

MI to expand learning program

The Mekong Institute (MI) will receive 30 million Baht from the Thai Government to support its human resource development (HRD) work and allow for further expansion.

The funding, through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, was approved on April 29; it will cover MI's operational budget of 10 million Baht per year, beginning in 2009. In a statement, the Cabinet said MI will be "the education and academic hub

and plays the most important role in human resource development and regional cooperation in the GMS."

Between January 2005 and August 2007, MI organized 53 training courses for more than 1,100 people from across the GMS and 17 other nations on subjects such as management, human trafficking, poverty reduction and leadership.

The new funding will allow MI to expand its learning programs and research projects, and employ more staff.

Director Dr Suchat Katima welcomed the news, and thanked the Thai Government for its on-going support of the Institute.



GMS Summit: MI essential to HRD in sub-region

The theme of the Third GMS Summit, which was held in Vientiane, Lao PDR on March 30 and 31, was "Enhancing sustainable capacity building and Competitiveness through Greater Connectivity".

MI was formally recognized at the meeting, with the six GMS countries pledging their support for the Institute and calling it "the learning center for the Human Resources Development for both government officials and personnel from the private sector".

The governments said MI will focus on the impacts of cross-border activities and be the driving force for strategies to develop and implement cooperative arrangements for addressing human resource issues in health, education and labor.

The Institute will help academic and research networks coordinate their programs and resources to achieve sustainable capacity building and competitiveness.

It will also support the transfer of knowledge and share experiences to improve the skills and competency of the sub-region's labor force, and improve the capacity to respond to labor issues and harness the benefits of advances in science and technology.



Photo source : www.thaigov.go.th

Governing bodies to meet

MI's governing bodies, the Mekong Institute Council and Mekong Institute Steering Committee, will meet in Khon Kaen on July 8.

These two meetings will provide an opportunity for the steering committee members and council to take into account the regular agendas like operations report and audited annual accounts. In addition the meetings will explore the sustainability of the MI operations in the long term, especially financial contributions from country members, after the six GMS countries approved to support the mandate and mission of MI in the 3rd GMS Summit, which was held in Vientiane, Lao PDR late March, this year.

Other proposals to be raised in the meetings include : 1) the MI's efforts to access to the provincial authorities in the GMS in order to get the opportunities to enhance the capability of the officials working in the provincial authorities, 2) setting up of liaison office in each GMS country to help support and facilitate the working of MI national coordinating agencies for the benefits of MI operations, 3) extending MI services to Guangxi province of PR China which has been included in the framework of GMS economic cooperation since 2005. The possibility of the MI services extension will be explored. It is expected that this meeting would provide the ample opportunities for the committee members and council to give inputs and recommendations an MI operations which will be benefit to the GMS countries at last.

The Council is the supreme decision making body of the Institute. This year, the chairman is Mr. Hoang Viet Khang, the Deputy Director-General of Foreign Economic Relations Department at the Ministry of Planning and Investment, Hanoi, Vietnam.

One representative is appointed by each of the GMS governments and five invited members from relevant organizations form the Council of no more than 12 people. The MI Director is a non-voting member. Dr. Tej Bunnag, Advisor of the Office of His Majesty's Principal Private Secretary, Thailand, serves as the Honorary Advisor.

The primary objectives of the Steering Committee is to provide guidance to the Director and staff on policy, strategy and funding, to submit recommendations to the Council and to appraise the performance of the Institute and its management staff.

It consists of no more than eight members appointed by the Council. At least two-thirds are GMS government representatives and the Director is a non-voting member.



MI Council Meeting in Kunming, China in December last year

From the Editor

Welcome back to our regular readers and welcome to those who are new.

You will notice some changes in this issue's The Mekong Connection. MI Director Dr Suchat Katima and the ICCD team put their heads together to come up with something new. Let us know if you like it, or if you have any suggestions for content.

This issue details two significant news stories. The first is that the Thai Government has committed to supporting MI for the next three years.

The second is that MI was recognized as being vital to the future of HRD in the GMS.

Also inside you will find information about the most recent learning programs and research activities, as well as a new look Alumni Corner.

Happy reading!



