

MEKONG CONNECTION

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Filling in the Gaps with GAP



As the world's consumption of food increases, consumers are also becoming more and more conscious of not just the kind of food they eat, but also how it was produced. We read about organic produce, GMO-free crops, and fertilizer-free products. Driven by this demand, markets are also in search of high quality food products. At the producer level, farmers and growers are looking for ways to tap into this growing market and at the same time, reap higher returns for their products.

The answer? Good Agricultural Practices, also known as GAP.



Similar to the manufacturing industry's quality assurance standards, GAP is a set of standards and regulations that aim to 'codify agricultural practices at the farm level' in the production of crops and other agricultural products. According to the leading food organization like FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization), GAP consists of 'practices that address environmental, economic and social sustainability for on-farm processes, and result in safe and quality food and non-food agricultural products (2008). More than encouraging better production practices, it also seeks to promote sustainable agriculture and more efficient natural resources management in the long run.

Even more so, GAP standards are expected to help producers and farmers position their products to countries that prefer GAP-certified produce like Singapore and Brunei, explained Dr. Premier, a GAP consultant who helped develop the ASEAN GAP. "There will be substantial opportunities for produce from the Lower Mekong region to be exported to extra ASEAN markets. [This] will increase the returns to farmers in the Lower Mekong region and develop more markets that exist at the moment, thereby providing more work for people in that area and greater returns," he explained.

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Working towards Better Collaboration in the Food Security Sector --The Lower Mekong Initiative Food Security Donor Mapping Database

Food security, along with terms like sustainable development is a popular buzzword in the international community. For a region like the Lower Mekong comprised of the agriculture-oriented economies of Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Vietnam and Thailand, food security remains the core of many donor projects and initiatives.



The challenge of tracking food security projects

There are close to a thousand food security and agriculture projects in the Lower Mekong Region (LMR) supported and initiated by donors and development organizations; most likely the same number of domestic initiatives carried out by key national agencies. But in these cases, the common concern is how to ensure the harmonization of initiatives to minimize redundancies and overlaps. There is also the challenge of tracking and making these initiatives transparent to the public and facilitating information sharing among the actors in the sector.

This is where the Lower Mekong Food Security Database (LMFSD) comes in, a collaboration between Mekong Institute (MI) and the United States Agency for International Development – Regional Development Mission for Asia (USAID/RDMA). Developed with the ultimate goal of encouraging better collaboration among donors and development organizations working in food security in the LMR, the database serves as a handy, one-stop online information source of food security projects in the five countries.

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Editorial



The concept of Good Agricultural Practices or GAP came to be because of the rising concern on food safety and quality, as well as agricultural sustainability. GAP enables farmers and consumers to meet specific needs in food security, food quality; and addresses overall issues relevant to environmental, economic, and social sustainability.

How GAP promotes food safety

Food safety essentially means making sure that the food provided will not harm the consumer when it is prepared and/or eaten. Due to the many processes that take place of food products from the farms to the household tables such as production, harvesting, and post-harvest operations, it is important to implement GAP to reduce possible hazards involved in production and distribution of the products. More and more operators involved in production, processing, trade and consumption of food are taking up the responsibility to keep food safe, healthy, and nutritious.

GAP aids in food safety beginning with the local markets. If the local farmers and sellers want to sell their products to a bigger market, they should upgrade their processes to better comply with the given standards. It is a given that observing and practicing GAP will cost more, but it comes with opportunity. These local products can and will make their way to developed countries.

GAP challenges in the GMS

We have to acknowledge the differences in the level of technological advancements among the GMS countries. As mentioned in this issue’s article on “Filling in the Gaps with GAP,” not all of the countries have GAP standards or a certification system yet. The region is also consistently battling the effects of climate and environmental change. What’s more is that there is also a risk that small scale farmers will not be able to immediately seize the laid out opportunities because of the lack of information, technical unpreparedness, and the lack of organization.

