

Mekong Connection



ISBN : 0859-7006

September 2004 – March 2005

Newsletter of the Mekong Institute



Myanmar



Lao PDR



China



Vietnam



Thailand



Cambodia



2005



From the Director

Happy New Year Greetings from Mekong Institute

I hope that at this time it is still not too late to greet all MI stakeholders with best wishes for a gracious new year. On behalf of the MI staff, I want to wish you all much happiness and success in your lives and careers throughout this year.

In November 2004 we marked an important milestone in the history (and the future!) of Mekong Institute with the opening of the Institute's very own course series, the MI Professional Development Series. The first course of this series, Project Management for Poverty Interventions was attended by participants from all six GMS countries: Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam and Yunnan Province of China. With up-to-date course content and continuing in the MI tradition of a highly participatory approach in learning, the course received excellent ratings, evaluated as "highly satisfactory" by participants in most categories. This very positive feedback gives MI confidence in continuing to offer high quality learning programs. From 10 January through the 18 February 2005, MI conducted the second program in the series, Leadership for Competitive Enterprise course, a six-week long learning program. This was followed by Tourism: A Regional Approach to Development. There are 7 more courses, for the 2005 Series finishing in December. Any GMS national interested in participating in an MI Professional Development Series learning program is welcome to apply. Other nationalities are also accepted on a limited basis. You can obtain the course details including the application procedure from the MI Website, or the MI Coordinating Agency (CA) in each GMS country. Be sure to have a look at the new MI website, www.mekonginstitute.org, for more details about MI and GMS activities.

In the new GMS charter of the Mekong Institute, development of a research program focused on Greater Mekong Sub region is emphasized as essential for ensuring the quality and results of all MI learning programs. The launching of the MI research program is an important new initiative of the 2005-2010 Strategic Plan. The primary objectives of the MI research program are the application of current research to improve learning programs and also support for policy formulations and decision making in the GMS. MI is urgently seeking an experienced research manager to develop and lead this research department. We have secured already multi year funding for a major social policy research program and will also be looking for policy researchers to work in this group. MI will form the MI Research Advisory Committee (MIRAC) to provide additional oversight and the program development. We will also work closely with GMSARN and network with other Mekong and Southeast Asian Studies Centers around the world, facilitating communications and prioritizations to reflect GMS priorities and needs. MI will provide GMS networking support, as well as facilitating proposal writing, providing access to MI technology and information services, and assisting in the publication and presentation of research results.

Another important commitment of the Mekong Institute as a regional GMS organization is to nurture communications and relationships with and amongst former participants in MI programs. Over the past six months we have conducted "road shows" in five countries (Thailand still remaining), meeting with the alumni, local officials and funding partners in each country. We have been able to introduce MI's new status as a regional organization, explain the new strategic plan and announce the new Professional Development Series. We have taken the opportunity also to encourage MI alumni to organize alumni activity in their own countries. Even though the time visiting each country was rather short, we were impressed with the numbers of alumni and their enthusiasm in meeting with MI staff and celebrating reunion amongst themselves. MI will organize learning programs for alumni, as requested, in the form of national and regional seminars, and we also plan to conduct the MI Road Show in each GMS country annually.

Lastly, we are pleased to inform you that MI will have "MI annual meeting : GMS Human Resource Development , Planing and Prioritizing" on the 12-13th of May 2005. This event is designed to bring together all MI stakeholders including alumni to Mekong Institute for sessions on capacity building and regional development to dialogue on recent GMS development, integration and cooperation issues. MI Annual Meeting will review MI activities over the past year, discuss how to strengthen and improve MI programs' support for the GMS, and collaboratively recommend priorities and topics for MI learning, research and regional policy formulation programs for 2006 and beyond. We expect to work together in a highly participatory, friendly and productive environment to improve the GMS regional development and cooperation that has always been the mandates of Mekong Institute. Those of you who have interest in joining the conference should contact MI immediately (see Website).

