC
(Secondary)

ORGANIZATIONAL
(Secondary)

PERSONNEL
(Primary)

**Spretzer (1995)
Work Empowerment Metrics**

COMPETENCE
IMPACT
METRICS

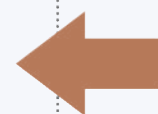
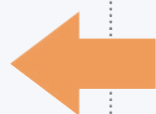
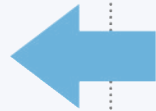
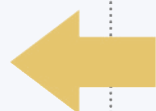
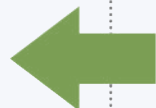


Figure 1: Methodological Framework Integrating Three Approaches

Data Collection Tools and Development Process

Based on the methodological frameworks outlined above, a set of data collection tools were developed as a guiding framework for data collection and analysis.

First, a literature review was conducted to identify each of the objectives in all eight Chinese Government funded HCB training components between 2016-2020 in the project portfolio. These objectives were mapped against the DAC framework as a foundation to a) assess the intentions of each intervention against each DAC criterion and b) as a framing reference for the development of the survey instrument and qualitative data collection tool for participant interviews.

Second, qualitative and quantitative data collection tools were developed against the framework developed in Figure 1 to theoretically generate

data aligned to the objectives set by this evaluative study. These tools were developed from this integrated framework with a focus on the DAC evaluation criteria as the main outcomes to be evaluated when analyzing MI's HCB interventions. This framework considers HCB inputs as catalytic to the development process (La Fond & Brown, 2003) and draws from the Empowerment Work Scale of Sprietzler (1995) as a tested scale to interrogate this assumption.

The qualitative questions matrix emerging from this framework were used as a guide in semi structured interviews with participants from the Chinese Government funded regional development projects. These interviews were conducted online using Zoom or other online video platforms if internet connectivity caused difficulties during data collection. All interviews were recorded, transcribed and then coded for analysis against the thematic codes emerging from across the data. The survey questions were also developed against this framework and disseminated through





Survey Monkey with a 7-point Likert scale to indicate the overall achievements of the interventions as a whole [1 - strongly disagree through 7 strongly agree]. In total the survey instrument tested 16 dependent variables and were categorically organized in country, developmental state and gender groupings for later analysis. These indices were treated for quantitative assessment of the HCB intervention's effectiveness, impact and sustainability according to the evaluations design. Both the theoretical framework for qualitative and quantitative instrument development, as well as the survey instrument and semi-structured interview questions are provided in the report's Annexes.

Data collection was conducted between November 2020 and January 2021. The survey instrument was put onto Survey Monkey and the MI secretariat communicated with alumni from across the eight different HCB interventions can the project portfolio to secure responses. Over six weeks a total of 107 full responses were received. The data were analyzed and verified for internal reliability using JASP a statistical analysis software package developed by the University of Amsterdam.

Furthermore, a total of 20 interviews with a set of participants from across all the Chinese Government funded projects were conducted. Qualitative data

was extracted from both extant literature and key informant questionnaires and then analyzed using Text Analysis Markup System (TAMS) software by coding thematic areas emerging from respondent interviews. These have been referenced against the chosen identified criteria from the DAC framework, their level of effect and Sprietzer's (1995) work empowerment metrics. These thematic areas were triangulated with the other data for analysis to cluster responses and group findings and recommendations around the objectives of this study. This structure is used in a presentation of the data and its findings.

The requirement of data saturation in qualitative analysis was deemed satisfied when an identified thematic area emerging from the responses appeared more than a minimum of five times. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, only qualitative data is presented that satisfies this threshold and is noted clearly if not. Furthermore, where potential discoveries in the qualitative data were identified these were theoretically developed and tested using the quantitative data to interrogate assumptions and verify or reject the prospective conclusions in the data.

Based on the preliminary findings, a further 9 short case studies/impact stories were generated as well.

Chapter 3: Analysis





Literature Review

Every project proposal, project summary report and evaluation, financial report or final project document was recorded and structured into the five components of MI's HCB interventions in the Chinese Government funded project portfolio. This process served to provide the shape and structure of this evaluation.

A total of 45 documents were reviewed and organized into their basic elements. These categories included the level of analysis, the main stated objective or outcome, the basic content of the workshop or training, evaluation or event, the date(s), cost, a rough estimation of the number of participants and a meta-analysis of the key words or focus of each incidence was recorded.

The workshops, trainings and their related events have broadly taken place between 2016-2020 and included an investment of approximately \$1,432,803 (in total with other contributions from corporate sponsors). The total investment of the Chinese Government was \$1,276,111 USD. In the project documentation up to 791 participants have attended the projects, but this analysis cannot account for double counting where individuals have likely attended repeated or follow up training or workshop.

The meta-analysis broke down each event into its specific objective statements or intended outcomes by selecting the key verbiage in each objective or outcome statement. This approach yielded 88 directional words that were analyzed using widely available word cloud software from the internet to obtain a visual picture of the key focus of MI's approach in the HCB interventions of the project portfolio.



PERSONAL LEVEL OF ANALYSIS

Effectiveness

The training from MI was considered as universally effective by respondents in the study. There were several areas that respondents noted as key outcomes as a result of their HCB training at a personal level.

The first area noted by several respondents was the area of their personal **confidence**. Respondent 02 noted that their time in MI was critical and, “a great experience for me - a lot of confidence, problem solving skills, management skills and independence for myself”. Respondent 03 agrees that the MI training they attended created, “a little bit more confidence to take more responsibility for my work in government and more and more for the future as well”. A growth in confidence also helped Respondent 07 step out and participate differently during and after their training, “giving me the confidence to have new ideas how to change my work, and how to change the thinking for my work”. For many of the participants using English in a cross-cultural context was daunting, but in reflection extremely helpful in building the confidence to interact cross culturally and express themselves in this second language.

A second area noted by the Respondents regarding the effectiveness of the HCB interventions at the personal level was the growth of their **experience**. Respondent 03 indicated their hopes before the training they attended would help them develop their program knowledge skills but found, “got a lot of experience through the various trainings

I was able to attend”. Experience was a fundamental outcome or change for Respondent 08 as it affected their entire approach to their work after the training particularly through the field visit/study visits that were conducted through the training schedule. Also, other participants found the experience of travelling internationally and receiving HCB interventions as significant to their personal development.

Third respondents grew at a personal level through the technical inputs received given through their respective workshops or trainings. This was not only in the area of **knowledge** acquisition but also **skills** gained through the workshop or training process. For Respondent 07 the training was effective in helping them develop **skills** in, “how to organize a workshop or training, how to organize the class effectively, how to divide students into small groups and team-work. I think I learned a lot of those skills from the MI training course”. Respondent 08 agrees, before in their work, “I sometimes did things for myself” but as a result of the training they learned how to ask for help and work as a team and were forced to develop self-management skills like keeping to time in project management because of their experiences at MI. Finally, Respondent 14 believes their training at MI was effective personally because of the, “facilitation and research skills” they acquired during their time at MI.

In the data the **knowledge** gained through MI training was considered highly effective. Throughout the interviews this aspect of personal growth was offered on 25 occasions. Knowledge was cited by Respondent 01 as effective because, “I think the training gave me ideas and ideas how to change my work”. In almost every Respondent interview the sentiments of Respondent 06 were reflected, “Right now this training improved my capabilities and I gained knowledge for myself”, or as stated by Respondent 02, “the beginning ideas they say to us is very important to changing of my mind”.





Sustainability

At a personal level, the quotes and findings reported attempt to focus on Respondent statements that are self-focused or lead to a sense of changed and sustained practice in their working habits and roles, rather than looking at the larger question of sustainability at the organizational or community level (which follows later in this section). Respondents considered the training they attended to affect them directly with changed perspectives or qualifiable outcomes in their work. Respondent 18 said of their training experience that, “this [workshop] certainly affected my job performance,” but further than this it changed the way they viewed their work, the way they viewed their colleagues from other Lancang-Mekong countries and affected their working approaches to be more “harmonious and sustainable”. In the case of Respondent 02 the issue of sustainability is evident in an attitude of lifelong learning, reading and ensuring they were technically proficient in their role before their training. However, the visit to a laboratory made their experience of the MI training uniquely valuable as they went from reading to experiencing the topic and content of the training. For this Respondent the training was sustainable in its approach because, “the training was real time” and the experience created genuine ongoing change for them in their approach to their work.

Impact

Impact at the personal level was also clearly identified in the findings from respondents. For Respondent 03 the experience of their time at MI as a young scholar not only had impact in their working knowledge and confidence levels it is directly related to their **promotion** to a position of influence in their home country’s Parliament, but has also lead to their successful scholarship application for further training study at the University of Japan. Another example is found in Respondent 08 who was also **promoted** after their work with MI on the Young Scholars program. For this Respondent the training they received at MI continues to change their working practice and consequently has enabled them to take on more responsibility, manage larger research programs and assume responsibility for their international and collaborative programs. While these outcomes start to address impact at an organizational level, none would have been possible without the promotion and positional change from which to affect them.