This is where MI comes in together with the GMS governments and development partners. We are here to play a facilitating role to aid them in meeting the said challenges. Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Myanmar are now developing their own standards and system. We still have a long journey ahead but we must keep our goal in mind – to achieve agricultural sustainability which will in turn help reduce poverty. Small, medium, and large-scale farmers will achieve added value for their products and better access to markets while the consumers will be assured of safer food.

Linking Small-scale Farmers in Value Chains through Contract Farming (CF)

Farmers in many parts of the world have thrown themselves into so-called ‘contract farming’ arrangements with hopes of improving their living conditions and earning substantial profits from their agri-products. Unfortunately, many farmers only have a limited understanding of how contract farming works. There have even been news reports that featured numerous cases where contract farming left farmers with nothing but debts.

Contract farming (CF) is a form of vertical integration where the buyer enters into an agreement with farmers for the production and supply of agricultural products, frequently at a pre-determined price. *“It is not a one-size-fits-all solution to rural development,”* asserted Mr. James Nugent, Asian Development Bank (ADB)’s Director General of Southeast Asia Department, in an ADB report, *“Rather, it is an institutional arrangement that, when properly implemented...can unlock agribusiness dynamism and green transformation”* he added.

Though in some areas CF had negative effects, with good management, cross-border contract farming (CBCF) can be an effective mechanism for lifting rural communities out of poverty, especially in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Vietnam (CLMV). In these countries, small family farms usually have limited capital. This is where contract farming can play an important role as a form of private sector involvement that can address the challenges that smallholder farmers usually face; especially in the provision of inputs, credit, improved technology, information and access to markets.

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MI Regional Work in the GMS (April - June)

Cross-Country Activities:

- 4 Research activities on 'International Shipping', 'Logistics', 'Benefits of CBCF Small-scale Farmers' in CLMVT
- 1 SLV & business matching on Fostering Agro-business along NSEC in 3 countries—P.R. China, Myanmar, Thailand
- 2 Action plan follow-up visits of the 'Certified Logistics Master Program Training' in 5 countries--CLMVT

*1 Mid-term Assessment of 15 maize farmers' performance in Kayin State
 *3 Business Matching & 1 SLV in 3 districts to link SMEs, traders, & maize farmers
 *3 Trainings on 'post-harvest' and 'Group Management & Strengthening Farmer Organization' to government officials & farmers
 *3 Demonstrations & Best Practices on 'maize cultivation', 'farm outcome', 'new threshing model' in 3 districts for 88 farmers and 7 government officials.
 *1 Monitoring Trip on new threshing machine & transferring of knowledge on cultivation & marketing
 *1 'Product Competition Award' to motivate & encourage outstanding officials of Department of Agriculture and farmers.
 *1 Multi-stakeholder Dialogue to discuss success factors, opportunities & challenges on cultivation & marketing. 21 maize value chain actors attended.

Form Quadripartite Cooperation in Quang Tri—linking farmer, fertilizer provider, coffee processor & agricultural bank

- Farmers increased income—23 farmers access fertilizer at factory price—saving USD3,907
- Farmers enjoyed 7% preferential interest rate from the bank, a 41.6 percent lower than normal interest rate

Establish Khe Sanh Coffee Association in Quang Tri.
 *2 trainings for government staff
 *2 meetings with farmers
 *1 national consultation workshop on Cross-border Contract Farming (CBCF)

*Plan for paddy field demonstration plot for farmers in wet season in 10 districts in Khammoune
 *Assessment study for 4 rice millers in Khammoune to promote use of GMP (Good Manufacturing Practice)
 *Dialogue Meeting on production plan of farmer –preparing for wet season
 *National Consultation Workshop on contract farming with government to improve CBCF
 *Raise awareness on benefits of using certified rice seeds of 375 farmers from 56 villages in Khammoune—dissemination meetings
 *Open rice demonstration plot to bring targeted farmers to learn from experts in rice production—farmer field day.