We are looking forward to seeing you at MI in Khon Kaen anytime that is convenient of you, and thank you in advance for your continued support, especially for our new strategic movement that will increase MI's capacity to strengthen GMS regional development and integration.

Sincerely,

Dr Anake Topark-ngarm
Director



Introductory Remarks
by Mr. Somchith Inthamith

Director General, Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Lao PDR.
at MI Road Show (3 February 2005, Vientian, the Lao PDR)



It gives me a great pleasure and honor in having opportunity to welcome you in my capacity as the Representative of the Lao PDR, being the Council Member of the Mekong Institute. Thank you for your positive consideration by accepting our invitation to attend the Mekong Institute Road Show. We look forward to listening to your constructive inputs on how the Mekong Institute can support the Human Resources Development and capacity building of Lao government officials and business managers in MI's role to serve as training partners in developing the Greater Mekong Sub-region.

At the outset, I would like to inform you that MI was established in 1997 basically as a Thai training institution supported mainly by Thailand and New Zealand governments. After that, the MI has developed itself to upgrade into a regional independent institution. To validate that status, the Government of Lao PDR represented by H.E. Somsavat Lendsavad has enacted the MI Charter with the five other Governments of the Mekong Riparian countries to institutionalize the MI as a regional institution. Under the new Charter, MI would be transform into a real regional institution, devoted to designing and implementing training courses and research on development strategies.

The overall objective of this MI Road Show is to publicize and promote the new Mekong Institute to be a regional institution devoted to developing human resources, researching development issues, as well as promoting networking among Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS) institutions. As an independent GMS organization, MI provides specialized learning programs for key public and private sectors personnel in the areas of leadership, development and regional cooperation. The Mekong Institute, which since its establishment has recorded over 1500 alumni, is well established with very good learning facilities. The Institute has gained much experience in capacity building and training areas. Drawing on these experiences the Institute has prepared a work program for the year to come by paying significantly increased attention on issues in poverty reduction. Capacity building and training activities are formulated and organized with a view to maximizing synergy and complementarily with other GMS regional activities and organizations.

As you may know, globalization presents developing economies with enormous opportunities, but it also poses risks that have to be managed. We need to find ways to maximize the benefit of globalization, while minimizing its risks and downside effects.

The appropriate response for us, therefore, is to equip our self with the institutional and organizational capacity to participate effectively in the global market. What is needed in long term includes upgrading of productivity through comprehensive efforts both by the public and private sectors. The Mekong Institute had prepared its self to cope with these challenges.

The concept of the Mekong Institute is really very simple, it is the quality of the development decision. We cannot go very far with all the money that be made available to us, unless we are to invest it wisely in our future. To that end, we need committed civil servants who can appreciate complex development challenges, develop and plan responses to meet them and who have the wisdom and skills to get those responses to bear fruit. Our idea is to concentrate our limited resources on getting a select group of officials, business managers and motivated farmers to equip then with the necessary skills and knowledge to take our GMS-Sub region forward in a sustainable way. For the details of MI HRD Programs, Dr. Anake Topark – ngarm, Director of Mekong Institute and his team will clarify to you later.

You presence today makes us very proud and we do hope to have a chance to build upon a network of partnership to be your partner for capacity building of training supports. Our success depends on all of us and I am completely confident that given our joint energies and talents, it will succeed.

In this perspective, after the presentation of Dr. Anake Topark-ngarm, I do hope to hear your deliberation and proactive views to further support the Mekong Institute. May I wish a brilliant outcome to our meeting and wish all of you good health and happiness.

Thank you.



Competition or Cooperation?



Subregional cooperation in the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) is a founding principle of Mekong Institute. It is perhaps important then to ask why GMS countries should cooperate and what MI's role in the process is.

Take the example of tourism. GMS tourism has developed from dramatic histories of competition and conflict between individual countries into a rapidly growing single destination offering phenomenal cultural, historical and natural attractions. Asian Development Bank (ADB) reports confirm that the number of international tourists visiting the subregion will continue to grow dramatically over the next ten years¹. This is welcome news to advocates and practitioners who see regional tourism as a strong poverty alleviation tool.

