



MEKONG
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2024 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT



MEKONG INSTITUTE, KHON KAEN, THAILAND

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

ADC	Agricultural Development and Commercialization
ACMECS	Ayeyawady-Chao Phraya Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy
ASEAN	The Association of Southeast Asian Nations
APPRACA	Asia-Pacific Rural and Agricultural Credit Association
BGCF	Broader GMS Cooperation Frameworks
CD	Capacity Development
CKM	Communication and Knowledge Management
CLMV	Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, and Vietnam
CLMVT	Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Vietnam, and Thailand
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
EOP	End of Project
FAOYN	Foreign Affairs Office of the People's Government of Yunnan Province
GMCA	Greater Mekong Community Affairs
GMS	Greater Mekong Sub-region
GS	General Services
HR	Human Resources
HRD	Human Resource Development
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IGO	Intergovernmental Organization
IT	Information Technology
LM	Lancang-Mekong
LMCSF	Lancang-Mekong Cooperation Special Fund
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning
MI	Mekong Institute
MI-CDM	MI Capacity Development Model
MKCF	Mekong – Korea Cooperation Fund
NZAP	New Zealand Aid Programme
PROSAFE	Promoting Safe Food for Everyone
RF	Results Framework
ROK	Republic of Korea
SEE	Sustainable Energy and Environment
SP	Strategic Plan
SMT	Senior Management Team
TICA	Thailand International Cooperation Agency

Executive Summary

This report showcases MI's effort throughout 2024 from January to December within development programs and institutional development. The report organized its contents by key thematic areas to provide a high-level picture of MI's contribution to Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) development guided by the MI's Strategic Plan 2021-2025. Regarding institutional development, the report outlined contributions from all the supporting units. MI's Flagship Program was also reported to capture high level progress and knowledge gained through their implementation as well as to highlight their contributions to the broader GMS cooperation and development.

In 2024, MI implemented 14 long-term projects, 9 short-term projects, and 11 one-off activities. These included 6 projects in Agricultural Development and Commercialization, 6 in Trade and Investment Facilitation, 5 in Sustainable Energy and Environment, 8 in Social Inclusion, and 9 contributing to broader GMS initiatives.

As of November 1, 2024, 82 high-level activities were completed, including 20 workshops, 12 research studies, 12 training (3 with action planning), 6 Structured Learning Events, 5 system development sessions, 2 webinars, 8 grant support activities, and 7 project management initiatives. These activities directly engaged 1,523 participants, with an additional 2,226 people indirectly reached through action planning and cascade training by direct participants. Among the direct participants, 49% were women; 77% were from the public sector, and 23% from the private sector. For indirect participants, 48% were women, with 22% from the public sector and 78% from the private sector.

During Jan-Sept 2024, MI's total revenue was US\$ 1,832,440, achieving 50% of the targeted budget for 2024 and MI's total expense amounted to US\$ 2,216,013 as of September 30, 2024. MI recorded a net deficit of US\$ 441,445 as of September 30, 2024, and MI's deficit was US\$383,573 excluding the non-cash expenses. According to the projected Statement of Revenue and Expenses as of December 31, 2024, MI's total revenue is expected to be US\$ 3,074,895, achieving 84% of the targeted budget for the year. Total expenses are projected to amount to US\$ 3,232,711, resulting in a net deficit of US\$ 157,816. Excluding non-cash expenses, MI's deficit stands at US\$ 83,734. MI annual financial performance for 2024 is projected to show a deficit due to MI not receiving the anticipated traditional funding. This deficit will be covered by the accumulated reserve funds from prior financial gains.

Introduction

In 2024, a total of 82 activities were completed across MI. These included 20 workshops, 12 research initiatives, 9 training sessions, 9 meetings, 8 grant support activities, and 7 project

management components. Additional efforts involved 6 structured learning events, 5 system development activities, 3 training and action plans, 2 webinars, and 2 forums. Data collection was also carried out. As the results of the activities completed, MI organizational level, annual implementation progress shows substantial and participant engagement. As of October 31, 2024. At the overall, organizational level, direct engagement included 1,523 participants, with a nearly even gender distribution of 51% men and 49% women, and a strong public sector representation (77%). Indirect participants extended to 2,226 participants, comprising 52% men and 48% women, primarily from the private sector (78%).

In 2024, MI implemented 14 long-term projects, 9 short-term projects, and 11 one-off activities. These included 6 projects in Agricultural Development and Commercialization, 6 in Trade and Investment Facilitation, 5 in Sustainable Energy and Environment, 8 in Social Inclusion, and 9 contributing to broader GMS initiatives.

The reporting period for this document covers January to September 2024, with forecasts provided for the remaining months of the year.

Key Progress on the Regional Development Themes

Agricultural Development and Commercialization

In 2024, MI has made significant strides in advancing agricultural development and commercialization across the GMS, aligning with its 2021-2025 Strategic Plan by prioritizing climate-smart agriculture, fostering public-private partnerships, and promoting sustainable food systems and through initiatives like climate-smart agriculture, crop insurance, postharvest management, and environmental sustainability.

9 projects were implemented under the Agricultural Development and Commercialization thematic area, with 63% of planned activities completed as of October 30. These activities directly engaged 210 participants and indirectly reached 1,917 people through cascade training and action planning conducted by the direct participants. Among the direct participants, 74% were from the public sector, while 26% represented the private sector. For indirect participants, 13% were from the public sector, and 87% were from the private sector. The geographic breakdown for direct participants included 31% from Cambodia, 25% from Lao PDR, 27% from Thailand, 7% from Vietnam, 2% from Myanmar, and 13% from other countries. Indirect participants primarily came from Cambodia (53%), Thailand (31%), and Viet Nam (13%) and with around 8% from Lao PDR.

One of the major achievements was the **Scaling Up Climate-Smart Agriculture (CSA) Practices project in which** the project reached over 100 participants, including representatives from national ministries such as the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, development partners and the private sector. A highlight was the Climate-Smart Postharvest Technologies training held in February 2024, followed by an exposure visit to Australia. This visit allowed participants to observe sustainable practices firsthand. These efforts have significantly strengthened technical capacity and collaboration, paving the way for more resilient food systems

in the region. The initiatives provided a strong platform for stakeholders to gain practical CSA knowledge and technical skills, with tailored training on climate-resilient farming techniques and postharvest management.

Furthermore, the **Climate-Smart Agriculture and Sustainable Agriculture project** in the Lancang-Mekong region has yielded significant results at multiple levels. For example, four leading academic institutions have strengthened their curricula to integrate sustainable agriculture, clean production, and climate-smart techniques. At the community level, farmers have adopted climate-smart practices like fertigation, solar-powered pumps, and crop rotation. Another example of changes made on the ground include the HACCP certification obtained by Thazin Nwe Family Trading Co., Ltd., a mango processing factory in Myanmar. Furthermore, Cambodia also promoted net house technology and updated academic curricula while Lao PDR introduced solar pump technologies, Thailand established a CSA Learning Centre, and Vietnam implemented sustainable packaging. These efforts indirectly reached nearly 69,000 people, enhancing food security and resilience across the GMS. Consistent technical support, peer networks, and stakeholder engagement were crucial, and in 2025, MI plans to expand these initiatives through additional funding and a regional workshop to further embed CSA in national strategies.

In advancing Public-Private Partnerships (PPP), within the **Promotion of Climate-Resilient Crop Insurance project**, MI's efforts in climate-resilient crop insurance in ASEAN involved a kickoff workshop and two regional meetings with over 150 stakeholders from ASEAN member states. The initiative showcased insurance models aligned with the ASEAN Vision for resilient agriculture. This approach not only stabilized smallholder incomes but also enhanced food security and economic resilience. Key lessons included the importance of public-private partnerships and the integration of insurance with agricultural services. MI aims to collaborate with SEADRIF in 2025 to strengthen risk financing and expand crop insurance coverage for smallholders across ASEAN.

Contributing GMS 2030 Strategic Framework for Agri-Food System Transformation, MI supported the development of the 2030 Strategic Framework for Agri-Food System Transformation, targeting climate resilience, market access, and digital transformation in collaboration with the GMS Working Group on Agriculture and private sector stakeholders, the framework aligns with UN SDGs and ADB's strategic goals for safe, climate-smart agricultural products. Its multi-stakeholder approach fosters sustainable farming, improved market linkages, and inclusive financial services, positioning the GMS as a competitive exporter of green agricultural products.

The **“Promoting Sustainable and Nutrition-sensitive Agriculture Development in the Lancang-Mekong Countries” project** (March-November 2024) expanded knowledge in climate-smart and agroecological practices and promoted nutrition integration in sustainable agriculture. Key results included a Regional Training Program where 26 participants from Lancang-Mekong countries developed six action plans tailored to their countries' agricultural needs. These plans, implemented from May to September, focused on sustainable farming, nutrition advocacy, and climate resilience. A Synthesis and Evaluation Workshop and a webinar in November 2024

assessed the project's impact, shared findings, and fostered regional collaboration. Country-specific achievements included Cambodia's workshop on nutrition-sensitive agri-food systems, which empowered 32 students to advocate for sustainable food security. China improved beef cattle breeding practices, increasing farmers' income potential, while Lao PDR's Fairtrade Coffee Impact Study demonstrated benefits in income, food security, and eco-friendly practices for certified farmers. In Myanmar, a study on groundnut production in the Central Dry Zone identified improvements for water access and pest management, supporting climate resilience. Thailand promoted low-sugar rice production, enhancing community involvement and food security, while Vietnam introduced a rice-shrimp rotation model in the Mekong Delta, which improved ecological balance and income stability.