Recommendations

There were also some areas where participants of MI training have found limitations or gaps in these areas that become obstacles or gaps to the effectiveness, sustainability or impact of MI programs at the personal level of HCB intervention.

A clear theme in the data was around **participant selection** and the need for MI to carefully match potential participants to the content of the workshop or training provided (05, 06, 08, 11, 15). Respondent 15 framed this concern well for the sample, "I have seen part of the participants group have little interaction because of language skill or because they do not have knowledge so not so much suitable to the workshop topic, they have little interaction and this affects their interaction", and the effectiveness of collaboration in the training affects the impact it could possibly have with fully engaged members.

resource people for workshops, rather than at times being dependent on a single individual to transfer knowledge to the participants, would greatly increase the effectiveness of the interventions.

Summary

Where La Fond and Brown (2003) note that human capacity building interventions are multi-layered and complex. This is clearly evident in the observable themes emerging from participants at this initial level of analysis. They also note that HCB interventions need to be considered as intermediate outcomes in and of themselves. Such outcomes noted include personal growth or **confidence**, **knowledge** acquisition, the development of **skills** and **experience** are evident across the sample. All the Respondents reported positive effect from the HCB interventions and considered their training to be effective, sustainable, and creating an impact in their personal lives and immediate job performance.



A second data set emerges from the sample regarding the effectiveness of the trainings provided by MI in the areas of length, scope and technical depth. With regard to length Respondents requested longer training periods that were also expanded in scope in order to do more involved study visits or field trips to enhance the learning (05, 06, 07, 11,13). This element proves very popular in the feedback and is directly related to the ongoing sustainability of the interventions at this level of analysis, as Respondent 13 notes, "it was the combination of theory and reality in the field trips. They made me imagine at that time what I should do when I come home to improve my job performance in my company". With regard to technical depth, two Respondents (05, 15) suggested that a broader, more diverse range of

Some obstacles were noted by the Respondents that hindered both the immediate and intermediate experience of MI's HCB interventions. The first recommendation in the data is the development of an even more robust **participant selection** and vetting process to ensure that all participants are competent in language and knowledge fitting to the field of study. Furthermore, respondents suggested that workshops or trainings could be longer, involve more **kinesthetic learning** with a greater focus on field visits or study tours, and draw on a broader range of **professional expertise** for the technical investments in the workshops or trainings.



ORGANIZATIONAL/SECTORAL LEVEL OF ANALYSIS

Effectiveness

At the organizational and sectoral level of analysis the effectiveness of MI's HCB training is evident in the degree to which participants **share their knowledge** with their team, organization, department or agency following their time of training with MI. Furthermore, for most Respondents, knowledge is not only shared with their constituent group but comes to change the practices, work or approach to work in these individual's professional sphere of influence. This moves to a broader level of impact in the sector.

Six respondents from the sample discussed how they had effectively shared the knowledge and skills gained from MI's training with either their organization or associations within their sector. In some cases where the Respondents were in the academic sphere this was a relatively easy and expected outcome of the knowledge gained from the MI interventions. One respondent said that they would send participants to MI workshops or trainings each year because it was a tried and tested way to bring that knowledge back to their context and apply it to cross border logistics management. They would ensure that beyond their immediate business they would collaborate with the other six national logistics associations to share best practices. Equally they engage with those associations when they return from MI trainings. There is a real economic return on such collaboration and networking that leads to greater economic development and shared understanding across the GMS borders that facilitates smoother trade, logistics, communications and infrastructural development. Another example of this finding would be Respondent 16 who, "trained their workers and staff [in the content of their workshop] and then shared my knowledge," with one of the agricultural associations in their country.

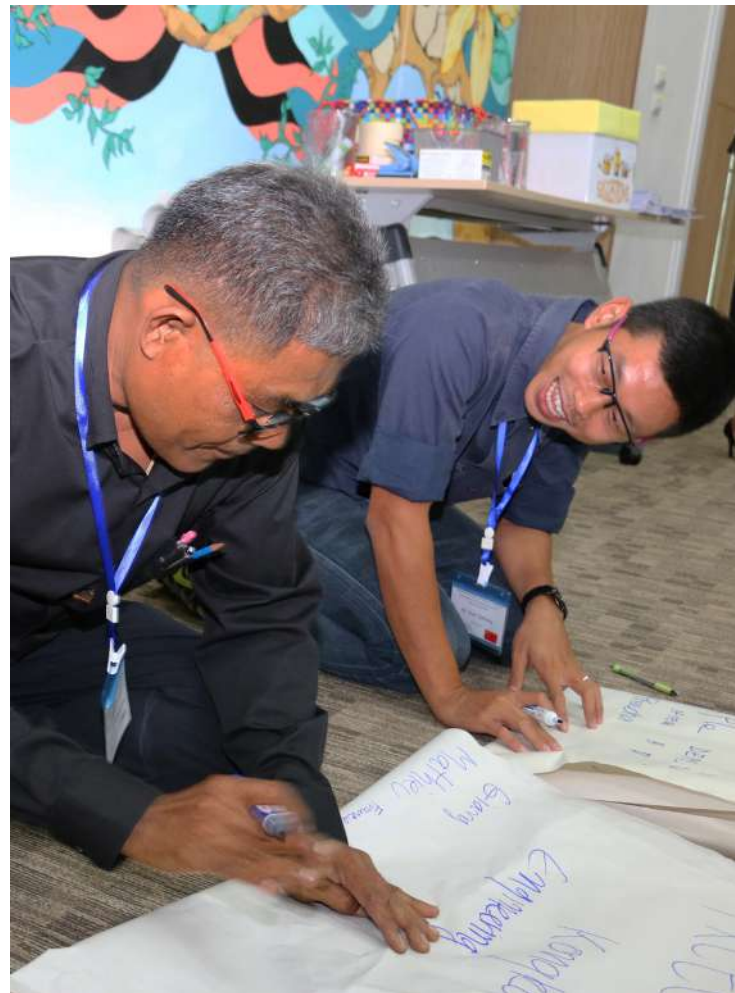


Sustainability

A key indicator emerging from the data is the **international collaboration and networking** that is affected through MI's HCB interventions. There is a clear and strong effect where the collaboration and networking that is catalyzed by participants joining together in a collegiate and international context like MI's trainings and the broader sustainable development practices this enables in the Lancang-Mekong Region.

"MI is like a bridge to make connections between GMS countries" says Respondent 04 to emphasize how their time at MI has led to greater sustainable work between their country and other countries in the Lancang-Mekong Region. Each training provides the context and opportunity for participants to learn how to collaborate with the other international participants and form relationships around their organizational or sector affiliations and reflect on their own context to become more effective in applying knowledge. This is most evident in participant feedback from the electricity and power trainings but occurs in almost all of the participants responses. Respondent 06 names the dynamic, "I think that international connections between GMS is also important if the other participants can attend because it's so effective - if we see that interactive discussions with them, I think we may understand and also think and realize more about our own situation". Respondent 12 notes the same effect where MI training provides knowledge but creates the space for the necessary networking that allows that knowledge to be shared and then effectively applied in areas like cross-border trade, or power distribution (18, 19).

Another common perspective is how the international experience of training at MI facilitates participants to be able to more easily engage cross culturally in their professional roles back at home which promotes ongoing sustainable relationships, contacts and ultimately collaborative work in the areas of agriculture, power, infrastructure, IT and innovation. For several participants, the international collaboration and networking element of MI training, leads to more sustained engagement with people from other cultures, reshaping and redirecting the course of their organizational and sectoral engagement and capacity back in their home context.



Impact

The HCB training provided by MI to participants has demonstrable impact on organizations and the range of sectors the Respondent's organizations work within. This in turn has great influence on development pathways across the Lancang-Mekong nations.

Respondent 13 states that their training, "inspired me to do many things for my organization's development" with demonstrable impact on their business product and bottom-line increase of profit by 30%. The immediate impact this Respondent noted was in employee performance as they were given clear objectives based on the theoretical learning this participant had received at the MI training. Another Respondent (07) was able to co-bid for a project funded by an institutional bi-lateral donor based on the direction they set out of the training received from MI. Finally, another example from the data that points to organizational and/or sectoral impact is where one Respondent (09) took information they had acquired at the MI training shared it with staff and saw, "the ideas growing in my team, for example, they now try to implement the automated programs to increase productivity and some these ideas came straight from the knowledge and best practices we received in the training". Further impact stories are provided in case study format below.

Recommendations

As the interventions conducted by MI participants are not controlled or managed by MI recommendations for MI at this level of analysis are less prevalent across the sample.

