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INSTITUTE



กระทรวงการต่างประเทศ
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand

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Curriculum Design Statement (CDS)

Training on Enhancing Negotiation Skills of the MLC Coordinating Agencies

March 2-6, 2020
Mekong Institute, Khon Kaen, Thailand



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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The Mekong-Lancang (ML) region consists of Cambodia, PR China, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam. Since 2015, the ML countries are part of a sub-regional framework - known as the Mekong-Lancang Cooperation (MLC) - to serve certain common interests of the countries of the sub-region.

The ML countries are among the fastest-growing economies of the world. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the ML countries has been growing in the range of 6-7 per cent in recent years, with the Yunnan province of China growing over 8 percent in 2019.¹ In spite of this, the ML countries are less integrated among themselves in terms of trade and investment through both intra-ML country trade and bilateral investment flows are rising fast.²

Within the ML region, the levels of development between countries vary considerably. As per a World Bank classification for the fiscal year 2020, Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar are lower middle-income countries and, China and Thailand are upper middle-income countries. Income inequalities within and between the countries of the ML region are widening. An ADB Institute Report of 2019 demonstrated income inequalities in all the countries of the region except Thailand (in which inequality reduced by a slight margin) have grown between 1994 and 2008.³ In addition, to the economic divide the countries are increasingly experiencing digital divide both within as well as between themselves.⁴ **This aspect, along with newer developments such as in the areas of disruptive innovation, industry 4.0 and climate change mitigation, implies the countries of the region have to strengthen their efforts of economic development and enhanced sub-regional integration.**

¹ Asian Development Bank (ADB); <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1171374.shtml>;
http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-11/18/c_138564538.htm

² ADB; Own calculation from ADB

³ <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/485186/adbi-demystifying-rising-inequality-asia.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.bangkokpost.com/business/1696568/cautious-optimism-on-aseans-digital-economy>

1.2 MLC Framework

Against this backdrop, the MLC framework aims to discuss, agree and cooperate on a broad range of issues facing the countries of the subregion. The MLC follows a 3+5 cooperation framework. The "3+5" mechanism of cooperation refers to the three cooperation pillars of political and security issues, economic and sustainable development, and cultural and people-to-people exchanges; the five key priority areas of connectivity, production capacity, cross-border economic cooperation, water resources, and agriculture and poverty reduction; as well as cooperation in broader areas such as the digital economy, environmental protection, customs and youth.⁵

The Five-Year Plan of Action (2018-2022) of the MLC states: “by synergizing China’s Belt and Road Initiative and the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 as well as the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity 2025 and visions of other Mekong Sub-regional cooperation mechanisms, the MLC is moving towards a new sub-regional cooperation mechanism with unique features driven by internal strength and inspired by South-South cooperation, which will support the ASEAN Community building and regional integration process, as well as promote the implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.”

The MLC initiative is at an early stage, and the identification of effective regional projects and success criteria still needs to be established, and coordination mechanisms need to be improved. The ML countries are at different stages of economic development, technological capabilities and thus political influence. This results in unevenness in negotiating capabilities and outcomes between the countries. Issues such as lack of understanding of the complex issues, lack of communication skills lack planning, poor knowledge of a country’s strategy (or the absence of strategy in a country in certain areas), dependence on more advanced countries etc. impede a country’s negotiating power.

The MLC framework provides an opportunity for the countries to come to mutual understanding and consensus on issues of mutual interest through dialogues and negotiations. These should produce positive outcomes such as improvement in infrastructure, especially in the areas which are lagging behind, improved connectivity, industrial development, strategies for dealing with disruptive innovation, poverty reduction etc.

2. Overview of the Project and the Training

Against the above background, Mekong Institute (MI), in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand and supported by the Mekong-Lancang Cooperation Special Fund of P.R. China, is implementing the one-year project (2019 – 2020) on “Capacity Building for National Coordinator of Mekong-Lancang Cooperation”. The project is funded by the Mekong-Lancang Cooperation Special Fund of the People's Republic of China. The project aims to

⁵ http://www.lmcchina.org/eng/zyjz_3/35hz/t1519481.htm

strengthen the coordination mechanism among the nodal and related agencies in ML countries to fulfill the strategies involved in the MLC.