*Launch 'Lower Mekong Initiative Food Security Donor Mapping Database' in Bangkok
 *1 Workshop on business research & info management, trade event & SLV cum business matching
 *1 Regional Seminar on linking farmers to markets. Development Practitioners, business, civic leaders & academic experts attended.
 *8 Trainings on research methodology, logistics, ASEAN GAP, post-harvest practice, sustainable rural development, community development, Cambodian language to master's students, officials and workers from governmental & private sectors

Filling in the Gaps with GAP

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Applying GAP in CLMV

—Training on ASEAN GAP and Product Certification

Realizing the importance of GAP not only in the region’s economies but also to the well-being of the farmers and producers, Mekong Institute (MI) has been offering GAP-related training programs such as the Regional Training Program on Improving Food Quality and Safety and the Training of Trainers on Good Agricultural and Postharvest Practices in Fresh Produce since 2012. This year’s training on ASEAN GAP and Product Certification was held at MI residential training center in Khon Kaen, Thailand on April 27 – May 8.

Twenty-four mid-level officials from government offices in CLMV, as well as from NGOs and private sector dealing with processing and trade of edible horticultural products, joined the training. The course helped participants gain a better understanding of the requirements of ASEAN GAP, which would enable them to assist farmers in implementing the required practices and obtain GAP certification.

The training has likewise taught participants to establish a credible certification system, which needs the setting up of Certification Body (CB) as required by international standard ISO 17065: Requirements for Product CBs. The certification of a producer will allow farmers to use a certification mark or logo, of which protocols were also covered within the course.

After the 10-day training, the participating government officials, NGOs and private workers were asked to organize localized training programs in their own countries (CLMV) using the training packages derived from the training course six months after the course’s completion. During this phase, experts and MI trainers will continue to provide technical support online if needed.

Looking Beyond—the Future of GAP in CLMV

Currently, in CLMV, where GAP standards are most significant, only Vietnam has an established GAP standards and certification system. The other countries—Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar—have not yet fully implemented GAP but have begun developing their own national GAP standards.

Nevertheless, there is still a lot of work to be done as far as the GAP standards of the countries are concerned. The challenges of optimizing systems, enhancing technical capacity, institutionalizing structural and policy mechanisms, and creating enabling environments must be properly and appropriately addressed.

From GAP and organic farming to climate-smart agriculture and a plethora of other agricultural practices – it is apparent that, at the very least, farmers and growers should be appropriately educated on how GAP differs from all these other terms. Only then can farmers become more conscious in the way they grow their crops, perhaps encourage them to go for GAP certification, and ultimately, for consumers to be assured of clean, healthy and safe food ■



Working towards Better Collaboration in the Food Security Sector

---The Lower Mekong Initiative Food Security Donor Mapping Database

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The LMFSD: A regional resource for the Lower Mekong region countries



With support from USAID, MI set up the Lower Mekong Initiative Food Security Donor Mapping Database to enhance donor cooperation and collaboration in LMR. The database is meant to complement individual efforts of the countries to track foreign aid and programs. While national databases provide a localized view of foreign programs not limited only to agriculture and food security, the LMFSD allows for a more focused look by providing information on regional projects. The Lower Mekong Food Security Database may be accessed at <http://foodsecurity.mekonginstitute.org>. A key feature of the platform is a geo-map that provides a summary of the food security projects in the LMR, and is equipped with filters that allow for searching at the country, provincial and sector levels. Donor and development organizations may also register as editors so they can edit and update existing information and add new projects in the database. Dr. Watcharas Leelawath describes the database as “a helpful resource in providing integrated information on national and regional initiatives.”

As an information resource, the database also features news and success stories on notable food security and agriculture initiatives in the region, and downloadable reports (snapshots) on the food security status of the LMR countries.

Ways Forward

The launching of the database on June 29, 2015 at the USAID/RDMA office in Bangkok was only the first of the many steps to promote the database to its intended users, namely donors and development organizations and key national agencies.