The "**Inventory of Innovative Cultivation Technologies for Reducing GHG Emissions in the Rice Sector in South and Southeast Asia**" project, supported by GIZ under the i4Ag Fund, aimed to catalog low-emission rice cultivation technologies across Bangladesh, Cambodia, Lao PDR, India, Indonesia, Thailand, and Vietnam in line with the 2015 Climate Agreement. Key results included the development of an inventory report cataloging innovative GHG-reducing rice technologies and the creation of two essential knowledge products: (1) scalable low-emission rice technologies and (2) guidelines for adopting low-emission practices. Additionally, a regional workshop held from April 30 to May 1, 2024, successfully engaged 41 participants, fostering knowledge-sharing and collaboration on these sustainable technologies. Following the project's success, MI secured continued grant funding for 2025.

Furthermore, a **Regional Workshop on Leveraging Inclusive Climate Finance to Scale up Climate-Smart Agriculture Practices in the Lower Mekong Subregion**, was held to facilitate access to climate finance, provided context-specific climate-smart agriculture approaches and built technical capacity. The workshop engaged 28 participants, including officials from line ministries, international agencies, civil society organizations, financial service providers, and academic experts.

Trade and Investment Facilitation

Lancang-Mekong Business Forum Project: the 6th Lancang- Mekong Business Forum

The 6th LMBF was launched in Beijing, China on January 10-11, 2024. With Thailand's MoC, Foreign Economic Cooperation Center (FECC) of Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs (MARA), China and China-ASEAN Business Center (CABC), MI bridged partnerships and introduced innovations to over 120 representatives from government ministries, regional organizations, food processing enterprises, import-export enterprises, transport and logistics enterprises and food processing equipment and technology companies, as well as food processing support organizations and business associations (BAs) from CCLMTV. The event offered back-to-back activities to encourage and facilitate business-to-business networking, cooperation and collaborations. The forum focused on the processed food industry with the theme "Promoting Agribusiness and Investment in the Processed Food Sector." The event opened with a seminar on January 10, 2024, that brought together experts in the food processing industry in China and Thailand.

On-site business matching took place in the afternoon of January 10, 2024, with over 65 participating enterprises. The result of it is impressive, with a total of 91 instances of business matching. 70.33% and 28.57% of interactions are at the level of "information exchange" and "business negotiations." 67 instances (73.63%), affirmed the likelihood of successful collaboration.

A structured learning visit was organized for participants from CLMTV to observe and learn from Pinggu National Agricultural Science and Technology Innovation Demonstration Zone in Beijing, China on January 11, 2024. Through the SLV, participants learned about success factors, best practices, challenges faced and the opportunities for business cooperation and collaborations.

Special Economic Zones (SEZs) Promotion for Intra-regional Trade and Investment in the Lancang-Mekong Region (LMC-SEZ Project)

The 21st China-ASEAN Expo (CAEXPO) – the ASEAN Industrial Parks Investment Promotion and Project Matching Event, September 23-27, 2024. Mekong Institute (MI), in coordination with Ministry of Commerce of Thailand, in collaboration with the China-ASEAN Business Center (CABC), and with the support of Lancang-Mekong Cooperation Special Fund of China (LMCSF), has designed and is implementing a three-year regional project titled “Special Economic Zones (SEZs) Promotion for Intra-Regional Trade and Investment in the Lancang-Mekong Region” from 2024 to 2026. This event was part of the three-year project, aiming to promote Thailand’s Special Economic Zones (SEZs) to Lancang-Mekong countries and beyond, and boost trade and investment within and outside the Lancang-Mekong (LM) region. It brought a delegation of 15 representatives from the Ministry of Commerce of Thailand (MOC), Northeastern Regional Office of Board of Investment (BOI), SEZs of Mukdahan, Nong Khai and Nakhon Phanom and the Udon Thani Industrial Estate (IE) in Northeastern Thailand. The event kicked off with a three-day event on September 24-26, 2024, including visiting CAEXPO exhibitions, attending the business matching with Chinese investor - a side event of CAEXPO, and field visiting some leading companies in Nanning, and signing MOUs between two SEZs in Thailand with CABC and the industrial parks in Qinzhou, Guangxi, China. A synthesis workshop was held on the evening of the last day to exchange the learnings and discuss the action plans after the event. Among the visits, participants showcased the SEZs & IEs in Northeastern Thailand, connected with potential investors, industrial parks, SEZs, and investment promotion agencies from China, ASEAN, and beyond, and identified the competitive investment advantages of Thailand’s SEZs & IEs to formulate future investment strategies. The last day Synthesis Workshop held post-trip highlighted key insights, focusing on the need for improved infrastructure, advanced technology integration, enhanced business matching processes, and targeted incentives for specific industries like logistics and clean energy.

Regional Training cum Workshop on Enhancing Trade and Investment Promotion of Special Economic Zones in Thailand and Lancang Mekong Region, October 21-23, 2024

Mekong Institute (MI), in coordination with the Ministry of Commerce of Thailand, in collaboration with the China-ASEAN Business Center (CABC), and with support from the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation Special Fund (LMCSF), was implementing a three-year regional project titled “Special Economic Zones (SEZs) Promotion for Intra-Regional Trade and Investment in the Lancang-Mekong Region” from 2024 to 2026.

As part of this initiative, a regional training workshop was organized on October 21-23, 2024, at the Mekong Institute in Khon Kaen, Thailand. This 2.5-day event aimed to highlight the SEZ landscape and development needs in Thailand while facilitating knowledge exchange on new trends in SEZ development and investment promotion within the LM region, influenced by global initiatives. A total of 66 delegates representing SEZ developers, operators, experts, investment promotion agencies, and potential investors have attended the regional training cum workshop in a hybrid format, among which 22 are invited as speakers to share their insights and experiences.

The workshop was structured with five sessions, focusing on showcasing SEZ development and investment promotion in Thailand, sharing successes and challenges among leading SMEs in the Lancang-Mekong region, discussing strategies for applying sustainable practices in SEZ development, providing investor insights to SEZ promotion strategy, and discussions on action plans.

By the end of the workshop, powered by the group discussion and support, the SEZs in Northeastern Thailand have developed action plans to enhance their investment promotion strategies and marketing efforts, including improving their online presence through the SEZ web portal developed by MI and other digital channels and preparing for the upcoming Investment Tour in November 2024, which will be co-organized by MI and CABC. Participants have also been encouraged to collaborate with MI on organizing investor tours and trade events to promote SEZs in the region. Additionally, the event explored the possibility of forming an expert group to provide ongoing technical guidance to SEZs and identify themes for future training workshops.

Investment Tour to SEZs and Industrial Parks in Vientiane, Lao PDR and Northeastern Economic Corridor of Thailand, Nov 25-Dec 1, 2024.

Mekong Institute (MI), in coordination with the Ministry of Commerce of Thailand, in collaboration with the China-ASEAN Business Center (CABC), and with support from the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation Special Fund (LMCSF), is implementing a three-year regional project titled “Special Economic Zones (SEZs) Promotion for Intra-Regional Trade and Investment in the Lancang-Mekong Region” from 2024 to 2026.

As part of this project, MI and CABC will co-organize an investment tour to SEZs and industrial parks in Vientiane, Lao PDR, and Thailand's Northeastern Economic Corridor (NeEC) from November 25 to December 1, 2024. This seven-day tour aims to showcase investment opportunities and the regional investment climate to a group of 20 Chinese investors. MI will facilitate meetings between the investors and the authorities and operators of SEZs and industrial

parks in Vientiane and four cities in Northeastern Thailand. The itinerary will feature site visits to cross-border trade facilitation facilities and logistics hubs, along with business matching sessions to explore potential investment projects, all designed to foster long-term partnerships and support investment initiatives.

Creative4Mekong: Promoting Creative Industry for Heritage Tourism development in the Mekong Region

Inception Meeting for the Launching of the project and formation of the Project Advisory Committee- April 3, 2024. MI organized an inception meeting to formally launch the project on Promoting Creative Industries for Heritage Tourism Development in the Mekong Region (Creative4Mekong) through an online platform on 3rd April 2024. A total of thirty-six (36) delegates attended from concerned ministries and departments, as well as the private sector, representing government agencies related to tourism, culture, hotels, fine arts, commerce, intellectual property rights, heritage sites, creative industries associations, and tourism associations in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam (CLMTV) countries. Additionally, representatives from international organizations, including UNESCO's Bangkok office and the British Council, were also present.

The meeting received strong support from all participants, a list of PAC members and its ToR were adopted. The main role of PAC is to provide directions and guidance to the project executing agency and implementation team, to review the project development progress, including setting directions and areas for cooperation and collaboration to ensure that all activities are effectively implemented for achieving the development results.

Baseline study on Creative Industries (Cis) in the Mekong region was conducted between June - July 2024 to develop an understanding of the CIs status in the heritage sites of each country. Over the course of two months, the project team and consultant led interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) with governmental offices, private sectors, MSMEs and Artisans to enhance multi perspectives understanding of challenges associated with CIs development in each destination. In addition, to identify a pilot Cultural and Creative product for the project. Alongside desk research, the team were able to identify 2-3 cultural products suggested by local authorities, scholars, and artisans that are unique to each location and need further protection and development. This study also acted as a fundamental source to design a training/workshop in response to the development gaps and challenges for further collaborative improvement. The identified challenges, as a result, include: The standardized definition and strategies of Creative Industries and Creative Economy, The Intellectual Property protection and legal actions in protecting local ideas and creativities, and the understanding of the business ecosystem in identifying proper markets and developing appropriate strategies for each distinct business.

Creative Industries Association Management Workshop in the Mekong Region was conducted in September 9-13, 2024, as part of the three-year project “Promoting Creative Industries for Heritage Tourism Development in Mekong Countries,” this workshop aimed to

enhance understanding and knowledge exchange on developing Creative Industries (CIs) at national and regional levels. The program hosted 25 participants from CI associations and government agencies across five heritage sites: Ayutthaya, Bagan, Hue, Luang Prabang, and Siem Reap. Participants engaged in sessions on Creative Industries fundamentals, Intellectual Property protection, and business plan management, combining group discussions, case studies, and a field visit to the Thailand Creative and Design Center (TCDC). Each session provided a connected view of the Creative Industries ecosystem and country-specific analyses to inform action plans. On the final day, participants developed country-specific action plans to address CI challenges, focusing on preserving, protecting, and promoting cultural products. For three months post-training, participants received technical support from MI and consultants to implement these plans in line with project goals.