As part of the project, “Training on Enhancing Negotiation Skills of the MLC Coordinating Agencies” will be organized March 2-6, 2020 at MI’s residential training center in Khon Kaen, Thailand.

3. Objectives of the Training

The objectives of the training are to

- Enhance understanding of different kinds of negotiation skills and aspects of negotiations to obtain win-win outcomes for the negotiating parties;
- Enhance capacities of the Government agencies to understand priorities and processes for conducting effective negotiations;
- Promote understanding of the importance of effective communication, interpersonal skills, prioritization, dialogues and discussions in order to arrive at a consensus in negotiations conducted as part of the MLC Framework;
- Hone negotiating capability of officials of foreign ministries and line ministries of MLC member countries to obtain the optimum objectives of their countries within the context of Five-Year Plan of Action of MLC.

4. Outcome of the Training

Broad expected outcomes of the Training Program will be

- Shaping of the agenda for greater cooperation and integration in the ML region in the face of challenges and uncertainty
- Greater synergies of interests and building of coalitions among the Government agencies of the ML region on the key priority areas under the Five-Year Plan of Action of the MLC
- Agreements concluded among the ML countries which would have long term, sustainable impacts and be beneficial to all parties

5. Profiles of Targeted Participants

The training will target to have 36 participants from the six ML countries.

Ideally, the participants should be

- Middle-to-senior level officials who are specialists, technical staff, analysts or their equivalent from ministries of foreign affairs, line ministries, technical ministries and national agencies of the ML countries.
- Currently, involved in or in the future could be involved in negotiations in areas under the MLC framework.

Desired qualifications and experience

- A minimum of five years of service in relevant fields.
- A university degree in related disciplines.
- Proficient English language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) - *there will be no provision for translation and all participants are expected to actively participate during group discussions and submit program requirements.*
- Proficient in the use of computers specifically in word, PowerPoint and excel spreadsheet.

In addition, MI encourages

- the participation of women; and
- the participation of persons from border areas which have other Lancang-Mekong countries as neighbors or persons possibly engaged in cross-border or regional trade and investment.

MI will bear the expenses of selected participants for their round-trip economy airfare, visa fees (if applicable), meals and accommodation on training days and a daily subsistence allowance (DSA).

6. Duration and Location

The five-day training will be held on March 2-6, 2020 at Mekong Institute's Residential Training Center in Khon Kaen, Thailand.

7. Broad Outline of the Training Curriculum

In this course, participants will explore five interrelated modules as following:



Module 1: Concepts and Pre-negotiation Preparations

- Basics – definitions and concepts of negotiations, the importance of diplomacy in negotiations, methods of negotiations, transforming competition into cooperation and opponents into partners
- Understanding the interests, priorities, and goals of all parties, conducting consultation with stakeholders, deciding the content of negotiations, framing of arguments and solutions which add value to all sides
- Maximizing opportunity through pre-negotiation preparation, deciding approach to negotiations (such as plenary or one-to-one meetings or both, informal vs formal meetings, high level or technical level meetings, venue of meetings, mode of communications etc.)

Objectives of Learning: The introductory module would provide the participants an overview of the content of the training sessions including basic concepts, the importance of preparing before negotiations and the importance of aiming to conclude win-win deals. It will be a scene-setter for the next sessions.

Learning outcomes: At the end of the Module, the participants should be able to grasp

- *Definitions and basic concepts associated with the term “negotiations”;*
- *The approach that should be taken before the start of negotiations;*
- *Preparations should be taken before the commencement of negotiations.*

Module 2: Sharpening Skills for Effective Negotiating Tactics

- Aspects of diplomatic skills and negotiations
- Interpersonal, cultural and behavioral aspects that impact negotiations
- Enhancement of communication skills
- Sharpening presentation skills
- Managing teams of negotiators

Objectives of Learning: To be successful, a negotiator has to understand complex human, social, economic, political and technical elements of the issues being discussed, and sharpen her/his behavioral and communication skills. This module will aim to make the participants aware of these various aspects and seek to help the participants to sharpen these skills.