Predictions of GMS tourism growth however include various scenarios with some envisaging much higher numbers of visitors than others. The significant assumption in the more opportunistic scenarios being that improved cooperation in subregional initiatives can better develop the GMS as a single destination through improved community based tourism products that distribute income more equitably to poorer regions. That is to say, in order for GMS counties to develop their full tourism potential, while simultaneously addressing poverty alleviation, a crucial component must be accomplished – cooperation.

Fortunately, for GMS tourism, while we tend to think of humans as competitive creatures, we are actually quiet good at cooperation – once there is a clear motivating factor. Think of the European Airbus consortium example. Some analysts predict this cooperative venture will revolutionise the travel industry through its new product the giant A380. However, this cooperative success would never have been achieved without a clear motivating factor - significant outside competition (i.e. Boeing).

To place this concept in the GMS tourism context, for years there has been significant talk by the six riparian governments on cooperating to promote the subregion as a

single tourism destination. However, by in large, most still operate from a national perspective. MI tourism programmes though emphasise subregional planning and marketing. Yet, no matter how successful the MI programmes are, direct competition from outside the GMS will more effectively promote subregional cooperation.

In a recent MI learning programme 'Tourism: A Regional Approach to Development' a group of participants presented a report on a BIMSTEC (Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Thailand Economic Co-operation) tourism meeting. While BIMSTEC and GMS tourism strategies are complementary for some, they are competitive to others. Such competition within and between groups will in fact be the best promotion for GMS cooperation.

Competitive forces then must be recognised as providing a clear motivating factor to promote GMS cooperation for subregional initiatives through public policy reform, private sector promotion and direct financial support. GMS subregional cooperation is therefore not altruistic. Mekong Institute will continue to obviate the competitive forces that promote subregional cooperation and provide the forum and venue for the required human resource development.

¹ GMS Tourism Sector Strategy, Interim Report, unpublished paper submitted to Asian Development Bank by Asia Pacific Projects, Inc. January 2005



Professional Development for Today's Manager

In May 2004 Mekong Institute hosted a GMS learning needs prioritisation workshop. Participants and representatives from all six GMS governments as well as key partner agencies participated. The aim of the workshop was to not only identify high priority topics but also give a clear mandate for MI's 2005 programming.

Based on the results and feedback from the workshop MI developed *Professional Development Series 2005* to provide a core set of specialised learning programmes in project management, leadership, tourism and rural development.

The first three courses have already been successfully completed with participants being extremely satisfied with both their learning outcomes and MI experience. The *Professional Development Series 2005* is another step in MI developing the GMS spirit of leadership and cooperation for development.

Professional Development Series 2005, programmes includes:

Project Management for Poverty Interventions

- 29 November to 24 December 2004
- 4 week programme
- Senior to Middle level

Leadership for Competitive Enterprises

- 10 January – 18 February 2005
- 6 week programme
- Middle level

Tourism: A Regional Approach to Development

- 21 February – 18 March 2005
- 4 week programme
- Senior to Middle level

Rural Development

- 25 April – 20 May 2005
- 4 week programme
- Senior to Middle level

Project Management for Infrastructure Development

- 23 May – 1 July 2005
- 6 week programme
- Middle level

Leadership for Public Sector Reform

- 1 – 26 August 2005
- 4 week programme
- Senior to Middle level

Tourism: A Regional Approach to Development

- 5 – 30 September 2005
- 4 week programme
- Senior to Middle level

Rural Development

- 3 – 28 October 2005
- 4 week programme
- Senior to Middle level

Project Management for Regional Energy Needs

- 31 October – 25 November 2005
- 4 week programme
- Senior to Middle level

Leadership for Competitive Enterprises

- 28 November – 23 December 2005
- 6 week programme
- Middle level

In the *Professional Development Series 2005* participants:

- work closely with professionals from all GMS countries,
- apply professional experiences to selected case studies,
- give group and individual presentations using PowerPoint slides,
- conduct Internet and library research,
- interact with GMS and international academics and experts,
- attend special Professional Skill Development sessions,
- go on field research visits and recreational trips,
- enjoy learning, living and laughing with new friends and colleagues from across the GMS.