MI welcomed a delegation from the Faculty of Economics at Chiang Mai University on April 3.



On May 1, Dr Oudet Souvannavong, Secretary-General of GMS Business Forum Secretariat, discussed a partnership proposal with the Trade and Investment Facilitation Team.



A student group from the Council on International Educational Exchange Thailand shared ideas on current trends and the direction of development projects in the GMS on April 23.

Canadian Ambassador visits Mekong Institute

The Canadian Ambassador to Thailand H.E. Mr. David Sproule visited the Mekong Institute (MI) on June 20.

MI's Officer-in-Charge Pakpoom Teranantana presented the Ambassador with a gift to mark his visit. Pictured with them are Director of Office of Peace and Governance, King Prachadhipok's Institute (KPI), Dr. Vanchai Vatanasapt, (3rd from left), and MI staff.



The Canadian Ambassador expressed his interest in a cooperation framework for the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS), particularly in large-scale projects such as hydroelectricity, and asked MI staff about recent developments.



On April 25, senior officials from the King Prachadhipok's Institute talked about a reconciliation workshop to be held in September.



Mr Noel Matthews, the United Nations Development Program's Regional Center for Asia Pacific in Bangkok representative, discussed joint training initiatives on April 25.



Twenty participants from six GMS countries were briefed on a Prototype Machine for E-Passport during their visit to the Department of Consular Affairs in Bangkok in May 2008. The visit was an important component of the 4-week course on "Managing Public Sector Reform" which was held during 12 May - 6 June 2008 at Mekong Institute in Khon Kaen.

Research and Learning Programs

Regional Research Development & Methodology

Twenty-one GMS participants and a representative from Guanhxi Province of China attended the "Regional Research Development and Methodology" course. Seven sub-regional research topics were identified, including livelihood of the ethnic minorities, the role of NGOs in combating the trafficking of women and the impact of ecotourism along the North-South Economic Corridor. The course, which ran from March 17 until April 4, was sponsored by NZAID. (Pictured below) Country Director of ADB Resident Mission, Mr J P Verbiest, Associate Professor Kittichai Triratanasirichai, Vice-President for Research and Technology Transfer Affairs at Khon Kaen University, and the Mr. Rattanatay Luanglatbandith, Regional Economist, Asian Development Bank, Thailand Resident Mission with the participants.



(Above) A MIRAC Research Team Leader presents the paper on trade facilitation based on the GMS CBTA, during the Policy Dialogue held on April 7 and 8. (Below) Dr. Suchat Katima, MI Director outlined the agenda and objectives of the Expert Meeting on Trade Facilitation, which was held on April 9.



Officials trained for environmental sustainability

At the end of May, MI hosted a technical workshop, designed to build the capacity of government officials conducting Environment Performance Assessment (EPA).

Forty-five delegates from the six GMS countries and Guanhxi Province of China attended the five-day workshop, which was organized by the Institute for Global Environment Studies and United Nations Environment Program, with the support of the Asian Development Bank through the GMS Environment Operations Center, Bangkok.

During the workshop, the participants planned national and regional sustainable strategies, assessed their domestic social, environmental and economic situations. They also analyzed the existing national and regional strategies and identified policy gaps.



Decentralized education planning

MI welcomed 21 government representatives to Khon Kaen on May 26, for a training course on decentralized education planning in the context of public sector reform.

Ms Ibtisam Abu-Duhou, (pictured right) Senior Adviser, the Education Policy and Reform Unit, UNESCO Bangkok, gave the opening address.



The course focused on 'education sector management, international development trends/ approaches, and education sector planning methodologies'.

Regional tourism seminar

A Training-of-Trainers Seminar on cultural tourism sites' guiding and management was hosted by MI on May 26 and 27. The participants were representatives from the six GMS governments and the United Nations involved in tourism human resources development. The seminar was co-organized by the French Government, UNESCO, UNESCAP and the Institute for Tourism Studies, Macao.



(Above) Participants from Thailand and Lao PDR demonstrate interview techniques and complete questionnaires for their GMS classmates as part of the Regional Research Development and Methodology course (March 17-April 4, 2008).