A key barrier to the application of knowledge that is acquired at MI trainings and then activated in the participants home country is the buy in of superiors, line managers or bosses. In one case the Respondent (11) echoed the sentiments of other participants in noting that an enabling environment where there is buy in from the superior, buy in from team mates and available financial means to action a new potential direction are critical components that means MI's HCB interventions can be effective, sustainable and have an impact. Financial resources are required for participants to fund their proposed activities or implementation following training.





In some cases, the individuals were able to elicit funding from alternative sources or worked in central administrative agencies where finances are less restricted. Others were not.

Other anecdotal areas cited by Respondents for MI to potentially focus on are around participant follow up, development of a more comprehensive alumni program, and tailored repeat training for the best participants who have demonstrated the implementation of knowledge, skills and training in their work after the initial training. Where these recommendations are cited by a couple of participants, they are not evident in the data beyond five instances and therefore are not elaborated on here.

Summary

At a secondary level of analysis, the organizational and sectoral levels MI programs show themselves to be effective, sustainable and have impact. MI's HCB interventions are effective insofar that participants **share their knowledge** after the training and in many cases share this knowledge more widely across their sectors with associations, government or other stakeholders within their sector. The key indicator of sustained engagement and application of this knowledge is evident where participants continue their **international collaboration and networking** beyond the initial training in significant ways that continue to grow the collaboration across the sector's international boundaries. The impact of these two dynamics at the organizational and sectoral level are evident in very real outcomes that are captured in this document's impact stories that follow below.

There are obstacles to these outcomes at the organization/sectoral level and are mostly founded in the context the participant finds themselves. There are things that MI can do to support an enabling environment for participants to return to so that training inputs can more easily translate to the desired outcomes or objectives of the training. These would include greater involvement of bosses and colleagues of participants before the training, selecting two or more participants from the same organization, business or government department to diffuse the knowledge and technological transfer of the trainings. Finally, micro-loaning, providing small grants, or subsidies of post training implementation may be a successful strategy to elicit buy in to proposed implementation plans following the training.





COMMUNITY/INDIVIDUAL LEVEL OF ANALYSIS

Effectiveness and Sustainability

There is less universal convergence in the data of the effectiveness or sustainability of MI's HCB inputs when translated to local communities or individuals in the Lancang-Mekong nations. This is because the inference between an input predominantly given in a MI training room is too weak to verify as directly responsible for the effectiveness or sustainability of observations in a local village in Myanmar or on the border between P.R. China and Lao PDR. In many of the Respondent's situations they are not really able to see the impacts at the local individual level because they themselves do not work or engage outside of their department or particular role.

Impact

At the level of impact, a number of the Respondents were able to demonstrate examples of impact with inference back to the initial training given by MI. This was evident in Respondents 02, 07, 11, 15, and 18's stories of where impact has changed either the economic income of local communities or directly affected local communities through changed practices at the environmental level. Again, some of these impact stories are accounted for in a later section this report.

Three examples from the Respondents will suffice to make the critical points of the findings for this section. First in the accounts from participants who attended the agricultural trainings direct impact can be easily translated to impacting local farmers. The participants were trained, they shared their knowledge directly in their team, more broadly among colleagues, they built international and collaborative networks to ensure best practices continued and were developed and they shared with farming communities or directly made the changes in their own context. In three of the Respondent accounts ultimately farmers in their respective product line (in Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam) switched to organic produce, improved their low-tech cold storage facilities, changed their packaging or introduced new packaging measures and opened up new markets to sell their goods. Each reported a significant economic return of between 10-30% on these new practices either at the collective or individual farmer level.



This is a significant impact because the reported 10%-30% increase translates to 100% increase in profits. The original sale may only generate 10-30% in profit as expenses in the production of the fruit or vegetable run around 70-90%. Now with sales increased to 110%-130% of their original value sellers have significantly increased their profit with demonstrable effect⁷.

One other compelling account comes from one Respondent who has worked with local communities and provided simple and workable solutions to slash burning agricultural waste after the rice harvest. Moving beyond the ineffective threats and fines from local authorities this participant used skills learned in MI training to work with local communities, build consensus around his teams developed alternatives for burning the fields following harvest to clear effect. This participant is waiting to see how the environmental impact and pollution in this region of South East Asia is affected positively in the coming year as the communities in question are adjacent to one of the largest cities in the region and heavily pollute the city each year during the burning season.

Summary

At the community/individual level it is difficult to identify the inferences between MI's HCB inputs and impact in development across the Lancang-Mekong Region. However, such moments of significant change that briefly tell a narrative that accounts for the linear logic between inputs and impact, whether intended, and often not, are evident and accounted for across the respondent's data. These few examples of sustainable economic impacts among farmers across the Lancang-Mekong Region and the environmental change of one participant's engagement of stakeholders in rice farming communities are followed by a set of more developed case studies that demonstrate the efficacy of MI's programs in contributing to impact across the Lancang-Mekong Region. To be clear, there are multiple factors evident in these accounts that are outside of the remit or purview of MI. However, in each instance where change is elicited at a personal, organizational/sectoral, or community/individual level, without the initial catalyzing inputs from MI these changes would potentially have had neither the same direction nor magnitude.

⁷ Please see quote from Ms. Niang Kia from Tri Tong District below to underline this assertion.





Quantitative Data Analysis

This section presents the findings of the quantitative analysis of collected data. It reviews the process of data collection, descriptive statistical analysis, reliability and data skew. Furthermore, based on emerging themes in qualitative interview findings, the data is analyzed using independent sample t-tests to look at the differences between grouping treatments of the data.

One hundred and seven participants responded to the survey instrument. In order for this data to be confident in drawing inferences, i.e. have power, a sample of 102 respondents was required⁸. A strongly founded presentation of the descriptive statistics is provided and further analysis emerging from post-hoc treatment of the data was able to either confirm or dispel emerging themes identified in the qualitative interviews. The process has presented some interesting considerations for further research and while the statistical analysis shows those considerations cannot be inferred to the larger population of MI alumni participants, trends would suggest areas for further and fruitful interrogation.

The collected responses were from among an alumni pool selected by the Communications team at MI. In total 389 alumni from the Lancang-Mekong Region were contacted for a response to the survey. Of those that responded, 62 were male and 45 were female. Seventeen responses came from individuals in Cambodia, 19 from P.R. China, 10 from Lao PDR, 27 from Myanmar, 18 from Thailand and 16 from

Vietnam. Respondents were all participants in one or more of the Chinese Government funded projects conducted by MI. All respondents were aware they were commenting on the effectiveness, impact and sustainability of the human capacity building project they attended at MI.

The data was downloaded from Survey Monkey and assessed for missing elements and potential outliers. In total 16 dependent variables were developed against the theoretical framework established for this evaluation and is provided in Annex 3. Each scale numbered from 1, strongly disagree to 7, strongly agree. The data included disaggregation by gender and country. The following table presents the 16 variables, their mean value, standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis.

The means of each variable fall within > 5 and < 6 range which explains the high degree of negative skew in the data on all the variables but three (changed job only slightly skewed at -0.75, changed organization at -0.78, and changed sectoral collaboration just, at -0.96). The data also presents extremely high kurtosis with all variables being significantly peaked at the mean distribution point. As an example, this distribution of the variable, 'MI's capacity building/training effectively equipped me to do my job' demonstrates this negative skew with a long tail to the negative side of the distribution and high kurtosis on the distribution to the mean within the > 5 and < 6 range is shown in **Figure 3**. **Table 1** following this figure shows the overall data against each metric variable.

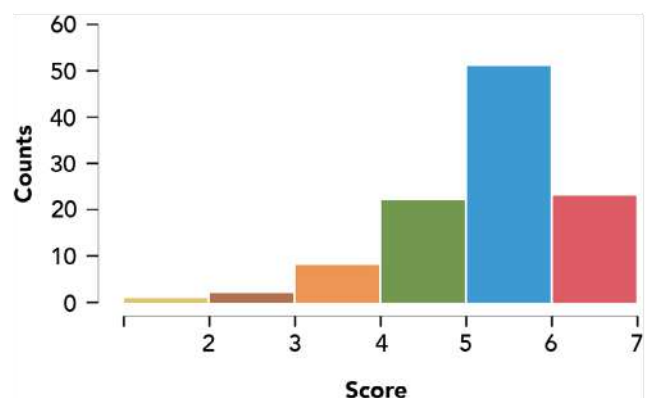


Figure 3: Distribution Graph of MI's Capacity Building/Training Effectively Equipped Me to Do My Job