Learning outcomes: At the end of the Module, the participants should be able to

- *Understand various behavioral and soft skills approaches that influence negotiation processes;*
- *Assess and review their own behavioral and soft skills aspects, which could be important during negotiations;*
- *Make an assessment on how to work with various aspects of behaviors and soft skills of co-negotiators and other negotiating parties.*

Module 3: Key Aspects of Negotiations

- Techniques e.g. negotiations on positions vs merits, soft vs hard negotiations
- Methods e.g. separating people from problems, focusing on interests or positions, devising options for mutual gain for 'win-win' criteria, using objective criteria, sequencing of deals, aligning deal-making and implementation phases
- Issues such as dealing with conflicts of interest, leveraging and controlling emotions, building and leveraging relationships and coalitions, sharing of information
- Timing – when to make an offer, when to walk away from the negotiating table
- Dispute resolution tools, techniques and strategies etc
- Negotiations that involve multiple parties, issues and agendas

Objectives of Learning: This module will go into the heart of the various aspects and elements of negotiations. It would aim to enhance the participant's understanding of these aspects and elements with the ultimate aim of strengthening their negotiating capability and power.

Learning outcomes: At the end of the Module, the participants should be able to

- *Understand various techniques, methods and processes of negotiations and issues that may crop up;*
- *Review negotiating techniques adopted by the participant herself/himself, her/his agency and her/his country and the adjustments that could be made in these;*
- *Review negotiating techniques adopted by other parties in the negotiations the participant, her/his agency and/or her/his country have been involved in;*
- *Outline the improvements or changes that should be made in negotiating techniques that were adopted by the participant, agency or the country.*

Module 4: Trade Negotiations and Formulating Policies

- Enhancing the skills to understand how the outcomes of negotiations can affect any country's overall policies. (e.g. development and diversification of trade potential, supply-side constraints, non-tariff measures etc)
- Priorities in trade policies in the ML countries and, notable agreements and negotiations on trade and investment involving the ML countries
- Case studies such as
 - o Overview of WTO and some of the important FTAs of MLCs
 - o Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) agreement including negotiating position and tactic deployed by each party, and trade and investment issues of interest to ML countries
 - o ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) e.g. various issues such as importance of negotiating on non-tariff barriers
 - o Trade disputes such as US-China trade war – how it affects MLCs

Objectives of Learning: This module would focus specifically on how trade policies and other policies of Governments can be affected due to the obligations in these agreements. How it can effect the domestic

policies and competitiveness of industries in the ML region. The aim of the session is to provide a broad overview of how agreements can affect the trade and competitiveness of industries by providing specific examples of issues and challenges in trade negotiations.

Learning outcomes: At the end of the Module, the participants should be able to

- *Have an understanding of various aspects of trade and other domestic policies, esp in relation to their countries*
- *Make an assessment of the priorities and future direction of various trade negotiations under different frameworks;*
- *Review their countries' roles and strategies in trade negotiations under different frameworks and outline whether any changes are required in these.*

Module 5: Mock Sessions

- Simulation techniques, role-playing and mock sessions to provide hands-on experience to the participants on conducting successful negotiations to reach an agreement, including dispute resolution
- “Areas of Cooperation” such as on Economy, Environment, MSME or agriculture-related issues
- Presentations by negotiating groups and sharing of experiences

Objectives of Learning: Hands-on experience is a better tool for learning than theoretical lectures. This module would seek to apply different tools and aspects of negotiations - introduced in the other modules - by presenting real life-like situations to the participants to solve. The aim will be demonstrating to the participant's methods of arriving at consensus and agreement by building relationships and solving problems.

Learning outcomes: At the end of the Module, the participants should be able to

- *Apply tools and techniques learned in the earlier modules in practice with different negotiating partners;*
- *Assess negotiating tools, techniques and processes adopted in actual negotiations and their countries' roles and interests in these negotiations;*
- *Make an assessment of improvements or changes needed in her/his negotiating style and technique based on the mock sessions.*

8. Approach of the Training

The training program is so designed so as to enable the participants to have a comprehensive understanding of the content, focus on sharing of practical knowledge by the participants and resource persons, encourage exchange of information and ideas through group discussions, adopt participative methods such as simulations and mock negotiations, and foster networking among the participants. The language used of the training program will be English.

The five-day training at MI will adopt the following methods and tools of delivery.