Ms Veraya Jaru-ampornpun, Director of Human Resources Development Branch II of Thailand International Development Cooperation Agency (TICA), was the guest speaker at MI's Income Generation and Poverty Reduction for Development learning program on April 21. Twenty participants from 19 countries worldwide attended the three-week course.

Upcoming Events (July - September 2008)

MI Event	Date	Development Partner
Leadership for Competitive Enterprises	Jul 7-25	TICA
MI Steering Committee and Council Meetings	Jul 8	MI ICCD
NSWEC Trade and Investment Structured Learning Visit for Thai Officials	Jul 12-19	Regional Operation Center, KKU
Project Management Learning Program	Jul 14-27	ADB-PPP
Unleashing Entrepreneurship in the GMS (in Kunming City)	Jul 28-30	EDI & SDC, Yunnan Chamber of Commerce
Enhancing Entrepreneurship in SME Development and Export Consortia	Aug 4-22	TICA
Training of Trainers in Masterful Facilitation	Aug 27- Sep 5	Mekong Metrology Project of NZAID
Regional Workshop on Trade Facilities and Structured Learning Visit NSEC	Sep 8-19	YPG
Public Participation and Reconciliation	Sep 24-26	KPI

Internal news

New staff

1) Ms. Samantha Dalton (Australian) was seconded by Australian Volunteers International (AVI) to work with MI for two years as the Communication and Public Participation Advisor attached to the newly-established International Cooperation and Communication Department.



2) Ms. Jutamas Thongcharoen (Thai) is a former MI staff member who has returned to the Institute as the Associate Program Manager for Rural Development and Project Management Department.

3) Ms. Sukhon Aduldaecha (Thai) will take over the position of Finance and Administration Department Manager next month. She has an MBA in Accounting from the University of Thai Chamber of Commerce, and brings experience from a range of areas to the position.



Hello everyone!! I just wanted to say it was really nice attending the course and getting to know all of you. I really learned a lot and I hope our network keeps in contact for many years to come. Best regards, Mr Joao Roberto Golin, Tajara, Brazil

Mr Chanin Kaekamnerd (1998 B2) now works as the Personnel Analyst, Bureau of Manpower and Position Audit. Chanin_k99@yahoo.com



Ms Runjuan Tongrut (1998 A2) is the Deputy Director of the Tourism Authority of Thailand's Phuket office.



Miss Piyant Watansiri (1999 B6) has moved to Singapore to take up a new position, as Director of the Thai Trade Center, Office of Commercial Affairs.

Mr Yutisakdi Ek-akara (2006 Poverty Reduction course) has been transferred from Lopburi Province to the Samut Prakan Province. He remains District Chief Officer of Bangbor District.



MI, you are doing a superb job and during my short stay I was moved and inspired by your professional ethics, hospitality and social cohesion. You are promoting leadership development and cooperation, not just in the GMS, but worldwide. I am very proud of what I learned and gained from Mr. Godfrey M. Karuki, GPO Nairobi, Kenya (2007 Project Monitoring and Evaluation)

F.Y.I.

Ms Kanya Jitsukumongkol (2003 B11) has been promoted to Director of Tariff Appeal Division, Customs Department. jit_kanya@hotmail.com



I enjoyed my stay here, at the Mekong Institute, in Khon Kaen, and in Thailand. Thanks to the MI Director, admin and facilitators, and special thanks for all the instructors. They presented the training courses using the best methodology. Mr Abdul Waheed Hamidi, Afghanistan (2008: Income Generation and Poverty Reduction for Development)



I attended a 3-week training course on project management at MI in 2003. I was impressed. It is a professional and high quality training center. I hope to come back again one day. Le Hong Giang



The Mekong Institute (MI) is an independent Inter-Governmental Organization (IGO) working in the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS). MI works closely with the governments of Cambodia, Myanmar, Lao PDR, Thailand, Vietnam and Yunnan Province of China to develop and deliver high quality, appropriate and timely human resource development (HRD) programs. Through HRD and capacity building, MI works to eradicate poverty through sustainable economic and social development, regional cooperation and integration. Its clientele comprises middle to senior level governmental and private sector representatives and individuals involved regional development.