Assessment of the Intellectual Property (IP) Landscape in Creative Industries at Mekong World Heritage Sites: in 2024, this study assessed the legal and institutional frameworks for Intellectual Property (IP) in Creative Industries (CIs) across five Mekong World Heritage Sites. Through surveys and secondary research, project staff and consultants collaborated with local authorities, commerce ministries, IP departments, and cultural ministries to understand IP processes, especially for local artisans and CCI workers. The study identified challenges in IP protection and proposed measures to strengthen IP systems in the region. Key recommendations included improving access to IP services, standardizing IP processes, and fostering best practice exchange across countries and stakeholders.

Cultural and Creative Industries Partnership Exchange Visit to the Republic of Korea was conducted on December 3-5, 2024, to foster collaboration between Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs) institutions in the Republic of Korea and representatives from five project sites seeking cross-border partnerships, knowledge exchange, and technical expertise. The program was tailored to participants' interests and challenges, focusing on meaningful exchange that could lead to ongoing cross-country contributions. Eighteen participants representing associations, private sectors, MSMEs, and scholars attended, all working to elevate CCIs products in their respective cities. The visit included engagement with Korean institutions specializing in arts and crafts, product design, intangible heritage management, promotion, modernization, and research and development. By grouping participants based on product types and interests, they gained insights from both Korean institutions and peers within their industry.

Mekong-RoK Cooperation Roundtable: Advancing Regional Development and Partnerships was conducted on December 13, 2024, in Bangkok with approximately 130-150 attendees, including government officials, MKCF Project Implementing Agencies (PIAs), international organizations, potential partners, donors, embassies, and private sector representatives, gathered to advance regional development under the Mekong-RoK Cooperation framework. The event showcased the outcomes of regional cooperation projects, promoting deeper understanding of sector-specific challenges and fostering partnerships for sustained impact. The exhibition displayed key project achievements, challenges, and solutions, while sector-specific discussions

facilitated collaboration among stakeholders to strengthen regional development and explore future co

AOTS: Project on Transforming and Advancing Sustainable Supply Chains in the Mekong

The project focused on enabling SME suppliers and component manufacturers to enhance their ESG performance with support from key stakeholders, including leading companies, technology providers, and financing institutions. These stakeholders guided SMEs in adopting ESG standards by offering technological and financing options, helping SMEs meet global regulations and the requirements of lead companies. The project included three main activities: (i) developing and delivering training programs based on global, regional, and local demand, with local lecturers trained in dedicated facilities, (ii) providing ESG-focused training to selected SMEs, and (iii) facilitating connections with solution providers and financial institutions to monitor SMEs' decarbonization progress. To date, the project completed two steering committee meetings and initiated four studies to: (i) assess the global and regional ESG landscape, (ii) conduct a baseline survey on SME suppliers' motivations and challenges regarding decarbonization, (iii) develop ESG performance indicators for SMEs, and (iv) design an IT platform to measure SMEs' ESG performance in decarbonization. The study outcomes will inform training sessions, train-the-trainer (ToT) programs, coaching, and decarbonization implementation for SME suppliers. Operation pathways.

Regional Workshop and Structured Learning Visit Along Economic Corridors in Thailand, Lao PDR, and Cambodia was conducted from September 18-27, 2024, funded by the Yunnan Government, China aimed to equip officials from connectivity-related government departments with firsthand insights along the East-West Economic Corridor (EWEC) and South Economic Corridor (SEC) to boost intra-regional trade and investment. The event brought together 24 government officials from six Lancang-Mekong countries, representing sectors such as planning, commerce, transport, logistics, and policymaking. The program began with an introductory workshop on September 19, 2024, in Khon Kaen, where representatives shared country-specific updates on connectivity development and discussed physical and soft connectivity challenges. This was followed by a one-week Structured Learning Visit (SLV) from September 20-26, with site visits to Mukdahan in Thailand, Savannakhet, Pakse, and Si Phan Don in Lao PDR, and Stung Treng and Siem Reap in Cambodia. During the SLV, participants examined border Special Economic Zones (SEZs) and gained insights into connectivity projects and services. The program concluded with a Synthesis Workshop, where participants presented country reports, discussed regional connectivity challenges, and proposed actionable recommendations to improve regional coordination and cooperation.

AANZFTA Implementation Support Program (AISP): Inception Workshop on Trademark Development for Lao Female Businesses: in collaboration with the Department of Intellectual Property, Ministry of Industry and Commerce, and the Regional Trade for Development (RT4D) Facility in Vientiane, Lao PDR, MI organized a 3-day inception workshop from June 17-19, 2024.

The workshop aimed to support selected Lao female businesses in developing their trademarks. A total of 27 participants from 11 provinces in Lao PDR attended, including female business representatives from sectors such as pepper, honey, herbs, oil palm, coconut, silk and cotton fabrics, handicrafts, shampoo, wine, and natural water-weed. Officers from the Department of Intellectual Property were also present. Participants gained knowledge and skills from experts representing Khon Kaen University Science Park, the Thai-ASEAN SMEs Promotion Network, and MI's Trade and Investment Facilitation Department. The training covered trademark development, product design, branding, marketing, trade event promotion, and tools for market selection.

Final Workshop on Trademark Development Assistance and IP Booklet Development: since 2023, with support from the AANZFTA Implementation Support Program (AISP), this project engaged closely with the Department of Intellectual Property (DIP) and the RT4D Facility in Lao PDR to assist Lao female entrepreneurs. The final workshop, scheduled for November 2024 at MI's Residential Training Center in Khon Kaen, Thailand, aimed to document project outcomes, share lessons learned, and showcase best practices. Participants focused on refining product designs, packaging, and logos for trademark registration, along with networking opportunities with associations and institutions in Khon Kaen. The project also developed an IP booklet as a practical guide on trademark application procedures.

Greater Mekong Subregion Strategic Framework 2030 - SEZ Assessment was conducted to reassess SEZs and BEZs in the Greater Mekong Subregion, MI served as the National Expert, focusing on Thailand. MI collaborated with the lead ADB consultant to conduct background research and design a data collection survey for Border Economic Zones. MI managed the survey administration, including data collection, tabulation, and initial analysis to inform actions for enhancing SEZ relevance within the subregional development strategy.

The CLMV ASEAN Senior Economic Officials' Meeting (SEOM) was conducted to develop the CLMV Development Framework Implementation Plan, which was adopted at the 14th CLMV Economic Meeting in July 2022. This eight-year plan (2023-2030) was divided into two phases: Phase I (2023-2026) and Phase II (2027-2030). To prepare for effective implementation, MI organised a workshop in early January 2025. Key topics included an overview of the framework and implementation plan, thematic discussions on the connectivity pillars, enablers and sectors of comparative advantage, and best practices shared by each CLMV country. Participants identified priority activities to be completed by 2030, established M&E reporting mechanisms, and developed actionable recommendations to move the plan forward.

Sustainable Energy and Environment

In 2024, the Sustainable Energy and Environment thematic area undertook five projects, engaging 215 direct participants and reaching an additional 309 indirect participants. Among the direct participants, 69% were men and 31% were women, with 92% representing the public sector and 8% from the private sector. For indirect participants, 52% were men and 48% were women, with

75% from the public sector and 25% from the private sector. Geographically, the direct participants were primarily from Thailand (26%), Cambodia (17%), Lao PDR (18%), and Vietnam (14%), China (13%), Myanmar (8%), and other countries (10%). Indirect participants were mainly from Thailand (50%), Cambodia (9%), Vietnam (14%), Myanmar (9%), and China (6%).

In 2024, **Triangular Cooperation Project on Sustainable Development in the Lower Mekong Basin based on the Water-Energy-Food (WEF) Nexus project (2021-2025)**, which aimed to improve water, food, and energy access for vulnerable communities in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Vietnam. Key results for 2024 included the completion of the Annual Review and 2024 Planning Workshop, which evaluated project progress and set project priorities. A side event on digital innovations for sustainable livelihoods featured a presentation by MI's Executive Director on the WEF Nexus Stakeholder Engagement Platform, highlighting MI's role in fostering regional collaboration. The 3rd Steering Committee Meeting reviewed 2023 achievements, approved the 2024 work plan, and established strategies for risk management and sustainability. Additionally, national pilots launched in Lao PDR, Thailand, and Cambodia, focused on integrated water management and early warning systems to strengthen community resilience. The 2nd National Consultative Meeting further refined the project design, incorporating diverse stakeholder feedback to ensure local relevance and impact. Capacity-building milestones included an online workshop on national pilot progress, a pre-trip briefing for participants, and a study tour in South Korea, where 19 delegates gained practical insights into advanced WEF technologies.

Additionally, MI implemented 2 energy projects in the Lancang-Mekong Region in 2024. The first, **"Promoting Greater Energy Connectivity for Equitable Development and Growth,"** project (June 2023-September 2024) in partnership with China Southern Power Grid Co., Ltd. (CSG). This project aimed to enhance sustainable energy solutions and regional cooperation. Key results included a knowledge-sharing workshop in Myanmar with 33 participants, where energy technologies, renewable energy plans, and connectivity strategies were discussed. In Thailand, a seminar and three internal meetings engaged 136 participants from the Ministry of Energy and EGAT, enhancing understanding of power security, green electricity markets, and Thailand's potential as a regional power trading hub. An Online Synthesis and Evaluation Workshop gathered feedback, reviewed best practices, and provided recommendations for future improvements. The second project, **"Catalyzing Energy Transition towards Low-Carbon Development,"** (July-November 2024) focused on accelerating sustainable energy practices in the Lancang-Mekong Region. Key results included the "Powering the Future" workshop at the Mekong Forum 2024, which generated actionable recommendations on financial accessibility, regional policy strengthening, and smart grid adoption. Also, a High-Level Forum on Zero Carbon Energy Development, hosted by MI and CATL in Ningde city, China created a platform for regional leaders to explore innovative solutions and build partnerships to advance a low-carbon future for the region.