In the said launch, Ms. Carrie Thompson, Acting Director of the USAID/RDMA stated that the database can be used to “streamline and harmonize [donor] planning, and identify ways [they] can collaborate and share resources.”

The event, attended by selected key organizations such as the Food and Agriculture Organization and the Asian Development Bank, served as a formal presentation of the site and its features and functionalities. Country focal points, agencies that have pledged to assist MI in updating the information in the platform, were also present.

Prior to the launch, MI’s Rural Development Department also sponsored a one-day training on ‘Managing and Sustaining a Database System’ on June 26, 2015. Fifteen MI staff were oriented on general database systems and database management practices, and explored the Lower Mekong Food Security Database.

We hope that this database project is not the end, but a starting point for a better food security sector at regional and national levels in the Lower Mekong sub-region ■



Cultivating Wealth and Encompassing Poverty in Vietnam

“Wealth is evidently not the good we are seeking for, it is merely useful and for the sake of something else.”
 – Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*

Like development practitioners across the world, Mekong Institute (MI) works to advance the economic lives of the poor; but oftentimes, we find ourselves so involved in the minutiae of our work that we do not have the chance to step back on occasion and ask fundamental questions about development. If wealth is only instrumental and for the sake of something else, then what is that ‘something else’?

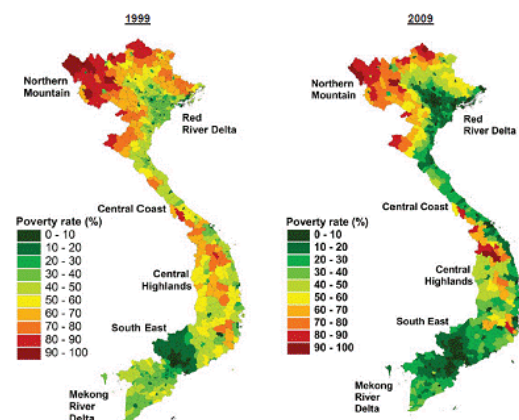
Amartya Sen’s proposed answer is ‘freedom’, more specifically, the capability to live a full, flourishing life. In Sen’s perspective, income is useful in so far as it enhances the capability of a person to lead a meaningful life. This philosophy resonates what MI is doing. MI is to provide capacity development to enable both the public and private sectors to promote economic and social development. The training provided by MI impart on those who attend training session is a part of a larger effort to help them help themselves, their families, and their fellow countrymen.

On Vietnam, its growing economy and wealth disparity

One effort by MI together with Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) to expand development to the poor is the “Capacity Building for More Inclusive and Equitable Growth – Regional and Local Development and East-West Economic Corridor (RLED—EWEC) Project,” in the Quảng Trị Province of Vietnam, one of the three project sites of EWEC project. Vietnam has been able to rapidly grow its economy while at the same time maintaining a low level of income inequality, measuring approximately 0.35 on the GINI index for the better part of two decades since 1990. The result of Vietnam’s development has been large-scale poverty alleviation. The incidence of poverty dropped from 58% in 1993 to 15% only 15 years later in 2008 and has since dropped below 10% by the same standard of poverty. Despite the remarkable economic growth and poverty alleviation of the country, the benefits of Vietnam’s development have not reached all members of Vietnam’s society equally.

On tackling wealth inequality in Hoang Hóa District —the RLED-EWEC project

MI’s project in the Hoang Hóa District of Vietnam’s Quảng Trị Province aims to correct these lapses in development. The project invests in the agricultural sector of a province containing both a high number of ethnic minorities and the lowest level of welfare for ethnic minorities in the country. As shown in the map below, while poverty has been greatly reduced throughout Vietnam, poverty in the Hoang Hóa District persists with rates between 80%-90%.