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
MI's capacity building/training effectively enabled me to accelerate sustainable economic and social development, and poverty alleviation in the Lancang-Mekong sub region.	5.925	1.061	-2.261	7.739
MI's capacity building/training effectively enabled me to collaborate and network across the region.	5.907	1.024	-2.445	9.064
MI's capacity building/training effectively equipped me to do my job.	5.757	1.036	-1.364	3.563
MI's capacity building/training effectively improved my job performance.	5.841	0.943	-1.668	6.022
MI's capacity building/training effectively met its objectives.	5.888	0.894	-1.958	8.221
MI's capacity building/training effectively improved my team/organization's results.	5.626	1.024	-1.129	2.904
MI's capacity building/training positively changed the way I do my job.	5.533	1.093	-0.748	1.482
MI's capacity building/training positively changed the way I collaborate and network.	5.692	0.966	-1.457	4.532
MI's capacity building/training positively changed my organization's approach to work.	5.346	1.010	-1.022	2.101
MI's capacity building/training positively impacts economic and social development and poverty alleviation in the Lancang-Mekong sub region.	5.542	0.974	-1.275	3.516
MI's capacity building/training changes the way we collaborate and network across the Lancang-GMS sub region.	5.710	1.028	-1.514	4.294
MI's capacity building/training has been adopted in my team's working practice.	5.477	1.110	-1.457	3.578
MI's capacity building/training continues to help me be self-assured about my capabilities to perform my work activities.	5.832	0.976	-1.515	4.969
MI's capacity building/training has significantly affected my organization's working practice.	5.364	1.050	-0.780	1.493
MI's capacity building/training has changed the way our sector functions, collaborates, and networks across the LC-MK region.	5.346	1.082	-0.957	1.749
MI's capacity building/training creates ongoing lasting change for communities in the LC-MK region.	5.701	1.075	-1.466	3.521

Each of the variables also scored a frequentist scaled .949 for Cronbach's α demonstrating significant internal reliability.

Quantitative Indicators for Research

The data is significantly skewed (greater than 1.0), distributed towards the positive end of each variable (shown in a negative value) and scaled with extremely high kurtosis (greater than 1.0). The mean data shows that on each of the variables, the average response range falls between 'slightly agree' and 'agree' for the majority of participants. Against the developed metrics this indicates that from this participant sample, respondents find the capacity building/training input of MI effective, sustainable and with impact, at the personal, organizational, sectoral and individual/local level of analysis. This data set shows that the interventions are having substantial positive effect in the minds of the participants with regard to the metrics selected, which are in turn based on the theoretical concerns of the study and objectives of this evaluation.

Post-hoc Quantitative Analysis

Several respondent interviews provided data that noted the importance of investments and technological transfer from Lancang-Mekong countries like Thailand and P.R. China. For example, in the words of Respondent 12, "you will see our country is a bit later than other countries in Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in all of the sectors, not only business but also in knowledge and infrastructure... we are later". This sentiment was repeated by other respondents like Respondent 05, "we have to go out [to those other countries] like P.R. China and Thailand to learn and be more confident". Participants from Thailand and P.R. China also noted how the investments of MI created change but respondents from the other four countries more regularly noted this difference. Post-hoc analysis of the quantitative data allows the assertion that participants from Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Vietnam (CLMV) are more positive in the variable distributions than participant from P.R. China and Thailand (CT) to be analyzed and interrogated.

To test this hypothesis the participant responses were divided into two coded groups 1 = CLMV (n = 70) and 2 = CT (n = 37). The proposed hypothesis is that $CLMV > CT$ and therefore its logical null is $CLMV < CT$. A one tail independent samples t-test was used to test this theoretical premise. The value of t must exceed 1.65 with a degree of freedom of 66 with p set at $< .05$ to reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis as significant,

assuming normality and variance conditions are met. The results of this test yielded no variables within the parameters set; thus, the null hypothesis was accepted and the variance between populations considered normal.

However, while in all the variables the difference was not considered statistically significant there is a clear trend in the data that suggests an area for further research and implications for the future of investment in sustainable development interventions across the region. This is best depicted in the following **Figure 4** which demonstrates the spread of responses from the two groups CLMV and CT and the difference between populations - and is replicated across the variables selected.

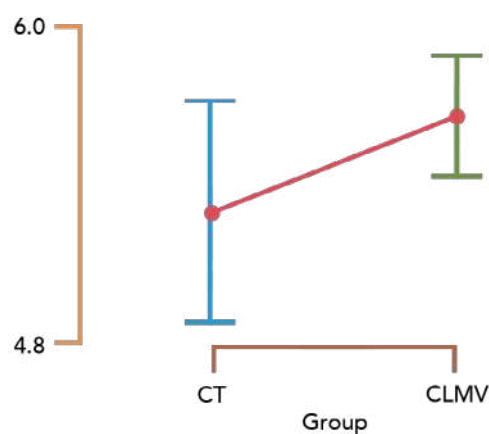


Figure 4: Descriptive Plot of MI's Capacity Building/Training Positively Changed the Way I Do My Job

Summary of Quantitative Findings

The 16 variables responded to by the 107 participants were highly reliable scales, each demonstrating significant negative skew and high kurtosis. This data shows that the 16 variables fell relatively consistently within the 'Agree' category of responses against the metrics of the study. The respondents near universally report that MI's HCB interventions have a demonstrable effect are effective, sustainable and have an impact at the personal, organizational, sectoral and individual/community levels of analysis.

Furthermore, post-hoc treatment of the data demonstrates a trend toward participants valuing the HCB interventions of MI from CLMV nations at a higher rate than participants from CT nations in the areas of individual and organizational work practices indicating greater impact in these two areas. This trend is evident across the metrics but not statistically significant.

Chapter 4: Impact Stories





The qualitative and quantitative findings above are systematic in their presentation of the data against the theoretical model of the study. This section provides several case studies from alumni regarding their perspectives of where and how the training they received from MI through the project portfolio have impacted them personally, organizationally, across their sector and in some cases across local communities in the region. For descriptive purposes these case studies refer to participants or Respondents (within this evaluation study) as alumni.

Agricultural Impact Stories



Impacting Local Communities with New Agricultural Practices

After attending two of MI's trainings covering post-harvest technology and a second on food safety awareness, one alumnus proactively chose to apply the knowledge they learned from the content of these two trainings. This has led to significant change in local communities throughout Vietnam.

"The training course[s] helped me to improve my knowledge of how to use these techniques in food preservation in agricultural products like mango, how to help local farmers reduce their costs and preserve their products" reports this participant. However, not only was the workshop's content important where the technical skills required to make changes among local communities across Vietnam were learnt. The approach and training styles experienced during the MI trainings also equipped this alumnus with core participatory and facilitation skills that could be directly applied first with their departmental colleagues and then ultimately with the farmers they worked. Furthermore, this participant found that the concrete results of their project, were grounded by engaging cross culturally and building the confidence to reach out in new ways in other international opportunities. These outcomes were all because of MI's training and capacity building inputs.

After the workshops, this alumnus successfully chased funding from Australian Aid and implemented the principles of the initial learning's from the MI training among 1,000 ethnic Khmer beneficiaries in Tri Ton District, An Giang Province, Vietnam and through the Mekong Delta.

This participant says, "I transferred the knowledge and skills I had received from MI to the farmers and they did it to improve their income, to protect the farm with post-harvest skills and used them to develop storage rooms with the lowest costs so [produce has] a longer time to get to market. The most impact was noticed in the income for the farmers, resulting in significant economic impacts across these communities as financial incomes were increased and poverty reduced.

In the Australian Aid story board of their funded program a quote is provided from 68 years old Ms. Niang Kia from Tri Tong District, a direct beneficiary of this now award-winning project in Vietnam, "Since joining... this project, I've earned more money to afford the daily essentials that used to be just a dream". For Ms. Niang Kia, and the 1,000 or so beneficiaries of this project, the initial technical investments made by MI in people like this alumnus and their colleagues, are a lifeline at the micro level and change lives. Yes, it has taken the follow up initiative of the participant and funding from another bi-lateral agency to support the emerging project, but the founding concepts and training were from MI's project portfolio. Where indirect transformations swell, greater economic security and broader sustainable development throughout the Lancang-Mekong Region is created.

Transforming Agricultural Practices and Developing Regional Collaboration

MI is a well know research institute serving the GMS countries of the ASEAN. It has credibility, reputation, and alumni actively push their colleagues into the ongoing opportunities that it provides because the inputs provided by the Institute are considered to add tremendous value at not only the level of personal development, but in secondary results at the organizational, sectoral and then ultimately at the local community level.

In this case the alumni participant from the post-harvest training starts, "in the past had no knowledge of the value chain, and most of the farmers in the Lancang-Mekong area that my office was responsible for also had no knowledge until I had received training at MI and then passed this training onto the farmers," so they could directly benefit from the knowledge. Like the previous impact story, the farmers in this participant's scope of responsibility were able to apply the understanding of value chain development and also increase the value of their produce by moving to organic production and effective packaging processes. But this alumnus' story does not stop here.