Furthermore, MI has implemented the **"Promoting Effective Corporate Governance for Power Enterprises in the Lancang-Mekong Region"** project (November 2024-January 2025) aimed to strengthen corporate governance within power enterprises across the region by assessing current practices, sharing best practices, and developing strategies tailored to power enterprises. Key results included a Regional Workshop conducted to provide an overview of the corporate governance landscape, addressing challenges, sharing practical insights, and introducing renewable energy investment. Additionally, an Online Consultation Meeting was conducted to

gather valuable inputs to develop strategies and actionable recommendations, while identifying capacity-building needs to support effective implementation in power enterprises in the region.

Furthermore, within the “**Upstream Single-Use Plastic Reduction Solutions for Khon Kaen’s Street Food Complexes project**”, MI addressed environmental challenges and influenced consumer behaviors in the reduction of single-use plastics. Guidelines for reducing single-use plastics in food markets, focusing on changing consumer habits and promoting eco-friendly alternatives were developed. Policy workshops and stakeholder engagement were conducted to encourage both vendors and consumers to adopt sustainable practices. Within the project, MI implemented single-use plastic reduction strategies in major street food complexes through reusable packaging, the “What’s SUP?” awareness campaign, and sustainable practice SOPs for vendors. The “Green Market Nights” event, which raised awareness among over 400 attendees and garnered social media reach. Market managers implemented discounts for reusable packaging and deposit-return systems, with the local government considering these SOPs for broader adoption. This project supports Thailand’s sustainability goals and provides a scalable model for plastic reduction across the GMS.

Cross-cutting Themes

Social Inclusion and Vulnerability

A **Regional Workshop on Development and Social Harmony in the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS)** was held in Khon Kaen, Thailand, aimed to introduce and explore social harmony as a foundational framework to address complex social and developmental challenges within the GMS. Organized as part of Khon Kaen University’s 60th-anniversary celebration, the workshop brought together 50 participants from diverse backgrounds, including researchers, policymakers, government officials, and representatives from academic institutions and international organizations across Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, China, and Myanmar. Key results from the workshop included an enhanced understanding of social harmony as a framework for addressing regional issues and a set of actionable strategies to foster social cohesion, especially through the GMS Economic Cooperation Program Strategic Framework 2030. Additionally, the workshop strengthened regional collaboration by facilitating connections among policymakers, researchers, and community leaders, who committed to ongoing knowledge-sharing, joint policy research, and capacity-building initiatives.

MI’s Flagship Programs

GMS Knowledge Network

The stocktaking study for the GMS Knowledge Network (GMSKN) has been completed, and the report has been submitted to the GMS Secretariat. This initiative is part of the “Knowledge Innovation and Digitalization (KID)” Initiative, marking the first activity to be undertaken through the GMSKN in 2025. The selected theme focuses on sustainable agrifood systems, incorporating sectors such as agriculture, digitalization, environment, energy, and trade. Specific topics will aim

to advance progressive knowledge, innovative technologies and approaches, as well as digitization processes. Details of the KID Initiative will be presented and endorsed during the Steering Committee Meeting scheduled for November or early December.

MI's Contribution to Broader GMS Cooperation Frameworks (BGCF)

Mekong Forum 2024

The Mekong Forum 2024, held in Khon Kaen, Thailand, focused on "Breaking Through New Horizons: Digitalization, Innovation, and Technology (DIT) in the GMS." The forum attracted over 330 participants and aimed to develop a subregional innovation strategy aligned with GMS-2030 and ASEAN's digital agendas. Key achievements included extensive discussions on digital transformation's role in sustainable and inclusive growth across sectors like agriculture, trade, energy, and tourism. The event featured seven thematic breakout sessions ("Terrains") where experts shared actionable strategies, emphasizing digital literacy, public-private partnerships, and inclusive digital policies. The forum also strengthened partnerships, with MOUs signed with academic institutions, and showcased innovations from 30 tech organizations, reinforcing the GMS' commitment to digital integration.

Capacity Building for Mekong Institute for Enhanced Secretarial Support and Development in the Mekong Region

A comprehensive 10-day training program was conducted in two phases—April 29 to May 3 and June 10 to June 14, 2024—aimed at enhancing MI staff's knowledge and skills in policy formulation, strategic planning, proposal and report writing, and communication strategies. This program was attended by 22 MI staff members. On October 15, key MI personnel participated in a structured learning visit to the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) Secretariat in Bangkok, furthering MI's capacity-building efforts. To strengthen its capabilities in the evolving landscape of regional development cooperation, MI hosted a webinar titled "Adapting for Impact: Navigating Transformative Changes in Regional Cooperation and Integration within the GMS" on October 28. Following the webinar, staff reflected on the insights gained and assessed their applicability to the organization's context. Participants evaluated how these insights could enhance MI's capabilities in key areas such as organizational strategy, resource mobilization, staff development, and innovation.

These activities are part of the "Capacity Building for Enhanced Secretarial Support and Development in the Mekong Region" project, designed to reinforce MI's role in regional cooperation and development initiatives across the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS).

Regional Public Health Laboratory (RPHL) Network - The Global Fund Project

By October 28, 2024, the RPHL Network project made substantial progress, including the successful Inception Meeting and NLSP Workshop in Bangkok, and the expansion of the Secretariat with seven new staff, supported by MI's FO department. Key guiding documents were drafted to enhance communication, project management, and financial procedures. Looking ahead,

December will feature a Secretariat orientation and Module 3 planning, while the Annual Partnership Forum in February 2025 will include consultations on governance and team building in Siem Reap, Cambodia.

ASEAN Youth Convergence 2024

The ASEAN Youth Convergence 2024 (AYC) Project aimed to empower youth in civic engagement by connecting them with ASEAN Prize Recipients and regional leaders, fostering future leadership and regional cooperation. Through the project's activities, including an online pre-departure meeting, the ASEAN Prize Symposium, and the ASEAN Youth Conference, youth delegates gained hands-on advocacy skills, strengthened their understanding of regional development, and engaged directly with prominent leaders. The symposium in Vientiane brought 114 participants together, including 30 youth delegates, who participated in mentoring sessions and collaborative breakout discussions, enhancing their capacities in leadership, volunteerism, and women's empowerment to support ASEAN's vision for a united, sustainable region.

ASEAN Prize Symposium

The ASEAN Prize Symposium 2024, held in Vientiane, Lao PDR, celebrated and showcased the achievements of ASEAN Prize Recipients from 2021 to 2023. With over 100 participants from public, private, and non-profit sectors, the event focused on inspiring future nominations and fostering regional integration through interactive sessions. Key achievements included the ASEAN Prize Talks, where recipients shared their contributions to community building, and breakout sessions, termed "Solutions Rooms," that encouraged collaborative problem-solving on themes like regional cooperation, youth leadership, and women's empowerment. The symposium successfully raised awareness about the ASEAN Prize, inspired impactful roles in regional cooperation, and strengthened networks among participants, particularly in Lao PDR.

ASEAN Day 57

The ASEAN Day 2024 event at Khon Kaen University (KKU), organized in collaboration with the Mekong Institute (MI), celebrated ASEAN's 57th anniversary under the theme "From Vision to Reality: Remembering the Past, Shaping the Future." This event brought together over 200 participants, including students, faculty, and ASEAN experts, to reflect on ASEAN's achievements and discuss its future trajectory. Key activities included a keynote address on ASEAN's socio-cultural evolution, panel discussions on ASEAN's role in community building and integration, and interactive sessions such as an ASEAN quiz and a cultural costume award. The event fostered cross-cultural understanding and regional solidarity, inspiring new aspirations for ASEAN's future and reinforcing the importance of educational and cultural exchanges within the ASEAN community.

ROK-ACMECS Regional Branding Project: Facilitating Cross-Border Trade through Synchronization of Rules and Regulations

From May 2023 to June 2024, MI implemented activities under the ACMECS-ROK Regional Branding Project aimed at improving cross-border trade by aligning rules and regulations across ACMECS countries. The project addressed common trade issues through coordinated national

interventions, each contributing to the goal of streamlined cross-border trade. It successfully engaged over 500 stakeholders from government agencies and the private sector, including import/export firms, freight forwarders, transport businesses, MSMEs, and startups across the ACMECS region. Focused on enhancing connectivity and addressing future challenges in transport and logistics, this project aimed to develop an integrated transport information platform to improve data sharing among Lancang-Mekong countries. In December 2024, an inception meeting briefed stakeholders, followed by planned capacity-building activities. These include training sessions, workshops, data collection, and platform development, with a robust information-sharing mechanism to be implemented from 2025 to 2026.

Mekong-Republic of Korea Cooperation Fund (MKCF) Management

In the Mekong region's dynamic socio-economic landscape, the Mekong-Republic of Korea Cooperation Fund (MKCF) played a vital role in promoting collaboration and development. As the appointed Fund Coordinator, MI supported Project Implementing Agencies (PIAs) and ensured project quality and effectiveness. Key results included updating the MKCF Management Manual and launching the 8th Call for Expressions of Interest (EOIs). MI presented MKCF progress at the Mekong-ROK Senior Officials meeting in Vientiane, Lao PDR, conducted project monitoring visits in Lao PDR and Cambodia, and participated in a project launch event. MI evaluated 208 EOIs from CLMVT, ROK, and regional International Organizations, processed project agreements and administrative costs, provided technical and financial guidance to PIAs for compliance, and coordinated materials for project launching.