- Lectures and videos;
- Examples and case study presentations;
- Simulations and mock negotiations; and
- Group work, exercises and presentations.

The team of resource person(s), facilitators and moderators will be comprised of qualified MI and external experts with knowledge and experiences on the concepts and issues which will be introduced and discussed during the training.

9. Monitoring and Evaluation

A monitoring and evaluation (M&E) mechanism will be put in place to assess the progress and measure the results of the intervention and every effort will be made to make it effective. The M&E will be introduced in the pre, during and post stages of the training program.

Pre-Training

During the selection of participants, assessments will be made of applicants' qualifications, experiences, English language proficiency, willingness and ability to ensure their effective participation in the training program. Telephonic interviews may be conducted for selected applicants to judge their eligibility.

During Training at MI

As per its standard practice, a few monitoring and evaluation tools will be employed by MI during the training sessions on March 2-6. Accordingly, pre-, post- and final training assessments will be conducted to assess the impact of the training on participants' understanding of the subject matter and skills. Results of pre-and post-assessment will be compared to measure the improvement in knowledge and skills of participants due to the training content and relevance of training materials and methods for the participants' jobs.

Post-Training

A few months after the training, MI will measure the outcome of the training program by seeking participants' inputs on the impact of the training program in terms of the enhancement of knowledge, skills and coordination among the participants post-training program, application of the newly acquired knowledge and skills in real-life situations (e.g. negotiations or dialogues conducted as part of the MLC Framework) etc.

10. Brief Program Schedule (Tentative)

Day I: Monday, March 2, 2020

Venue: Mekong River Conference Room, Mekong Institute (MI), Khon Kaen, Thailand

09:00 - 09:30	Inaugural and project overview
09:30 – 10:30	Sharing experiences – Representative from Department of International Economic Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand, MFA, Thailand <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Overview of diplomacy ▪ How to coordinate with agencies, What is required from the agencies ▪ The kind of negotiations take place under MLC framework
10:30 – 12:00	Module 1: Concepts and Pre-negotiation Preparations – MI
13:00 -15:00	Module 1...contd – MI, External RP (TBD)
15:00 -17:00	Module 2: Sharpening Skills for Effective Negotiating Tactics – RP TBD

Day II: Tuesday, March 3, 2020

Venue: Mekong River Conference Room

09:00 - 10:30	Module 2 ...contd – RP TBD
10:30 – 12:00	Module 3: Key Aspects of Negotiations – RP TBD
13:00 - 17:00	Module 3...contd – RP TBD

Day III: Wednesday, March 4, 2020

Venue: Mekong River Conference Room

09:00 – 12:00	Module 3 ...contd – RP TBD
13:00 -17:00	Module 4: Broad overview of negotiations (understanding legal texts, stakeholders consultations, resolving internal conflicts etc.) – Dr. Rajan Sudesh Ratna, UNESCAP

Day IV: Thursday, March 5, 2020

Venue: Mekong River Conference Room

09:00 - 12:00	Module 4: Broad overview of trade agreements (WTO and MLCs FTAs with <i>and case studies of RCEP and US China Trade War</i>) – Dr. Rajan Sudesh Ratna, UNESCAP
13:00 - 17:00	Module 5: Mock Sessions – Dr. Rajan Sudesh Ratna, UNESCAP

Day V, Friday, March 6, 2020

Venue: Mekong River Conference Room

09:00 – 10:15	<i>Presentations by Negotiating Groups, Sharing of Experiences – facilitated by Dr. Rajan Sudesh Ratna, UNESCAP</i>
10:30 – 12:00	Module 5: Mock Session results and discussions - Dr. Rajan Sudesh Ratna, UNESCAP
13:00 - 17:00	Closing Ceremony

11. Contact

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The Greater Mekong Subregion

The Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) comprises five Southeast Asian countries and two provinces of China sharing the Mekong River, namely Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam, and Yunnan Province and Guangxi Autonomous Region of the People's Republic of China.

About Mekong Institute

Mekong Institute (MI) is a GMS intergovernmental organization (IGO) working closely with the governments of six countries to promote regional development and cooperation through capacity building programs and projects in three thematic areas of agricultural development and commercialization, trade and investment facilitation, and innovation and technological connectivity.



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