Another key way in which MI adds value to the GMS region is in the collaborative projects that emerge from trainings when participants build friendships and collegiate relationships that lead to greater sharing of knowledge, skills, experience and technological transfer. This alumnus not only has seen local communities impacted with developed value chain marketing, but they have directly been investing their knowledge, experience and expertise in Yunnan province and have continued to have their Chinese co-participants from a university in Kunming also make technical investments in their work in Thailand. This growing mutual relationship is evolving with a memorandum of understanding between the two entities to solidify their commitment to ongoing technical transfer and shared management practices, particularly in post-harvest management. While the content of this exchange program may not be directly around MI training content, it certainly has been catalyzed by the international collaboration opportunity created by MI's trainings. The mutual benefits and investments for both Yunnan and northern Thailand in this arrangement leads to positive economic outcomes and agricultural management upgrades that move local communities to greater economic sustainability.

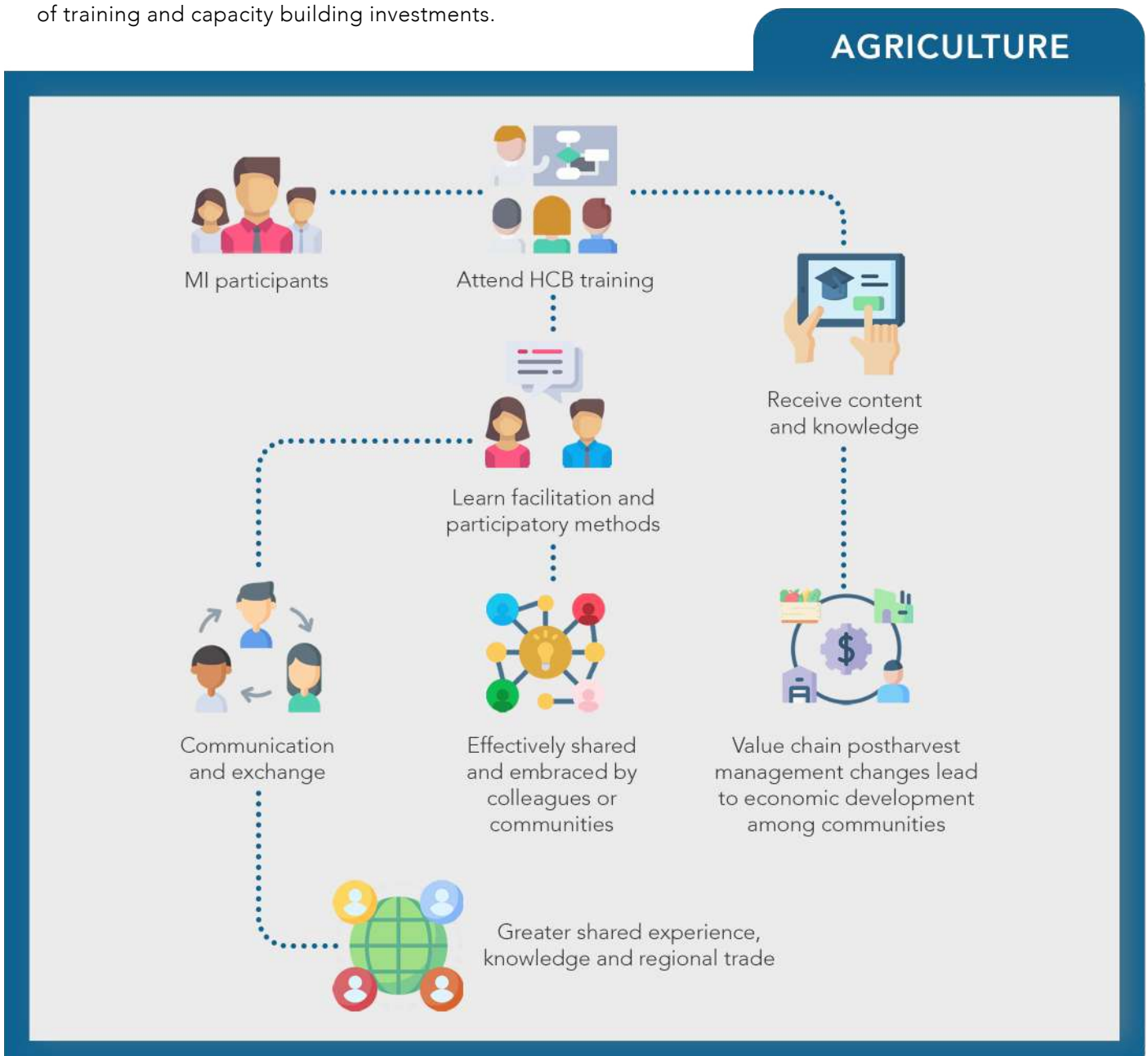


Impacting the Agriculture Sector Beyond the GMS

Not only does MI's training impact and touch the GMS countries alone. Sometimes the effects are evident in regions further afield. After attending the post-harvest and food safety training one professor from Yunnan returned to their university and continued to share the practices and learnings from the workshops with their undergraduate and Masters students. They even directly tested students on pre- post- understanding of the issues and technical inputs taken from MI inputs and these were translated into the final projects of several undergraduate thesis.

However, for this participant, the added value of their time at MI was the international collaboration and networking that was enabled through attendance at the MI trainings. This is, "very important because we work in Yunnan and we are trying to establish a lot of cooperation with the border countries [in the Lancang-Mekong Region]. So, now because of the international network that has come from the MI training it has established for the future a way for us to do projects together and work together. It makes me, and my organization more internationalized". Such outcomes are the direct intent of the portfolio of training and capacity building investments.

This participant also was in the position where they were able to co-supervise a number of students from Pakistan in their studies and work at the University in developing agricultural produce. The direct inputs and knowledge from MI were also given to these students as a part of this supervision to help them improve the management and packaging of peaches back in their local communities in Pakistan.



MI Young Scholar Program Impact Stories



Developing Technical and International Skills for Young Professionals

Participating in the MI Young Scholar Program, this individual from Lao PDR worked at MI for six months developing project proposals, planned implementation of projects and grew in their overall project management skills. Now working as a political coordinator back in their home country their time at MI is considered to have been extremely helpful at a technical level. Because of the international experience in building friendships with other colleagues from the GMS countries and dealing with international and bi-lateral relationships during their tenure at the MI secretariat this participant notes where this experience has perfectly prepared them for their current role in political coordination and working with people from different countries, "I think it is positive to my job, we go out, have more experiences as well and I learned to be more confident".



Reforming Provincial Planning in Cambodia

This participant attended the MI Young Scholar program at MI for several months and was placed in the secretariat for six months working in a department and attending some of MI's trainings. In this particular case the young scholar returned to a role with an Asia Development Bank (ADB) project in land use and special provincial planning in Cambodia.

During their tenure at MI this Young Scholar notes that the soft skills they learned in organization, facilitation, workshop planning, and research have been critical inputs that have positively affected their work back in Cambodia. Building coalitions to elicit agreement and engagement from multiple stakeholders to ensure success in project delivery, are not skills that can be learnt in a classroom. For this alumnus, working in MI with people from multiple backgrounds, career levels, different GMS nations, and organizational affiliations was a critical learning process that makes a key difference in the success of the projects they manage with the ADB.

The result? In their current role this Young Scholar works with communities in different provinces to vision 20-30-year processes of what key and critical components are required to sustainably develop the region, whether in infrastructure, power, agriculture, environmental considerations, industry or manufacturing. Their main role is to facilitate consultation workshops to help central planners know the local situation, "so [local stakeholders] share, they explain their real situation and we can know, ok, this doesn't work and we can make changes to process the right strategy". This participant noted also that where local engagement is involved in the planning of their region's development process there is increased engagement, participation and ownership. This not only economically impacts the communities they work among but also builds a communal approach to the process that further affects the reduction of poverty.

This work and its outcomes are not isolated to this current project. These 'soft skills' of respecting local people and developing participatory processes in central development process are not soft at all for this Young Scholar - they make the difference in sustainable long-term development across the region. Furthermore, they also create the context where the long-term impact of the approach is evident continuing into new and future projects. They note, "when the local communities see our name, or our team, they know, this team is trustful and have good cooperation so they know the next project will have good impacts for them as well".