In 2024, eight new projects were launched, all of which are currently ongoing. As of now, a total of 48 projects have been initiated, with 28 projects actively being implemented and 20 successfully completed. To effectively monitor the progress of the projects, visits were made to Cambodia, Myanmar and Thailand. These site visits allowed for direct engagement with the PIAs, providing valuable insights into the implementation challenges and successes on the ground (MI was able to assess the alignment with project objectives, evaluate the impact of the initiatives, and offer on-the-spot guidance and support to the PIAs).

MI supported several Mekong-ROK Cooperation Fund (MKCF) Project Implementation Agencies (PIAs) by providing orientation on MKCF requirements, reviewing and verifying project budget compliance, and ensuring that financial reports included proper supporting documents to meet the MKCF's rules and regulations. MI also monitored partners' cash flow and ensured the timely disbursement of funds. Additionally, MI offered handholding support through project monitoring visits, online orientations, and the flexibility for PIAs to seek suggestions or guidance as needed.

The MKCF manual has been revised to incorporate updated guidelines, improve clarity, and address the evolving needs of Project Implementing Agencies (PIAs). The revision includes new sections on project monitoring, financial reporting, and compliance with donor requirements, ensuring that all stakeholders have a clear understanding of the procedures and expectations.

The MKCF has disbursed USD 15.86 million since its inception. In FY 2024, disbursements amounted to USD 3.75 million, covering all ongoing and recently closed PIA and MI projects. The details of transfers for the current year, by call, are as follows:

Call 1st: Return of balance leftover funds of USD 106,579 from MI.

Call 2nd transfer: Cambodia (USD 253,082), Myanmar (USD 45,00).

Call 3rd transfer: Thailand (USD 39,381), Cambodia (USD 39,763), MI (USD 47,383).

Call 4th transfer: Myanmar (USD 89,604), return of balance leftover funds of USD 28,578 form Thailand.

Call 5th transfer: Thailand (USD 187,488), Myanmar (USD 80,000), Lao PDR (USD 199,840), ROK (USD 50,000), MI (USD 18,216).

Call 6th transfer: Myanmar (USD 198,528), Thailand (USD 170,228), MI (USD 398,828).

Call 7th transfer: IO (USD 304,554), ROK (USD 313,071), Vietnam (USD 240,000), Cambodia (USD 190,000), Myanmar (USD 249,920), Lao PDR (USD 217,568), Thailand (USD 303,131)

MI announced the 8th MKCF call through both the MI website and the MKCF website. For the 8th MKCF Call, MI conducted a thorough review of the Expressions of Interest (EOIs) and full project proposals submitted. A total of 217 EOIs were received from various organizations, with the following distribution: Cambodia 15, Lao PDR 26, Myanmar 62, Viet Nam 21, Thailand 57, Republic of Korea 7, International Organization 20, MI 1, Local NGO 8. In addition, 23 full project proposals were reviewed, with the following breakdown: Cambodia 4, Lao PDR 4, Myanmar 4, Viet Nam 4, Thailand 3, Republic of Korea 2, International Organization 1, MI 1.

MI attended the Mekong-ROK Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM) held on June 6, 2024, in Lao PDR. During the meeting, MI presented its management of the Mekong-ROK Cooperation Fund (MKCF) and showcased several projects implemented with support from the Fund, highlighting them as MKCF Success Stories. As part of the presentation, MI also shared insights into its project monitoring activities, including visits to project sites. These efforts emphasize the Fund's focus on promoting sustainable development and regional integration across the Mekong region.

Capacity Building on Regional Project Management (Project Identification, Design, Implementation, Monitoring & Evaluation) of MKCF Projects

In 2024, MI's PRIME project made strides in enhancing regional cooperation. Key achievements included the Regional Project Identification Training in March, where 30 professionals from CLMVT and RoK gained skills in project planning and M&E. MI also launched the MKCF web platform on its website, including a CMS for PIAs to share project insights. In April 30 PIAs participated in a Regional Project M&E Training to improve monitoring and sustainability practices, supported by a new web-based M&E system and an upcoming analytics dashboard. From September to mid-October, three virtual meetings were held to train PIAs on M&E, data entry, and preparations for the December 13 Roundtable event. Facilitated by the PRIME team and an M&E consultant, these sessions covered project outputs, outcomes, and impact reporting. PIAs were tasked with developing project materials (posters, brochures, videos) to showcase their achievements, with guidance on writing impactful outcome stories. Drafts were submitted to the PRIME team for review and refinement by the M&E consultant. Structured Learning Visit on

Regional Program Development and Management in Cambodia from October 27 to November 1, was conducted where MI hosted a Structured Learning Visit (SLV) in Phnom Penh and Siem Reap for 22 government officials from five Mekong countries. Part of the PRIME project, the SLV provided insights into regional project development across seven priority sectors, with sessions led by international organizations, including UNIDO, UNDP, ILO, and GIZ. A field visit to a GIZ-supported project in Siem Reap further enriched the learning experience. Following the SLV, participants are expected to develop project ideas for regional development cooperation between the Mekong region and RoK, preparing for the next project call from RoK in early 2025. MI will continue to support participants as they refine their action plans in the coming months.

Empowering Human Capital: Advancing Lancang-Mekong Cooperation through Comprehensive HRD Initiatives

This initiative aimed to strengthen the human resource capacity of public institutions by equipping 25 government officials from Cambodia, China, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Vietnam, and Thailand with advanced HRD skills, regional knowledge, and valuable professional networks. A key achievement was the Regional Training Program on Comprehensive Human Resource Development for Lancang-Mekong Cooperation, held from May 13-24, 2024, which fostered collaboration and enhanced the capabilities of public sector leaders across the LM region.

Mobile App Development for HR Management System of Mekong River Commission Secretariat (MRCS)

The project began in 2022 when MI signed a consultancy contract with MRCS to develop a mobile application for their HR Unit, aiming to enhance cooperation among Mekong Country Organizations and strengthen MI's staff capacity. Completed in 2023, the application includes six key HR modules—Recruitment, Performance Appraisal, FAQ, Absence, Knowledge and Development, and Staff Directory—serving as a vital tool for streamlining HR functions. In 2024, MI provided ongoing technical support, conducted training for users and HR teams, and ensured the application's smooth operation.

Institutional Strengthening

Outcome 1: Strengthened accountability and transparency among GMS member countries and MI.

MI reinforced its commitment to accountability and transparency in 2024. Regular Governing Board meetings, the Governing Board and Experts' Dialogue at the Mekong Forum 2024, and Quarterly Executive Meetings were held to ensure strategic alignment and effective implementation. The Mid-Term Review Sub-committee reviewed the Strategic Plan's draft recommendations. Under the guidance of China's Steering Committee member, MI established closer ties with the Consul General of China in Khon Kaen, setting up a system for regular monitoring and reporting on China-funded projects.

Outcome 2: Strengthened management leadership in MI Secretariat initiatives and operations.

Regular SMT meetings were conducted to enable timely discussions on priority actions, alignment with the strategic plan, and emerging challenges, ensuring the decisions made complied with the operation manual. Internal communications were conducted via Executive Orders, internal memos, and staff announcements.

Outcome 3: Established norms and values shared by MI stakeholders and Secretariat staff members towards “One MI.

Regular bi-monthly staff meetings were conducted to provide updates, discuss internal challenges, and progress. Key internal events were organized including MI’s 28th Anniversary celebration, New Year gatherings, and long-service award ceremonies. Regional Public Health Laboratory Network (RPHLN) project and Mekong Forum 2024 were also coordinated and collaborated cross-departments.

Organizational Structure and Culture

Outcome 1: Fully operationalized the New organizational structure and governance mechanism.

In 2024, MI implemented its revised organizational structure, approved by the MI Council in December 2023. Director of Sustainable Energy and Environment (SEE) was selected and included in the SMT. Consolidation of the Procurement and HR units and the establishment of a standalone IT unit was completed while the Partnership and Resource Mobilization (PRM) unit was changed to the External Relations and Protocols (ERP) unit. The Director of Agriculture and Commercialization Department position was progressing, with the candidate expected to join by early 2025.

Outcome 2: Increased consultations and joint decisions by SMT and Extended SMT members.

MI strengthened cross-departmental collaboration by holding quarterly and ad-hoc meetings with SMT and Extended SMT members.

Outcome 3: Increased communications, mutual sharing, and learning through participatory consultative processes across MI to foster deeper internal synergy and cooperation.

MI organized a series of in-house workshops, covering facilitation, budget development, Generative AI, performance management, transformative change in regional cooperation and integration within the GMS, communication strategies, policy formulation, strategic planning and coordination, proposal and report writing skills, and disciplinary measures. The E-office model was promoted which included flexible working hours.

Collaborative, cross-departmental projects such as the Interventions Package 4 Workshop and consultancy projects on the Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security Program with ADB further reinforced synergy across MI. These initiatives aligned departmental efforts with MI’s strategic

goals, demonstrating the power of coordinated teamwork in driving impactful regional development outcomes.

Business Model

Outcome 1: Increased number of programs/projects implemented by MI in a partnership approach

MI expanded its project portfolio and impact through strategic private sector partnerships, including collaborations on low-carbon energy with CATL, sustainable supply chains with AOTS, and corporate governance with China Southern Power Grid, alongside local partnerships with Mitr Phol and ThaiBev. Additionally, MI strengthened its global and regional networks by collaborating with think tanks such as the Global Development Forum, Asia Think Tanks, and SUMERNET, and partnering with inter-regional organizations like the CAREC Institute and the Center for IMT-GT. Key projects with the British Embassy and DFAT Australia, along with grants from GIZ and ADB, further diversified MI's funding and supported essential capacity-building initiatives.

Outcome 2: Increased and diversified products, services, and sources of funding to support MI's operations.