Source: World Bank 2012 Poverty Assessment Vietnam

The project aims to improve the productivity and sustainability of coffee farmers in the district. It is already a production hub for Arabica coffee, the main crop and main source of income for 6,000 households. Nevertheless, further growth of the local coffee sector is limited by 1) low quality coffee beans, 2) poorer-quality land, and 3) high input prices.

MI addresses the first problem of low-quality coffee beans by offering technical assistance to farmers on the best practices of coffee farming to enhance both quality and sustainability. MI has already developed a training curriculum and technical manual in preparation for the training sessions. The project will train 368 farmers on sustainable coffee production at farmer field schools on the 4C or ‘Common Code for the Coffee Community’ sustainability standards in 2015.

To address the problems of poorer-quality land and high input prices, MI has worked to improve access to affordable fertilizer by working with farmer associations, the Vietnam Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (Agribank), the Binh Dien Fertilizer Company, and the Dai Loc Processing



Company. MI was able to create a business model that provides more and cheaper fertilizer than would otherwise be possible. To make up for the cash shortfall that farmers often experience before planting season that prevents them from purchasing and applying fertilizer, Agri-bank lends to farmer associations at subsidized interest rates. Farmers buy fertilizer from the Binh Dien Fertilizer Company to generate greater coffee yields and sell their harvest to Dai Loc Processing Company. Farmers use their money from selling more coffee to pay off their loan to Agri-bank. The fertilizer company earns more business from farmers, and the processing company is able to generate more revenue from the greater quantity of coffee to be sold.

As of June 2015, 24 farmers were eligible for subsidized loans from Agri-bank. These 24 farmers are able to buy fertilizer at a preferential price that is paid from the bank loans. Farmers have already bought 51.9 tons of fertilizer for distribution, and it is estimated that 72.8 tons of fertilizer will be soon transported to farmers. The savings to farmers generated from participating in this new model is shown in the table below.

The farmers group has already saved \$3,907 on fertilizer or \$163 individually. When the full 72.8 tons of fertilizer are distributed, anticipated savings for the group will amount to \$5,492 for the whole farmer group or \$228.82 for each farmer.



The Vietnam project site also helped 42 farmers this year to obtain an additional income of \$11,726 by linking them directly to the Dai Loc Process Company. The farmer group sold 310,365 tons of good quality coffee to the processing company at a price 10% (\$35.3/ton) higher than the normal price. The coffee processing company made a profit of \$14,966.63—higher than would have been possible without the high quality coffee cherries from the farmers. Additional income gains were generated from savings that came from farmers’ efficient logistics management which reduced transportation costs.

On sustaining the project life

To ensure the project life is sustained in the years to come, even without the assistance of MI, a special program on “Experiencing Coffee Harvestation with Farmers” was initiated. Under this program, students can volunteer to participate and experience the coffee harvestation in the field with farmers in the Hướng Hóa District. Participating students will be paid upon their working days by hosting farmers. Three key objectives of this program are: to reduce production costs for farmers since farmers pay far less labor costs for students compared to hired labor; to create learning experience for students, and to improve the quality of coffee through better harvesting practices.

As implementation of the RLED-EWEC project continues, the hope is that the farmers who attended the training sessions and participated in the programs will share the knowledge with other farmers within their communities. They would be able to use their ingenuity and hard work to gain self-sufficiency for themselves and their families ■



			Farmers who participate in the model (beneficiary)	Difference	Farmers who don't participate in the model (non-beneficiary)
Price difference	Unit	Quantity			
Factory-price fertilizer	Ton	1	446	61	507
Transportation cost	Ton	1	10	-10	-
Amount of fertilizer bought by the farmers group	Ton	51.9	23,660	2,656	26,315
Interest rate difference	Unit	Loan duration			
Interest rate of the bank loan versus interest rate of credit provided by local collectors in the field	%	Month	0.58%	0.42%	1.0%
Total expenses for the interest rate of the bank loan and interest rate of credit provided by local collectors in the field		10 months	1,380	1,251	2,632
Total cost reduction of 51.9 tons of fertilizer (USD)					3,907

Farmers’ Benefit from the model

(Quadripartite Cooperation for Farmer Loan Access and Low-price Fertilizer)

Linking Small-scale Farmers in Value Chains through Contract Farming (CF)

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However, CF must be accompanied by equitable risk sharing between contractors and farmers, a transparent regulatory framework and support from the government, which have been identified as factors that ensure both parties benefit from contracts. Under these conditions, contract farming can bring about desirable economic, social and environmental impacts.