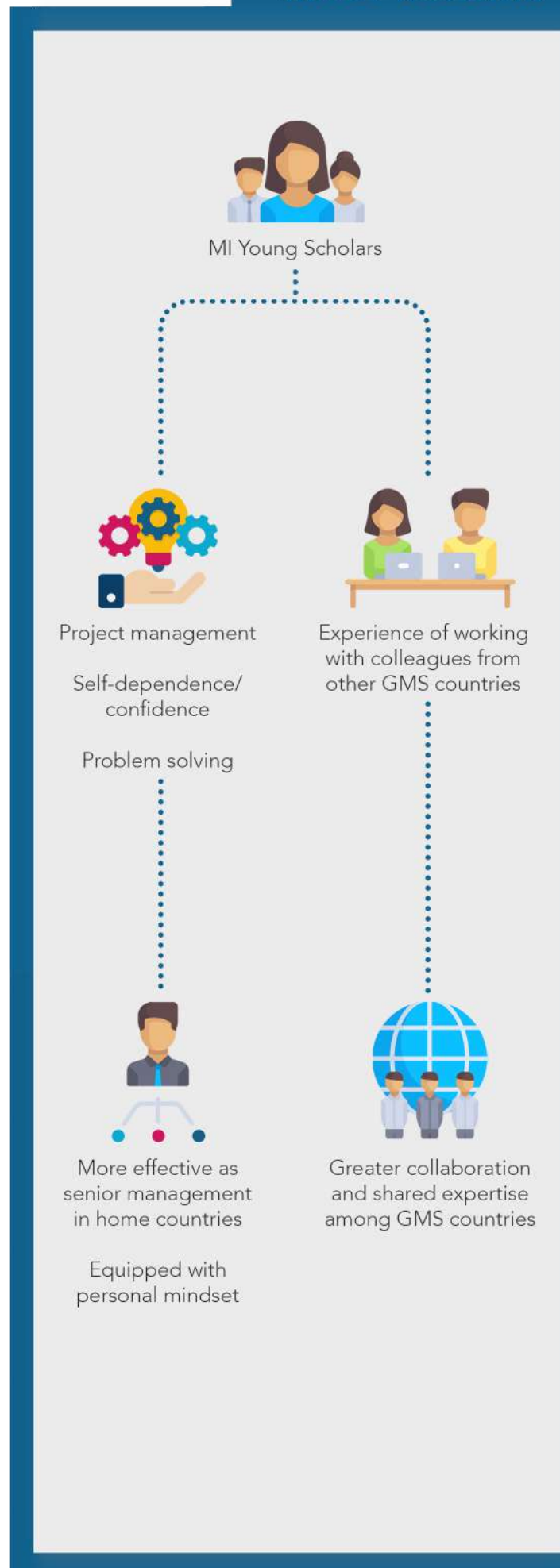


Transforming Access to Governmental Processes in Myanmar

Another Young Scholar candidate from Myanmar found their time at MI, "a great experience, where I grew in confidence, problem solving, self-management and independence". Because of their tenure at the MI secretariat they report being able to communicate with different kinds of people from the GMS countries and beyond and also were able to gain important knowledge about processes and systems by being involved in the delivery of some of MI's trainings and workshops. This has had an immediate impact on this participant's responsibilities back in Myanmar as they were immediately deployed into projects trying junior and senior staff in document management and shared IT systems across the Myanmar parliament. Now as assistant director for both public relations and network security this Young Scholar is responsible for democratizing the process of access to important governmental documentation and processes, both internally for the members of parliament, and more widely for the public. Many of the skills learned through the MI Young Scholar program have affected how this individual engages their work. Their confident approach means these new systems are changing the efficiency of the internal workings of the government as it moves to a shared platform in managing day to day operations, meetings, and decision-making processes.

Additionally, it is changing the way the Myanmar government can be virtually interacted with digitally, democratizing its laws, providing access to important governmental information, and providing pathways for people in the country to engage with different departmental requirements when necessary. For example, when the community needs to understand food safety regulations, they are now provided on the Government virtual gateway universally to anyone with online access. The international experience of their time at MI has also encouraged this individual to keep growing in their work as they have applied and received a scholarship from the Japanese government to keep growing in their professional development - none of which would have been possible without the learning, knowledge and confidence gained through their six months in Khon Kaen working the MI team.

MIYS PROGRAM



Energy Impact Stories



Automating Power Distribution in Vietnam

This participant attended just one training provided by MI in 2017 on Maintenance and Safety Management of Electrical Power Grids but found the training inspirational for their work back in Vietnam. To this point the participant had worked 'in theory', through books, reading and articles to understand and learn more about their field, providing and overseeing electrical supply to southern Vietnam over their 26-year career. They state, "this training gave me ideas about changing the automation of substations in my country, and now my work is about introducing Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) - the system that controls and operates high voltage substations". While not necessarily the focus of the training, for this participant, the training was effective in, "giving me ideas how to change something in my work and how to change in the work more effectively". The training and site visit to electrical substations in Thailand and the laboratory experiments this participant could engage with and observe were revolutionary, "it was the first time I had been in a real DC 500 kV substation and all the knowledge I had read about became real to me. In real time I saw it'.



Since this training this participant has been involved in the ongoing automation of substations across Southern Vietnam. MI's training and site visit has been the key element that has given this participant the vision to keep progressing and developing the power grid network towards full automation. Two years ago, the region had roughly 180 manned substations. In the past 24 months this has changed where now there are 230 fully automated substations being remotely controlled from a main operational substation hub. Now human involvement is redirected to maintenance and servicing while each sub-station is self-operational sending data to the main control station. These changes result in greater and more stable electrical supply to the south of

the nation which in turn has direct economic impact on the regional economy of southern Vietnam, "I think that now this supports international venture in Vietnam, the economic prospects go up". Essentially local communities across the south of the country have greater access to stable power and there is a demonstrable increase in economic productivity and consequential reduction in financial poverty. This participant is not done. Automation was the first inspiration from the MI training. The second, and the focus of the next phase of developing southern Vietnam's power grid, is full analogue to digital transformation of the systems, a path that, again, MI "brings to us".



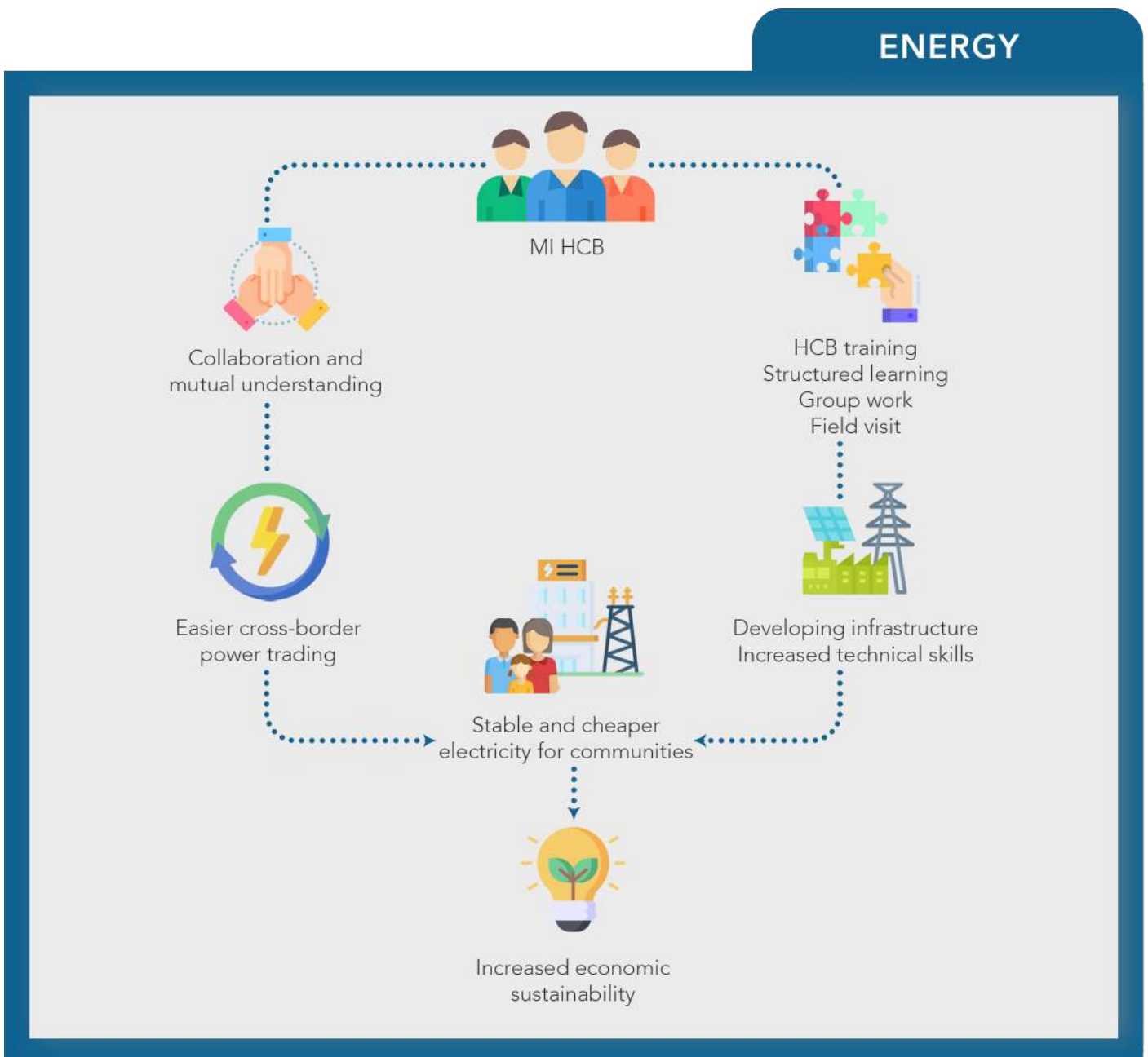
Power Trading among Lancang-Mekong Countries

After attending three separate trainings on Power Grid Interconnection in the Lancang-Mekong Region this participant notes, "the trainings [provided by MI] are absolutely effective because the institute is goal orientated and pays attention to the needs of GMS countries and their shared benefits, training fits need".