MI utilized the Mekong Forum 2024 as a platform to secure diversified funding, drawing contributions from multiple stakeholders, including TCEB, ThaiRAIN, and PRC. Additionally, MI's consultancy services expanded through projects such as the Promotion of Crop Insurance in ASEAN and the 2030 GMS Agri-Food Strategic Framework, which showcased MI's expertise in providing policy guidance and strategic insights. MI's environmental Campaign, such as the Single-use Plastics Reduction Solutions for Khon Kaen's Street Food Complexes funded by the Environmental Coalition on Standards (ECOS), underscored its commitment to addressing critical environmental issues within the GMS. As a fund manager for the Global Fund's PRHL project, MI demonstrated its capacity to lead large-scale regional initiatives.

As a key player in the GMS Knowledge Network, ASEAN Climate Resilience Network, ACMECS Interim Secretariat, and an ASEAN Prize Recipient, MI bolstered its funding base and visibility. Collaborating with GIZ and FECC, MI produced impactful knowledge outputs, including a publication on Rice Cultivation Technologies and a regional agriculture report, reinforcing its position as a knowledge leader in sustainable agriculture. Events like the ASEAN Prize Symposium, ASEAN Youth Convergence, and ASEAN Day further elevated MI's profile, emphasizing its expanded role in youth engagement and regional cooperation beyond the GMS.

Collaboration was completed with the Regional Public Health Laboratory Network (RPHLN) to develop a proposal for the Global Fund. This proposal, titled "GC7 Integrated Laboratory Systems Strengthening Strategic Initiative – South-East Asia – RPHL," was approved for 2.5 years (July 2024 to December 2026) with a total budget of \$3.25 million.

Also, the finance unit generated income through consulting services and managed the development of application systems for the Mekong River Commission Secretariat (MRCS).

Outcome 3: Increased annual contributions of GMS member countries.

MI engaged in structured discussions with GMS member countries regarding the potential increase in annual contributions. A formalized plan, under development with sub-committee input, aims to establish an increased contribution model that reflects the strategic value MI brings to the region.

Greater Mekong Community Affairs

Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

Following the Mid-Term Review (MTR), a subcommittee was formed with representatives from China, Cambodia, Lao PDR, MI, and New Zealand. An action plan to implement the MTR recommendations was drafted and submitted to the sub-committee for review. Routine organizational monitoring, evaluation, learning and reporting was conducted including support for MEL aspects of proposal development for all departments.

Communications and Knowledge Management

In 2024, CKM provided corporate support on key communications and knowledge management by developing communications products and raising MI's profile. The Unit outreach efforts expanded across multiple platforms with the following key results:

Platform	Followers
Facebook Followers	18,312
Twitter Followers:	862
LinkedIn Followers	3,078
Total Media Mentions	562 media outlets, including both local and international platforms such as newspapers, online news portals, and specialized publications relevant to our work featured MI.

Following these figures here were the unit estimates values

- Estimated Total Public Relations Value: 50,378,779.00 baht
- Estimated Total Advertising Value: 16,792,926.00 baht
- Total Possible Number of People Reached: 424,135,998.00 individuals

Communications Products

- **Publications:** Notable articles were published in MI's E-Briefings from Jan - July 2024, Mekong Forum 2024 Proceedings, and ASEAN at 57th Proceedings, highlighting our projects and contributions to regional development.
- **Press Releases:** We issued 84 press releases that were picked up by various media channels, showcasing our events, research findings, and partnerships.
- **Video Content:** We produced and shared 13 videos showcasing our projects and events, which received 539 views across our video platforms.

The CKM Unit garnered significant media coverage that has enhanced the visibility of MI's initiatives and activities. Key insights from our media coverage include:

- **Website Dominance:** MI achieved the highest news coverage on websites (72%).
- **Social Media Mentions:** Facebook emerged as the primary social media platform featuring MI, surpassing Twitter, LinkedIn, and YouTube.
- **Top Featured Units:** The Office of the Executive Director Unit and the Trade and Investment Facilitation Department secured the highest media coverage in 2024.

Partnership and Resource Mobilization

In 2024, the External Relations and Protocol Unit (ERPU) advanced MI's mission through stakeholder engagement, strategic partnerships, and governance support. Key achievements included organizing MI Governing Board meetings and the Mekong Forum, securing sponsorship, and enhancing member relations. ERPU expanded MI's regional presence by representing MI at international events, formalizing eight new partnerships, and establishing groundwork for additional MoUs. As back-office support for the ACMECS Interim Secretariat, ERPU coordinated key tasks and drafted TORs.

Finance and Operations

Financial Management

To enhance its financial management, MI developed a reporting system to track departmental expenses against the approved budget, ensuring spending remains within limits. Cash flow forecasting, monitoring, and control mechanisms were implemented to improve liquidity visibility and planning, reducing cash flow gaps. Regular internal audits were conducted to identify areas for improvement, address compliance gaps, and align with international accounting standards, minimizing the risk of financial irregularities.

- **Effective Reporting:** Financial and narrative reporting was conducted for all projects.
- **Audit Compliance:** Collaborated with auditors twice annually.
- **Internal Audit Support:** Internal audits for MKCF projects in partnership with PIA were conducted.
- **Support for RPHLN:** For the RPHLN, inception meeting, staff recruitment, and basic financial, administrative, and IT management was completed. MI has now successfully recruited and onboarded all RPHLN staff.
- **Support for MKCF:** MI launched 8 MKCF projects, disbursing \$2.6 million to 13 PIAs across the Mekong region. Through orientations, AppSheet implementation, and site visits, MI enhanced project transparency, accountability, and local capacities. Comprehensive assessments of PIA financial systems improved practices in finance, procurement, and reporting, aligning them with regional standards.

MI's Financial Performance

Financial Management

The financial status as of September 30, 2024, presents MI's current assets, liabilities, and capital fund, offering an accurate snapshot of financial performance. For a complete view of 2024, the statement of revenue and expenses combines actual data through September with forecasted figures for October to December, based on MI's work plan, to support informed decision-making for the coming period.

During Jan-Sept 2024, MI's total revenue was US\$ 1,832,440, achieving 50% of the targeted budget for 2024 and MI's total expense amounted to US\$ 2,216,013 as of September 30, 2024. MI recorded a net deficit of US\$ 441,445 as of September 30, 2024, and MI's deficit is US\$383,573 excluding the non-cash expenses. According to the projected Statement of Revenue and Expenses as of December 31, 2024, MI's total revenue is expected to be US\$ 3,074,895, achieving 84% of the targeted budget for the year. Total expenses are projected to amount to US\$ 3,232,711, resulting in a net deficit of US\$ 157,816. Excluding non-cash expenses, MI's deficit stands at US\$ 83,734. MI annual financial performance for 2024 is projected to show a deficit due to MI not receiving the anticipated traditional funding. This deficit will be covered by the accumulated reserve funds from prior financial gains.

Consolidated Statement of Financial Status (January 1 – September 30, 2024)

MI's current total assets amounted to US\$ 12,185,836. The cash and cash equivalent amounted to US\$ 11,019,124, while other current assets were US\$ 182,087, with the net value of fixed assets being US\$ 984,625. On the other hand, MI's total liabilities were US\$ 10,615,261, including unearned revenue from GMS countries' contributions of US\$ 134,492. The total equity was US\$ 1,570,575, which was decreased by 19.22% $\{(1,570,575-1,944,468)/1,944,468\}$ compared to December 31, 2023.

Table 1: Summary Statement of Financial Status (as of September 30, 2024)

Asset	Amount (in USD)	Percentage
Cash and Cash Equivalent	11,019,124	90.43%
Other Current Assets	182,087	1.49%
Fixed Assets	984,625	8.08%
Total of Assets	12,185,836	100.0%

Liability and Equity	Amount (in USD)	Percentage
Current Liability	21,031	0.17%
Unearned Revenue (GMS Country Contributions)	134,492	1.10%
Grant Advance Received	10,459,737	85.84%
Total Liability	10,615,261	87.11%
Equity	1,570,575	12.89%
Total of Liability and Equity	12,185,836	100%

MI's total revenue was US\$ 1,832,439 achieving 50% of the target budget for 2024 as of September 30, 2024, this included total revenue from long-term projects US\$ 897,939, short-term projects US\$ 310,111, customized activities US\$ 184,459, GMS countries' contributions US\$ 384,905, and other revenues US\$ 55,026.

MI's total expenses amounted to US\$ 2,273,884, covering expenses from project delivery US\$ 1,563,877, operation expenses US\$ 652,135, and non-cash operating expenses US\$ 57,872. MI recorded a net deficit of US\$ 441,445 as of December 31, 2024, and MI's deficit becomes US\$ 383,573 excluding the non-cash expenses.