With support from the NZAP (New Zealand Aid Programme), Mekong Institute (MI) has stepped-up its efforts to promote good CBCF and cross-border agricultural trade to ensure that it will benefit the CLMV countries. Under the project “Capacity Development Program for Integrating CLMV Economies into the ASEAN Economic Community in 2015”, MI conducted on regional research project as well as a Structured Learning Visit for related stakeholders in CLMV.

Making CBCF Better for the CLMV —CBCF Research in CLMV Countries

To improve contractual arrangements and ensure they benefit all stakeholders, a study on cross-border contract farming along the economic corridor was conducted in selected provinces in CLMV countries. It focused on black pepper (Kampot, Cambodia), pumpkin (Luang Namtha, Laos), maize (Myawaddy, Myanmar) and banana (Lao Cai and Lai Chau, Vietnam). The research examined the existing facilities, policies and practices of the private companies, contract farmers, concerned government offices and other stakeholders.

The research findings were presented in the National and Regional Policy Consultation Workshops held in CLMV from May until August this year. The workshops served as a platform for discussing relevant issues and proposed policies to help create a proper policy environment for smallholder farmers and contracting companies. The results will also help better understand the current situation of CBCF to make it more effective in planning, designing and implementing capacity development packages for concerned organizations and stakeholders in the sub-region.





Understanding CF --SLV (Structured Learning Visit) on Successful Contract Farming Models in Thailand

Aside from improving the current CF system, MI also identified the need to raise stakeholders' awareness of various CF arrangements in the GMS as well as of the importance of linking small-scale farmers to market. To this end, the institute organized a one-week Regional workshop-cum SLV on Successful Contract Farming Models in Thailand on May 18-23, 2015.

Mid- to senior-level decision makers from relevant government agencies, agri-business firms, farmer and producer groups who are directly involved in CF and cross-border agricultural trade in CLMV were invited to join and were exposed to four different models of successful contract farming arrangements.

During the SLV, participants had an opportunity to link theoretical knowledge to best practices which helped deepen their understanding

of the opportunities and challenges presented by CF arrangements. Moreover, the participants were able to identify the key players involved in CF, as well as factors determining its success and failure. This was done to improve current national CF policies and discuss capacity needs for the improvement of CBCF practices and management systems in CLMV.

Contract farming not only provides buyers with greater control over production, but also a potential to earn more stable and higher incomes. To shift from subsistence to high-value commercial agriculture, small-scale farmers need to be linked into agricultural value chains. For this reason, it is essential to ensure that the institutional arrangements for CF are properly designed and implemented ■

Guest Visits

Neighboring Countries Economic Development Cooperation Agency (NEDA) visits MI – April 23, 2015



MI Director, Dr. Watcharas Leelawath, warmly welcomed Mr. Perames Vudthitornetiraks, Vice President of Neighboring Countries Economic Development Cooperation Agency (NEDA) in MI on April 23, 2015. The meeting discussed possible long term and sustainable collaborations in the GMS.

The Visit of Government Officials from Ministry of Justice, Thailand – May 22, 2015



Mekong Institute (MI) welcomed 80 government officials from the Ministry of Justice, Thailand led by Dr. Vanchai Vatanasapt. Major issues concerning the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS), including the role of MI in the development of GMS and ASEAN were discussed.