This alumni's role focuses on cross-border power trading where a shared power market is being created in the sub region. MI's training has been critical for this participant because without the experience of learning and experiencing the workshops with colleagues and participants from the GMS countries understanding the cultural and national differences that could impede integration have been greatly reduced. They state, "I could connect with my classmates...communicate and build relationships and build mutual understanding. Before they met the participants from other countries, "we really didn't know what the attitude was to share power market integration or what the real status was of the different countries".

When colleagues from Vietnam, Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar were able to share about their development status it helped this participant and their team understand how to scale the process of integration in an appropriate way that would make the agreed transition of building and developing a shared power market more successful. Another key element emerging from this process for this alumnus was the realization that an open-minded approach to power development is required. For example, the GMS countries share resources so hydro-electric power on the upper reaches of the Mekong River have real impact for countries further down the river that rely on the resource for other important sectors, "we should consider factors like this, like culture, and not consider development in a rapid progress as the best way, we need to consider other [GMS countries understanding]". The value of such outcomes cannot be underestimated because they support the long-term development of the region by building solutions that are based on international collaboration and ecological/environmental factors that are shared across and between these nations.

In this case study the impact of increased intercultural understanding creates an enabling environment in which power trading can effectively function and where relationships are not simply virtual or distant. The interaction and relationships formed at MI have enabled power trading between P.R. China and Vietnam to be positively engaged. When Yunnan has potentially wasted hydro-electric surplus during the wet season this is exported into northern Vietnam. Conversely in the dry season border towns/cities in Yunnan can also draw from the Vietnamese grid. Since northern Vietnam has connected into the Yunnan power grid this has allowed a stable supply of exported energy that serves one of the northern provinces of Vietnam and provides a reliable source of power to some of Samsung’s manufacturing plants should local supply fluctuate. This directly affects local communities with new economic opportunity, good jobs, and drastically impacts poverty reduction across the north of the country. These outcomes are directly grounded in the cross-cultural understanding MI training creates among workshop and training participants.



Trade and Investment Impact Stories



Shaping Logistics in Myanmar


This participant is from Myanmar and has been involved in the logistics sector for 23 years running their own business for 14 years and chairing one of the six associations in the country that focuses on cross border trade facilitation. From their perspective the trainings provided by MI on logistics and trade development over the past few years are critical and a source of importance for them personally, their staff and wider association colleagues to keep attending. They note that countries like Myanmar, as middle developed countries in the GMS family, directly benefit from the technical inputs from the wider family of nations in ASEAN. For Myanmar's ongoing development, the workshops and regional consortia of MI provide necessary inputs and critical opportunity to keep helping this sector in Myanmar evolve and move towards greater integration,



with the associated indirect impacts this has on local economy. Continued inputs from MI are shared at the institutional and business level continually allowing both to align systems, processes, and legalities to be integrated in areas such as infrastructure, logistics, shipping and rail travel to be increasingly integrated with neighboring countries in the Lancang-Mekong Region. Furthermore, the workshops provide context to develop greater international knowledge and networks "we get this privileged benefit and consequently our staff become more confident working in the sector, they build relationships and it helps them to understand how to connect with those overseas networks and consequently the benefits [are ultimately] very important for our local people".

Chapter 5: Findings and Recommendations





This study presents the following summarized findings from the research data at the literature, qualitative, quantitative and post hoc quantitative analysis.

Immediate Outcomes

- **Equipped and empowered professionals that report greater capacity in their work at the personal level.**

Every individual interviewed reported an area where their personal and or professional capacity was expanded through their training and/or experience of engaging with MI. Areas included Knowledge, Experience, Skills, Language, Confidence, Cultural Awareness, Relationships, Teaching Styles, Presentation Skills, Leadership and Management to name the most obvious elements. This list is however, not exhaustive.

- **Translation of content, and learning approaches are adapted to local contexts demonstrating significant effectiveness, sustainability and impact.**

A significant percentage of participants have adapted the content learned from their training and translated this knowledge to their local context, directly in their immediate team and/or wider organizational context. The scope of influence here is dependent on the participant and their role. For example, government officials have adapted learning to their departmental team in changed teaching practices that are more facilitative of learning, where academics or practitioners have directly implemented knowledge and skills among grass root communities (more below).

- **Broader and expanded influence indirectly from the initial training in changing organizational or departmental approaches effecting the organizational/sectoral level of analysis.**

In some cases, participants have expanded this influence further, directly or tangentially in their wider department, organization or sphere of influence in the Lancang-Mekong Region changing the direction to sectoral approaches with demonstrable effect. This has been most evident in the agricultural training outcomes and energy sector.

- **Immediate effect in the operations, decisions and processes of participant related entities.**

Where participants grow in their career and therefore related influence, training from MI is cited as a key factor in changed practices among key sectoral organizations, institutions and business operations. There is a longevity to the catalytic inputs of MI's HCB interventions in shaping participants frame of reference that continues to impact them in their sphere of influence even as it grows (e.g. they get promoted or their role evolves with greater responsibility).

Intermediate Outcomes

Secondary impact is evident in shared experience, knowledge and skill outside of the participants immediate organization. This has demonstrable effect on the sustainability of the interventions and impact across the Lancang-Mekong Region.

This is evident across all the programs analyzed. Where participants have direct access to other spheres of influence, networked departments and/or local communities, skills and knowledge are applied into these secondary contexts on a regular basis with clear effect.

Changed practices across sectors influenced by MI inputs and direct change in the economic status of local communities.

There is reported change in local communities from many participants where knowledge and skills gained from MI engagement has led to change in organization/institutional practices and then direct impact economically on local communities. This is also clear in the energy and agricultural training streams and innovation stream.

The evolution of sustainable practices and transactions across the Lancang-Mekong Region.

Cases from the participant interviews demonstrate that impact among the projects that have either been directly inspired by MI inputs, or influenced in a new direction, do have sustainable impact in the Lancang-Mekong Region. Examples would include the environmental impact of MI's HCB training on agricultural communities in northern SEA and the integration of power connectivity that accounts for the environmental impact of developing hydropower at the costs of communities elsewhere on the Mekong River.



Final Outcomes



Collaborative and networked relationships across nations among the participants from the friendships and collegial relationships formed during trainings create sustainable development practices.

Perhaps the most intangible outcome from MI training to grasp, but evident in almost all responses is the key element of wider relationships that are developed across the Lancang-Mekong countries through the international configuration of each training. There are particular examples in the data with follow up and direct exchanges of knowledge, visits and/or training that occurs out of initial MI inputs that sustain learning, build on best practices and change the scope or shape of direct interventions.



Greater cross-cultural understanding between participants that is defined by relationship, not theory or less trusted web-based research.

A key outcome is achieved through MI's HCB interventions' intentional creation of a space where collaborative relationships are formed. Before MI training, participants gain knowledge textually through books or the internet, or in the localized experience of peers and professional experience. Cross border engagement is absolutely theoretical. While the technical inputs of MI training are cited as key to all participants, the cross-cultural dynamic of trainings moves theory into direct exposure (through field visits or study tours). The shared experience of the other cultures that participants must engage with in their future work is an essential outcome of MI's work. Cross cultural understanding, appreciation and mutual learning is clearly evident among participants and supports a free flow of ideas, learning and necessary networking to ensure Lancang-Mekong regional development is sustainable is directly enabled through the intended mission of MI.



Shaping the development practice of sustainable integration across the Lancang-Mekong Region.

This point is made above but worth noting alone. MI is having an indirect effect on the shape of sustainable development of the Lancang-Mekong Region through the provision of training, its qualified and experience learning processes, a stable and well known/recognized platform in the region and the creation of a unique space that enables the development of intra-regional connection, networking and collaboration.



A greater reported need for technical investment from less developed countries in the Lancang-Mekong family of nations.

It is evident that participants from less developed countries in the Lancang-Mekong Region are more effusive about the inputs provided by MI and more prone to engage these inputs for the positive return on the investment of attending MI trainings. This is not to say that other nations do not appreciate or embrace both direct and/or indirect outcomes from attending training and engaging the training processes, however, a preferential positivity from the less developed contexts for the utility and necessity of the initial inputs noted above appears in the quantitative data.



Increased economic activity and poverty reduction across the Lancang-Mekong Region.