Professional Development Series 2005 is a professional learning series for current and future leaders in the GMS. Participants should therefore be senior to middle-level government officials or managers of state-owned or private enterprises or civil society sectors.

The course fees are US\$2,500 *four-week tuition* and US\$3,600 *six-week tuition*. A limited number of scholarships are available for exceptional applicants. For further details and application forms please visit the Mekong Institute website

www.mekonginstitute.org



MI Alumni Coordinators

Mekong Institute has been meeting with our alumni from each country. (Thai alumni meeting coming soon), some of our alumni were willing to co-ordinate future alumni activities. The following are the key contact persons. We hope to see many alumni activities in the near future.

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Lao PDR



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MI News

MI participated in the GMS Ministerial Meetings in Vientiane Lao PDR in December 2004. It was a very interesting and fruitful time, and also a pleasure to see our friends and colleagues from the GMS countries all together. During this same time, the MI Council and Steering Committee met. Dr. Anake Toparkngarm, MI Director, presented our 6 months activity report on progress at MI. The next Steering Committee Meeting will be held in July 2005. Both of these meetings will be in Khon Kaen.

Congratulations to *Mr. Sa-nga and Ms. Amorat Satanon (COP and Baby)*. They have a very cute 3 month old son. His name is "*Chub*".

Mr. Siwaraj Rajchabat. Our very capable colleague and good friend, our MI librarian, resigned in the end of December 2005. Ping Pong left MI for position of information Services Librarian(Bangkadi Campus) in the international program library of Sirindhorn International Institute of Technology (SIIT) www.siiit.tu.ac.th, Bangkok Thailand. Contact Ping Pong at "superpingpong@hotmail.com" We miss him very much!!

Ms. Fang Liu started to work with MI in November 2004, as marketing and development assistant to the International Advisor. She is Chinese, born in Shanghai, and has been living in Thailand for 2 years with her family. Now she also has become a part of the MI family.

Alumni News

B2

Ms. Li Yan (Chinese) moved to work in USA many years ago. Now she is a graduate student in School of Public Health and Health Science, University of Massachusetts, Amherst. Her mailing address in the USA is 950 N. Pleasant ST. Apt#67 Amherst MA 01002 USA. E-mail : yanli2k@yahoo.com.

B4

Mr. Vutha Lay (Cambodia) would like to Hi! to all MI friends. He is a student of Public Administration at Gadjah Mada University, Yogyakarta-Indonesia in a final semester of theory classes and maybe next year he will finish his studies. All MI staff and your friends are supporting you, and wish you every success. You can send a supporting word to Mr. Lay at layvutha@yahoo.co.uk

B7

Mr. Kong Jianxun (Chinese) is now in the Institute of Asian Studies, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand as a visiting scholar financially sponsored by the Asian

Scholarship Foundation. His present research interest is Thai OTOP Campaign. If any alumni would like to provide or receive information about the Thai OTOP Campaign please contact him at jxkong@hotmail.com. MI hope that Mr. Jianxun will join us for Thai alumni Meeting later this month in Bangkok!

B9

Mr. Ung Eang (Cambodia) got married on 30 January 2005. We wish him and his wife sweetness and romance all time! Soon we hope to see their product (small Eang).