Special Events

Discussion on OTAGAI Industrial Platform – May 19, 2015



A discussion on OTAGAI industrial platform was held in Bangkok in May 19, 2015 to promote the industries of five Mekong countries with Japanese businesses through technology transfer, R&D, recycling business, Japanese hospitality and other industrial best practices. MI will be the corporate branch in this initiative. The business platform will be formally launched at the 11 Otagai conclave on July 6, 2015 at Nagoya, Japan. The event will be organized by the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI), Japan to be attended by over 200 Japanese industry leaders from 11 prefectures.

A Courtesy Visit to H.E. Mr. Sun Chanthol, Minister of Commerce, Cambodia - June 3, 2015



Dr. Watcharas Leelawath, MI Director paid a courtesy visit to the Senior Minister of Commerce of Cambodia, H.E. Mr. Sun Chanthol. They discussed on the needs for capacity building for government officers and SMEs, more specifically on the promotion of e-commerce in Cambodia.

A Courtesy Visit to the New MI Council Chairman, Mr. Songkane Luangmuninthone – June 30, 2015



Dr. Watcharas Leelawath, MI Director paid a courtesy visit to the new MI Council Chairman, Mr. Songkane Luangmuninthone, Director General, Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Lao PDR on June 30, 2015.

Strategic Cooperation Agreements Signing in P.R. China – June 12, 2015



Mekong Institute (MI) signed three strategic cooperation agreements during the China-South Asia Expo at Dianchi International Convention and Exhibition Center in Kunming of P.R. China.

MI's new strategic partners in P.R. China include: International Business School of Yunnan University of Finance and Economics (IBS); Academy of Commerce of Yunnan Province (ACYP); and AP Location Service and Intelligent City Industrial Technology Innovation Strategic Alliance (APLBSA). These agreements will strengthen the cooperation between MI and partners in P.R. China in an effort to further promote capacity building development.

MoU Signing with the Trade Training and Research Institute (TTRI) of Ministry of Commerce, Cambodia – June 3, 2015



Mekong Institute (MI) and the Trade Training and Research Institute (TTRI) of Ministry of Commerce, Cambodia signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in Phnom Penh on June 3, 2015 to facilitate the cooperation initiatives in area of trade, business and regional integration.

The MOU commits the two institutions to share knowledge and expertise relating to the trade and economic integration, utilize and leverage existing resources, collaborate on research and dissemination of good practices, jointly host seminars, workshops and regional and international forums to strengthen Cambodian connectivity in this region.

“The MOU signing marks an important step forward in the ongoing trade and economic integration for Cambodia into GMS and ASEAN connectivity.” said Dr. Watcharas Leelawath, Director of MI. *“We are looking forward to working more closely with TTRI.”*

Testimonials

“I joined the training on cross border transport agreement at Mekong Institute (MI) because I think it is very interesting in terms of giving us the opportunity to understand other agencies as well as other countries.

I’m personally very interested in the GMS CBTA (Greater Mekong Subregion Cross - Border Transport Agreement) because I really want to apply my knowledge on that since we are stepping into ASEAN common market. I think this course met my expectation because it’s not only giving us the environment to learn about the theory, but also a field trip at the border so we can see the real situation. Moreover, it gave us time to develop the friendships with other countries.

Three things I liked the most about the training course is the field trip because it gave us an opportunity to learn the technique they are using, the friendship, and the contents of the course since it is related to what I want to learn.”



Ms. Chea Nalin, Cambodia

Customs Officer, General Department of Customs and Excise

“I joined this course because I think the contents are quite similar to my current work as I am responsible for international cooperation and international crime and ASEAN-EU program on immigration border management. Before I joined the training I expected I would learn something more about the good practices and good experience from Vietnam, Lao PDR, Cambodia, Thailand and Myanmar.

During the course, I learned about the ship register in Nong Kai - Vientiane and immigration check point. I also hoped that by the end of the training course I can connect myself to cooperate with Mekong border immigration management. I think the course met my expectations better than I expected.