Table 2: Summary Statement of Revenue and Expenses (as of September 30, 2024)

Revenue	Amount (in USD)	Percentage
Long-Term Projects	897,939	49.00%
Short-Term Projects	310,111	16.92%
Customized Activities	184,459	10.07%
Total Project Revenue	1,392,508	75.99%
GMS Country Contributions	384,905	21.01%
Other Revenues	55,026	3.00%
Total Revenue	1,832,439	100.00%
Expenses		
Project/Program Delivery	787,621	34.64%
Program Administration	709,332	31.19%
Business Development	66,925	2.94%
Total Project Expenses	1,563,877	68.78%
Total Operating Expenses	652,135	28.68%
Total Expenses before non-cash operation	2,216,012	97.45%
Deficit before non-cash expenses	-383,573	(20.93%)
Non-cash expenses	57,872	2.55%
Total Expenses	2,273,884	100.00%
Deficit after non-cash expenses	-441,445	(24.09%)

Percentage of total revenue

As of September 30, 2024, the accumulated actual expenses indicate that the major contributions to total funding from various countries and multinational organizations came from China at 25.70%, followed by the Republic of Korea at 24.80%, and Australia at 13.60%

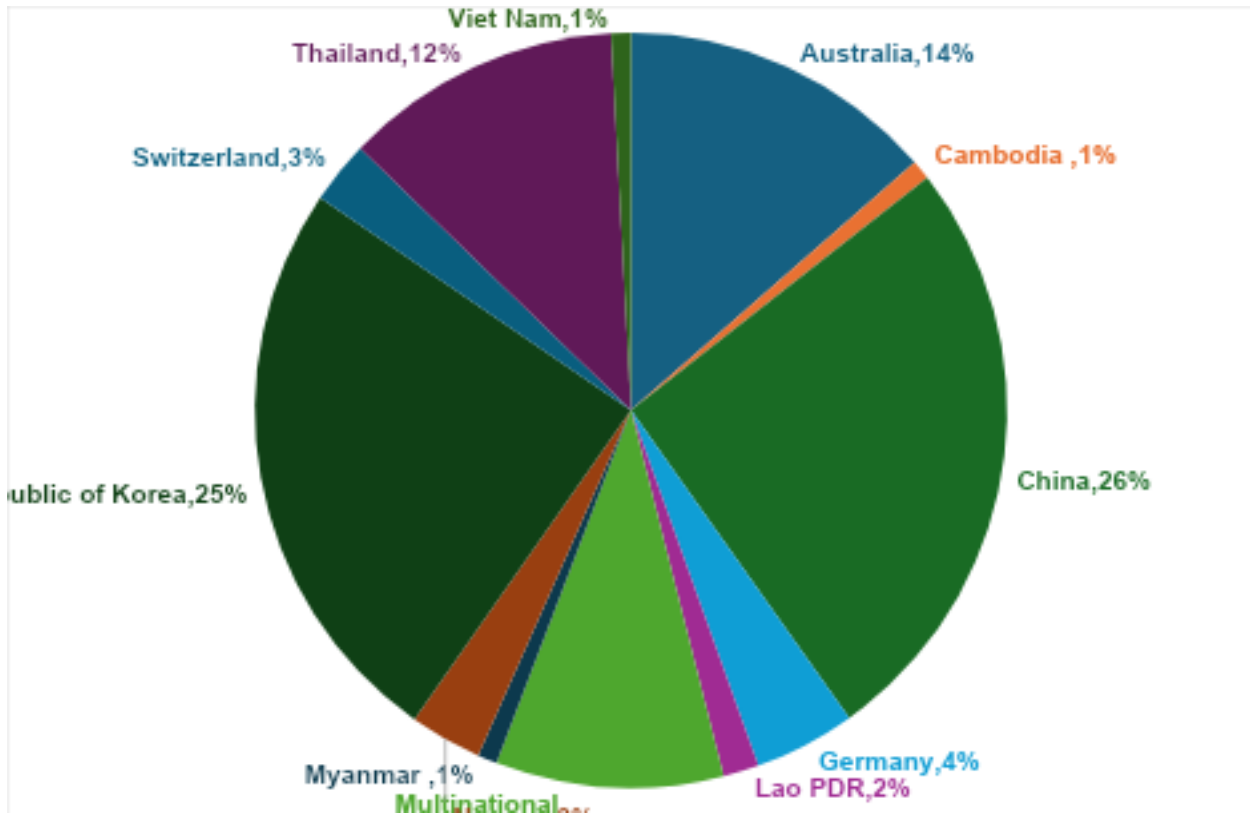


Table 3: Summary Projected (Forecast) Statement of Revenue and Expenses (as of December 31, 2024)

Revenue	Actual Amount Jan-Sept	Projected Amount Oct-Dec	Total Forecast Jan-Dec
Long-Term Projects	897,939	679,850	1,577,789
Short-Term Projects	310,111	297,635	607,746
Customized Activities	184,459	132,495	316,954
Total Project Revenue	1,392,509	1,109,980	2,502,489
GMS Country Contributions	384,905	127,976	512,881
Other Revenues	55,026	4,500	59,526
Total Revenue	1,832,440	1,242,455	3,074,895
Expenses			
Project/Program Delivery	787,621	547,668	1,335,289

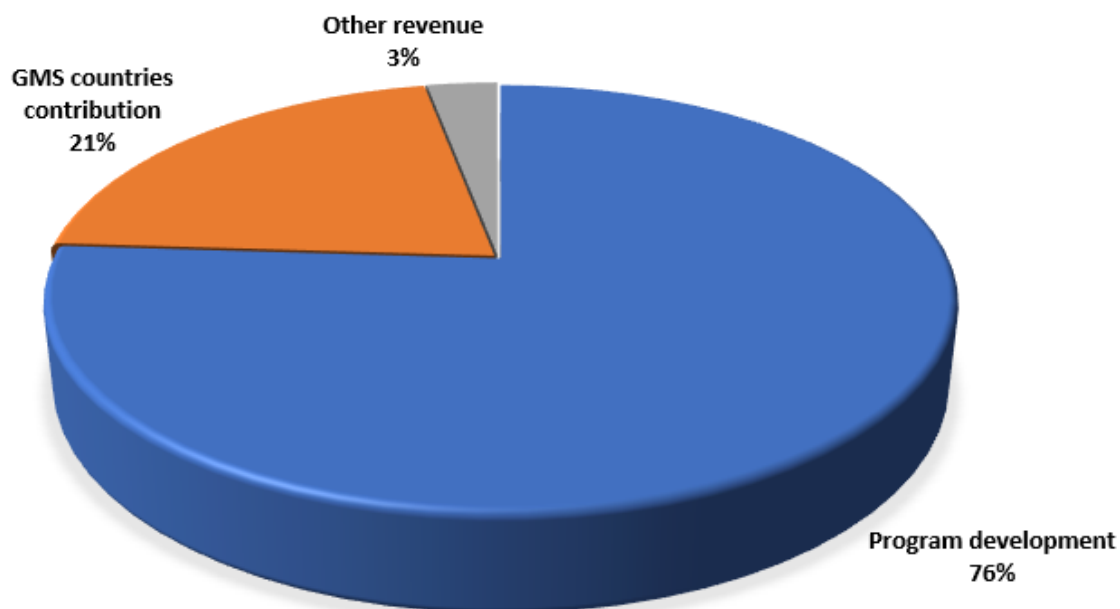
Program Administration	709,332	210,276	919,608
Business Development	66,925	1,500	68,425
Total Project Expenses	1,563,878	759,443	2,323,321
Total Operation Expenses	652,135	183,173	835,308
Total Expenses before non-cash operation	2,216,013	942,617	3,158,630
Deficit before non-cash expenses	(383,573)	299,839	(83,734)
Non-cash expenses	57,872	16,210	74,082
Total Expenses	2,273,885	958,826	3,232,711
Deficit after non-cash expenses	(441,445)	283,629	(157,816)

As of December 31, 2024, MI received US \$512,805 from all of its member countries

Table 4: MI's Member Countries' Annual Contribution in 2024 (as of September 30, 2024)

GMS Country	Contribution (in USD)	Receiving Month
Cambodia	20,000	March 2024
China	150,000	September 2024
Lao PDR	20,000	March 2024
Myanmar	20,000	May 2024
Thailand	282,805	February 2024
Viet Nam	20,000	July 2024
Total	512,805	

As of September 30, 2024, the major revenue of MI was earned from project implementation 76%, while only 21% was from annual contributions from the member countries.



Human Resources Management:

In line with MI policy, recruitment and selection was completed to ensure a diverse workforce aligned with Gender Equality and Social Inclusion. By the end of this year, MI employs 58 staff of 10 nationalities; among them 34% were men and 66% were women. Currently, the staff represents all six GMS countries.

A revised organizational structure was approved by the council and updated the Operations Manual, circulating it for council review prior to finalization.

Staff participated in the following training and workshops:

- The Program Officer of the Agricultural Development and Commercialization Department attended the Mekong-U.S. Partnership Track 1.5 Policy Dialogue on Agriculture, Fisheries, and Food Security, hosted by the Stimson Center and IUCN in Ho Chi Minh, Vietnam, March 18–19, 2024.
- The Finance Manager and Cash and Bank Officer joined a seminar on managing foreign exchange rate risks, hosted by the Bank of Thailand in Khon Kaen, on March 20, 2024.
- The Executive Secretary attended the Japan International Youth Innovation Summit 2024, April 17–19, focusing on global challenges, skill development, and innovative solutions.

- The Program Assistant of the Trade and Investment Facilitation Department participated in the ASEAN Youth Convergence 2024, May 20–21, aimed at empowering youth for regional cooperation and sustainable development.

Procurement Services Management:

In 2024, the Procurement Unit processed 240 purchase requests, a 23% increase from the first half of the year, ensuring timely, high-quality delivery across all departments. Successful vendor negotiations resulted in cost savings of \$11,900—a 300% increase from the first-half savings of \$2,920—achieved through meticulous sourcing and evaluation.

The unit facilitated the hiring of 30 consultants through Special Service Agreements (SSA) and other contracts. Revised procurement guidelines for consultant hiring, swiftly approved by the SMT, streamlined the process. Migrating the consultant database to the AppSheet platform enabled secure, self-service profile management, improving professional engagement and operational efficiency.

Strategic management of contracts for services like security, internet, and health checks ensure reliable operations. The unit issued 56 contracts on time, up from 44 last year, and secured suitable venues for MI events outside the institute. These improvements set a high standard for future procurement activities and reinforce our commitment to operational excellence.

IT Services Management

In 2024, MI's IT Unit optimized its infrastructure by migrating to AWS, enhancing security, reliability, and scalability. Key upgrades included 15 computer enhancements and 5 new acquisitions. The IT team provided seamless support for major events, ensuring stable internet, Wi-Fi, and AV systems across 5 key events in Bangkok and Vientiane. Consistent maintenance and proactive upgrades minimize disruptions, enabling smooth facilitation of 709 meetings and webinars. Enhanced data security measures, including encryption, access controls, and regular backups, safeguarded data integrity and continuity.