While the direct impact of MI training and workshops in economic activity and poverty reduction could be explained legitimately with alternative explanations, there remains a clear, valid and justifiable argument for MI's HCB interventions significant contribution to this outcome. Quantitatively participants demonstrate a clear skew towards considering the intervention's contribution to sustainable economic development across the region. Qualitatively this finding is also supported where in many of the responses collected, positive economic change resulting in poverty reduction were cited, particularly in the agriculture and energy cohorts of MI training participants.

Gaps and Recommendations

1

Participant selection and diversification.

Several participants noted that MI would do better to create a more developed/robust participant selection process to ensure that candidates are appropriately matched to the objectives of the training. This is important as it affects the quality of training events and can reduce the quality of these interventions for participants that are appropriately matched to the HCB inputs.

2

Learning approaches and styles. Time, content, focus.

Several participants made suggestions about the scope, time, approach to trainings. While the data shows a disparate set of requests, suggestions or recommendations clear themes do emerge – timing of trainings (length) is important, a greater degree of open space for collaborative work, and slower pace or more time at study visits where theory becomes more tactile/kinesthetic would be preferential.

3

Alumni follow up and development.

Many participants desire greater follow up, engagement, ongoing communication and involvement with MI after their training. No participant was unduly negative in their feedback about MI. Many reported a need or desire for more contact beyond the utilization of the alumni network as a recruiting channel for new participants for future trainings. Alumni would like an alumni event, chances to present the work they have done after training, tailored follow on trainings/investments for alumni that leverage and grow the international element of their networks and/or collaboration.

4

Support to create an enabling environment.

MI were encouraged by participants to work at creating a broader enabling environment for key participants on their return to their organization or respective place of work. This may include direct work with superiors to provide context of the training and why it is important, eliciting two participants from each location to diversify the learnings/inputs from workshops so that greater traction can be achieved following the training as collegiate adoption is supported, and in certain cases providing further seed funding or micro-loans for project implementation to catalyze further buy in where resistance is met, or participants do not have skills to develop the income streams required to develop their projects.

Annexes



Annex 1: List of Projects Supported by Chinese Government (2016-2020)

Central Government

Focus Area	Project	Duration
Agriculture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Regional Training on Promoting Cross-Border Trade through Value Chain Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ November-December 2016
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Postharvest Management System in Fresh Horticultural Produce <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Regional Training ◆ Regional Training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ November 2018 ◆ November 2019
Trade and Investment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Development of the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS) Transport Information Connectivity System (GTICS) along the Economic Corridors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Consultation Workshop on Feasibility of GMS Transport Information Connectivity System ◆ Regional Consultation Workshop ◆ National Consultation Meetings ◆ Provincial Consultation Workshop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ April 2017 ◆ April 2018 ◆ July-December 2018 ◆ August-September 2019
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Capacity Building on Greater Mekong Sub-region Power Grid Interconnection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ GMS Energy Policy Formulation and Power Grid Planning ◆ Power Dispatching, Operation and Control for GMS Power Grid ◆ Greater Mekong Sub-Region Power Equipment Operation and Safety Management ◆ GMS New Power Technologies Application and Innovative Development ◆ Power Market Construction and Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ May 2015-January 2016 ◆ March 2016-January 2017 ◆ January 2017-March 2018 ◆ March 2018-February 2019 ◆ February-December 2019
Energy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Regional Training on Promoting Efficient Utilization of Resources and Sustainable Energy in the Lancang-Mekong Region 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ November-December 2019

Focus Area	Project	Duration
Technology and Innovation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Seminar on Promoting Innovation and Technology as Driven Tools for Economic Sustainability in the GMS ◆ Capacity Building on Technology and Innovation Policy Development in the Lancang-Mekong Region <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Consultation Workshop ◆ Capacity Development Program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ November 2018 ◆ November 2019 ◆ October-December 2020
People-to-People Exchange 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Mekong Institute Young Scholars Program <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Batch I ◆ Batch II 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ May-November 2018 ◆ April-October 2019

Yunnan Provincial Government

Focus Area	Project	Duration
Poverty Alleviation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Regional Training on Poverty Alleviation and Sustainable Rural Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ August 2016
Energy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Regional Training on Affordable, Sustainable and Innovative Technology Based Energy for Mountainous Rural Area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ April-May 2017
People-to-People Exchange 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Communication Skill Capacity Building for Regional Cooperation and Integration in the Mekong-Lancang Region <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Regional Training ◆ Regional Training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ June-July 2018 ◆ September 2018

Focus Area	Project	Duration
Trade and Investment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Capacity Building for Regional Economic Integration and Innovation for Free Trade Zone Development in the Lancang-Mekong Region 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ November-December 2020

Lancang-Mekong Cooperation Special Fund

Focus Area	Project	Duration
Trade and Investment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Joint Development of Cross-Border Special Economic Zones ◆ Upgrading Border Facilitation for Trade and Logistics Development ◆ Lancang- Mekong Business Forum ◆ Action Research on Rural E-Commerce Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ May 2018-April 2021 ◆ May 2018-December 2021 ◆ April 2018-April 2024 ◆ April 2018-April 2021
Agriculture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Development and Implementation of Common Rice Production Standard in Mekong-Lancang Sub-Region ◆ Development of Rice Pest and Natural Disasters Monitoring, Forecasting and Warning Center for Sustainable Rice Production under Climate Change in Mekong-Lancang Sub-Region 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ December 2019-March 2023 ◆ December 2019-March 2023
Water Recourse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Transboundary Cooperation Mechanism on Adaptation to Climate Change & Hydropower Development Projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ October 2018-October 2019
People-to-People Exchange and Regional Government Cooperation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Capacity Building for National Coordinators of Mekong-Lancang Cooperation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ March 2019-March 2021

Annex 2: Qualitative Methodological Framework and Data Collection Instrument

	Relevance	Effectiveness	Impact	Sustainability	Level of Analysis
Beneficiaries / From your perspective/knowledge...	... how valid and relevant do you think MI's work has been in your situation? Have there been any gaps you see?	... how effective was MI's training in creating real change in your work, your organization's work, or your wider sector? What could help to improve this change?	... what has happened as a result of MI's training for your situation/work? Where have you seen change in your organization or sector?	... where have you seen the benefits of MI's training continue beyond yourself? Can you give examples?	Personnel/ Organizational
	... how are the activities and outputs of MI addressing your overall needs and context?	... what are the major factors that made the training effective in your workplace? How well did the training affect your job performance?	... where do you see a real difference because of MI's training? Would you change anything?	... what major factors make MI's training and your work more sustainable?	Personnel/ Organizational
	... are the activities and outputs able to attaining broader impacts in your context?	... how well do you feel/think MI met the training objectives? What would help or strengthen this?			Personnel/ Organizational

Annex 3: Quantitative Methodological Framework and Data Collection Instrument

Demographics

Name (optional)
Gender (must capture)
Country (must capture)
Status (role in MI, senior leader, beneficiary/alumni, organizational leader, national department leader)

Testing Effectiveness

	Level		Framed as...
1 MI's capacity building approach is an effective way to accelerate sustainable economic and social development and poverty alleviation in the Lancang-GMS sub region.	C	Not sure this can be attributed to MI cf LaFond and Brown	This training works for the common good
2 MI's capacity building/training effectively enabled me to collaborate and network.	S	c/f literature study objectives	I am better connected to do my job
3 MI's capacity building/training effectively equipped me to do my job.	P	c/f effectiveness questions from Spreitzer	I am better at my job
4 MI's capacity building/training effectively increased my job performance.	P	c/f competence questions from Spreitzer	I am better at my job
5 MI's capacity building/training effectively met its objectives.	P		The training was successful
6 MI's capacity building/training effectively met its objectives for my organization.	O		The training was successful

Testing Impact

	Level		Framed as...
7 MI's capacity building approach positively changed the way I do my job.	P	c/f impact questions from Spreitzler	My working practice is different.
8 MI's capacity building approach positively changed the way I collaborate and network.	P	c/f impact questions from Spreitzler	My collaboration and networking are different.
9 MI's capacity building approach positively changed my organization's approach to work.	O		My organizations working practice is different.
10 MI's capacity building/training positively impacts sustainable economic and social development and poverty alleviation in the Lancang-GMS sub region.	C	Same as above	My community is impacted.
11 MI's capacity building/training changes the way we collaborate and network across the Lancang-GMS sub region.	S	c/f literature study re credible validity	My sector is impacted.



Testing Sustainability

	Level		Framed as...
12 MI's capacity building approach continues to help me be self-assured about my capabilities to perform my work activities.	P	c/f sustainability questions from Spreitzler	I am still getting better at my job.
13 MI's capacity building approach has been adopted in my team's working practice.	O		I influenced my team and organization.
14 MI's capacity building approach has significantly impacted my organization's way of working.	O		I influenced my team and organization.
15 MI's capacity building approach has changed the way our sector functions, collaborates, and networks across the LC-MK region.	S		We influenced our region.
16 MI's capacity building approach creates ongoing lasting change for communities in the LC-MK region.	C	Same as above	Change is self-replicating.

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