The course was practical and can be applied in our work since I’m really involved in CBTA (Cross Border Trade Agreement) to promote the economic development. I also really like that I connected with not only my colleagues in Vietnam, but also my friends from Lao PDR, Cambodia and of course, friends from MI. The way MI organized the training course was very professional as well as the resource persons. I enjoyed the course very much.”



Ms. Nguyen Thi Hien, Vietnam

Officer, Interpol Vietnam, Department of Foreign Affairs
Ministry of Public Security, Vietnam





UP-COMING ACTIVITIES (September-November)

Item	Planned Activities	Date	Type
1	Modular Training on Product Market Identification for GMS	Aug 31- Sept 4	Training
2	4 National Workshops on Trade Promotion Events in CLMV	Aug - Oct	Workshop
3	Action Plan Implementation on Trade Promotion Events in CLMV	Aug - Oct	Other
4	Regional Multi-Stakeholder Policy Consultation Workshop on Cross-Border Contract Farming	Sept 1-2	Workshop
5	Professional Training on Planning and Construction for GMS Power Grid and Power Interconnection	Sept 7-25	Training
6	Localized Training on Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) Certification System in Cambodia	Sept 8-9	Training
7	Silk Seminar	Sept 9-10	Seminar
8	Disseminating Training on Postharvest Practices of Fresh Chilli in Cambodia	Sept 14	Training
9	Training on Trade Event Promotion for Stakeholders in Rice Sector of Khammouane Province	Sept 14-18	Training
10	Rural Development-East-West Economic Corridor Structural Learning Visit on Coffee Production and Marketing System in Thailand	Sept 14-18	SLV
11	Roundtable Meeting for MINZAS Scholars	Sept 16-17	Meeting
12	GAP Forum	Sept 22-23	Forum
13	Training on Quality Standard Thresher and Maintenance	Sept	Training
14	Mekong - Lancang International Shipping Project - 4 Dissemination Workshops	Sept	Workshop
15	4 National Workshops on Product Market Identification in CLMV	Sept - Nov	Workshop
16	Stakeholders' Perception Studies on the Adoption of Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) in CLMV	Sept - Dec	Research
17	Action Plan on Effective Trade Event Promotion for Stakeholders in Khammoune, Lao PDR	Sept - Dec	Other
18	Research on Thailand Non -Tariff Measures	Sept 2014 - 2015	Research
19	Rural Development-East-West Economic Corridor Structural Learning Visit on Rice Production and Marketing System in Thailand	Oct 12-16	SLV
20	Training on Capacity Building for Business Membership Organization	Oct	Training
21	Training for Maize Traders on Purchasing Practices (pricing, specification and market demand information)	Oct	Training
22	Training on SME Development and Promotion for Maize Sector in Kayin State of Myanmar	Oct	Training
23	Business-to-Business Matching	Oct	Workshop
24	2 nd Modular Training on Logistics Master Program	Oct 26 - Nov 6	Training
25	Dissemination Workshop (peer-to-peer communication by sharing proper cultivation technology and market information)	Oct - Nov	Training
26	Action Plan Implementation on Product Market Identification for Maize Sector in the Kayin State of Myanmar	Oct - Dec	Other
27	Action Plan: Implementation on Knowledge and Skills for Branding and Marketing for Coffee Sector in Quangtri, Vietnam	Oct - Dec	Other
28	Synthesis & Evaluation on SME Cluster Linkage, Trade Event Promotion and Product Market Identification	Nov 24-25	Workshop
29	Regional Training Course on Contract Farming	Nov	Training
30	Training to Maize Threshers on Quality Standard Machinery Management	Nov	Training
31	National Workshop on Business Matching cum Market Linkages for SME Promotion in Maize Sector in Kayin State of Myanmar	Nov	Workshop
32	National Workshop on Building Capacity of Business Membership Organization (BMO)	Nov	Workshop
33	Action Plan: Implementation on 2 nd Modular Training on Logistics Master Program	Nov - Jan 2016	Other