General Services Management

In 2024, conference rooms were utilized and organized 607 times for training, workshops, and webinars in onsite, online, and hybrid formats. Transportation was arranged 780 times for these activities, with vehicles maintained to ensure safety and reliability. Furthermore, MI implemented several initiatives to enhance the efficiency and functionality of its general services. New signage improved MI's visibility and modern appearance. Also, cleaning and disinfection protocols maintained a safe environment against COVID-19 and other health risks. Asset management was streamlined through an updated asset database ensuring regular maintenance, with in-house technicians. Accommodation facilities were upgraded with the inclusion of kettles in all rooms. In line with MI's sustainability commitment, designated garbage separation points were introduced.

Challenges

The recent progress update identified key areas for growth that, once addressed, could significantly enhance organizational efficiency, culture, and capacity for continuous improvement.

1. **Building Cross-Departmental Collaboration and a Stronger Organizational Culture:** Great potential was identified in fostering a culture of open communication and teamwork across departments. Strengthening these connections was anticipated to help reduce silos, improve efficiency, and enable diverse teams to tackle complex projects collaboratively, drawing from a richer pool of expertise.

2. **Strengthening Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Capabilities:** There was a recognized need for enhanced M&E systems that could provide robust tracking, clear progress insights, and data-driven evaluations. Strengthening these capabilities would allow the organization to better assess project outcomes and continuously refine its strategies, ultimately supporting greater impact and learning organization wide.

3. **Maximizing the Benefits of IT and AI Tools:** The transition to MS365 and the potential applications of AI tools presented a clear opportunity to improve knowledge management, project tracking, and address language needs. These tools offered a chance to streamline workflows and bolster internal communications, creating a more connected and resourceful organization.

Recommendations

To address these areas of opportunity, several targeted and forward-looking recommendations were proposed:

1. **Establish Regular Inter-Departmental Workshops and Culture-Building Activities:** Routine spaces for inter-departmental workshops, team-building sessions, and knowledge-sharing events were recommended to nurture a culture of alignment, openness, and collaboration. These sessions would provide a valuable platform for departments to share updates, learn from each other's successes, and collaborate on problem-solving.

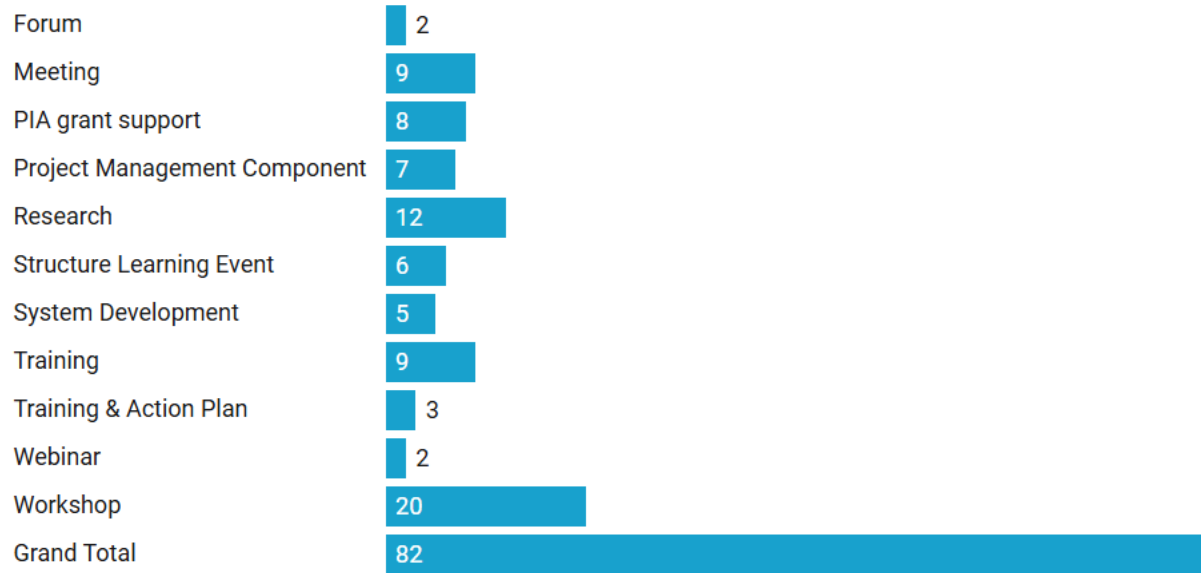
2. **Enhance Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Tools and Training:** Investment in refining existing M&E tools and process and training across departments was suggested to help track progress more effectively, generate insights, and support a data-driven approach to improvement. Developing user-friendly M&E tools and offering staff training would strengthen the organization's ability to evaluate project success, adjust strategies as needed, and continuously enhance impact.

3. Implement a Phased IT Integration and Training Program: A comprehensive and phased rollout of MS365, along with AI tool training, was proposed to allow staff to maximize these resources. Training would focus on project tracking, knowledge management, and collaboration tools, with AI training to support documentation and multilingual needs. Equipping staff with these skills would help the organization harness the full potential of these tools, improving efficiency and connectivity organization wide.

Annex

Annex 1: Types of Activities Completed

Activities Completed



Annex 2: Human Resource

Number of MI Staff according to their Nationalities



Annex 3: Status of Completion (in %) of Projects based on Thematic Area in 2024

Thematic Area	Project Title	Donor	Implementing Departments/Units	2024 Status
Agricultural Development & Commercialization	Promoting Climate-Smart Agriculture Technologies and Innovations in Lower Mekong Countries	DFAT	ADC, SEE	81%
	Promotion of Crop Insurance in ASEAN through the Public and Private Partnership (Consultancy Services)	ASEAN	ADC	94%
	Knowledge Management in Agricultural Development	APRACA	ADC	94%
	Co-organizing the Intervention Package 4 Workshop: Enhancing Value Chains and Regional Trade of CGIAR-ASEAN Project on February 23, 2024, held in Bangkok, Thailand	IFPRI	ADC	100%
	Promoting Sustainable and Nutrition-sensitive Agriculture Development in the Lancang- Mekong Countries	China	SEE	50%
	Inventory of Innovative Cultivation Technologies that Potentially Contribute to Reducing GHG Emissions in the Rice Sector in South Asia and Southeast Asia (Bangladesh, Cambodia, Lao PDR, India, Indonesia, Thailand, and Viet Nam)	GIZ	SEE	100%
	Development of Lancang-Mekong Agricultural Cooperation 2024-2025 Report	FECC	ADC	25%

	2030 Strategic Framework for Transformation of Agri-Food Systems in the GMS	ADB	ADC	75%
Trade & Investment Facilitation	Promoting Creative Industry for Heritage Tourism Development in the Mekong region	MKCF	TIF	68%
	RoK-ACMECS Regional Branding Project - Facilitating Cross Border Trade through Synchronization of Rules and Regulation in the ACMECS	ROK	TIF	100%
	Lancang-Mekong Cooperation Project	MLCSF	TIF	100%
	Paperless Trade Study	UNESCAP	TIF	100%
	In The AANZFTA Implementation Support Program (AISP) under the management of the Regional Trade for Development (RT4D) Facility (inception Workshop on Trademark Development Assistance to Launch the Support for Selected Lao Female Businesses to Develop Their Trademark)	RT4D	TIF	100%
	Final Project on IP Trad Mark Registration for Lao Women	RT4D	TIF	50%
	Transport and Logistics Information System in Lancang-Mekong Region (Cambodia)	LMCS	TIF	0%
	Land-based connectivity in Greater Mekong Subregion-Regional Workshop Cum Structural Visit	FAOYN	TIF	100%

	along the Economic Corridor in Thailand, Laos, Cambodia (April 2024 - March 2025)			
	Special Economic Zones (SEZs) Promotion for intra-regional Trade in the Lancang-Mekong Region (LMC)	LMCSF	TIF	60%
	Mekong Sustainable Supply Chains Transformation and Advancement	AOTS	TIF	45%
Sustainable Energy and Environment	The Triangular Cooperation Project on Sustainable Development in the Lower Mekong Basin based on the Water-Energy-Food (WEF) Nexus (Phase3)	UNOSSC	SEE	100%
	Upstream single-use plastic reduction solutions for Khon Kaen's street food complexes	NREF	ADC	100%
	Promoting Greater Energy Connectivity for Equitable Development and Growth in the Lancang-Mekong Region	China	SEE	100%
	Catalyzing Energy Transition towards Low-Carbon Development in the Lancang-Mekong Region	China	SEE	50%
	Powering the Future: Tech-Driven Energy Solutions in the Greater Mekong Subregion	MECC	SEE	0%
	Promoting Effective Corporate Governance for Power Enterprises in the Lancang-Mekong Region	CSGLMI	SEE	0%

	Regional Workshop Innovative Development for Fundamental Education in the Lancang-Mekong Region	China	SEE	0%
MI's Contribution to Broader GMS Cooperation Frameworks	MKCF Fund Management	MKCF	TIF	68%
	Capacity Building on Regional Project Design, Implementation, Monitoring & Evaluation of MKCF projects	MKCF	TIF	64%
	Project on Capacity Development of Mekong Institute for an Enhance Secretarial Support in the Mekong Region	DFAT	OED	33%
	The forum on "ASEAN Youth Convergence 2024" (Mar - Jun 2024)	ASEAN & SOMY	CKM	100%
	Comprehensive Human Resource Development for the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation	FAOYN	SEE	100%
	Mobile development for HRMS system	MRC	FIN	75%
	Study to Re-assess and Re-orient SEZs and BEZs in the Greater Mekong Subregion for Growing Together (Thailand Segment)	ADB	TIF	75%
	MI-Organizing Event and Co-Funding with Partner	MI, Kkuic	OED	100%

	Socialisation Workshop on the Implementation Plan for the Framework for CLMV Development	AKCF-MOC	TIF	0%
	Enhancing Digital Innovation Ecosystems for Accelerating Sustainable Development in the Lancang-Mekong Countries	P. R. China	SEE	0%
	Regional Public Health Laboratory Network, in consortium with the Mekong Institute	Global fund	OED	0%