B11

Congratulations to Mr. Prak Nuogn Hong (Cambodia) who has been promoted to be Bureau Chief and Assistant to Permanent Secretary of Foreign Affairs. He will move to Belgium next month for his diplomatic post as second secretary of the Royal Embassy of Cambodia to Belgium. Moreover, after one year marriage, his wife is pregnant for 7 months. He will become a very good father soon. B11 friends who would like to send a word of congratulations to him can sent at his e-mail address : praknguonhong@hotmail.com

Corporate

Ms. Lagsana Leuprasert (Thai) has been very

busy with working and also more studying for another postgraduate diploma in Public Economic Management at King Rama the 7th Institute in Bangkok every week end (Friday till Sunday). She travels from Khon Kaen to Bangkok every weekend. We wish her success with her hardwork both in her job and her studies.

Project Management for GMS Sustainable Development

Ms. Woranuch Emmanoch (Thai) is studying for her PhD at Coventry University, United Kingdom. If her Project Management colleagues or anyone else want information about study in Coventry University, contact her at e-mail address goonging@myway.com or m_worranuch@yahoo.com.

Poverty Reduction Strategy and Poverty Impact Evaluation Course

Mr Wu Jianxin (Chinese) was promoted to assistant consultant in Nov.2004. Mr. Wu works for the Rural Science & Technology Division of the Guangxi Science & Technology Department. Talk to Mr. Wu at wujxgx@yahoo.com.cn.



GMS NEWS

March 22, 2005



Seminar on "Comparing Countries in Southeast Asia" By Center for Research on Plurality in the Mekong Region (CERP)

Apply by March 21, 2005

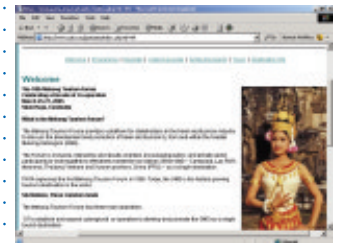
E-mail: plurality@kku.ac.th

Web Site:

http://www.plurality.net/eng/news/comparing_Countries-eng.pdf

March 25-27, 2005

Siem Reap, Cambodia



10th Mekong Tourism Forum "Celebrating a Decade of Co-operation"

by Pacific Asia Travel Association, Asian Development Bank, UN, Ministry of Tourism of Cambodia

E-mail ; sucheera@pata.org

Web Site:

<http://www.pata.org/patasite/index.php?id=99>

April 7-10, 2005

Khon Kaen, Thailand



Workshop on "Learning 'Thai Noi' from Archives of Palm Leaf Manuscripts"

By Center for Research on Plurality in the Mekong Region (CERP)

Apply by March 21, 2005

E-mail: plurality@kku.ac.th

Web Site:

<http://www.plurality.net/eng/news/thainoiPalmleaf-eng.pdf>

May 12-13, 2005

Khon Kaen, Thailand

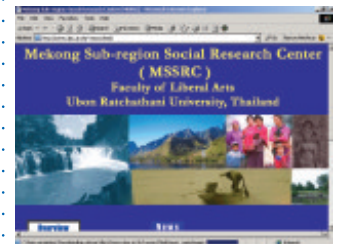


The MI Council approved the new MI Strategic Management Plan 2005-2010 in the June 2004 Council Meeting. The MI Annual Meeting is a key part of the annual strategic management planning process of MI, providing the forum and information basis for next year's program

planning. The MI Annual Meeting will take place in Khon Kaen in mid May 2005. Participants will be MI stakeholders such as MI Steering Committee, MI Coordinating Agencies, MI Alumni and funding partners and other GMS stakeholders such as sub regional organizations, government officials, NGOs, researchers, academics, journalists and anyone else with interest in the GMS or Mekong Institute. Keep checking www.mekonginstitute.org if you want further details or would like to participate in this meeting.

June 30- July 2, 2005

Ubon Ratchathani, Thailand



International Conference "Transborder Issues in the Greater Mekong Sub-region"

by Mekong Sub-region Social Research Center (MSSRC), Faculty of Liberal Arts, Ubon Ratchathani University. Supported by The Rockefeller Foundation

E-mail: mssrc@la.ubu.ac.th, mssrc_ubu@yahoo.com

Web Site:

<http://www.ubu.ac.th/~mssrc/html/>