

MEKONG CONNECTION

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EDITOR'S NOTE

■ **As the year 2009 begins with a worldwide economic downturn, MI staff continue to work hard towards achieving the goal of developing capacity for regional cooperation.**

We kick off the year with a fresh new look for the Mekong Connection. The size of our newsletter has been reduced to A4 size, and with more engaging articles that will inform our readers on what's happening at MI and in the GMS region.

In this January-March 2009 edition, you will find our *Official Visits* news report, program and staff training activities in Guangxi and Yunnan provinces of China, and learn more about MI from our lead story *A glance at MI's learning and development*.

An account of this year's MI Research Round Table workshops comes under *The 2009 MI Research Round Table Meeting* article, in which twenty-three young researchers from the six GMS countries participated in January this year.

Ms. Siriluk Chumpasri, MI Senior Program Administrator, shares with you a few heart-warming messages from our

alumni on the MI alumni column. *MI alumni* are encouraged to stay connected and share their experiences with the institute and their MI program peers. You will be able to find out about some of our alumni activities since the completion of their programs.

Introducing new columns in this issue: *Book review* by Mr. Marat Yu, our Mekong Development Program team leader; and *Regional news* by Ms. Urinthorn Pheungsaengkeo, one of MI's Young GMS Professionals. Hopefully, the new *Quote of the day* column will keep your spirits up during this difficult time of global economic crisis.

Our *Upcoming events* and *Visitors* columns will ensure you are updated on MI future activities, one of which is the important MI Stakeholder Consultation Meeting to be held in July 2009.

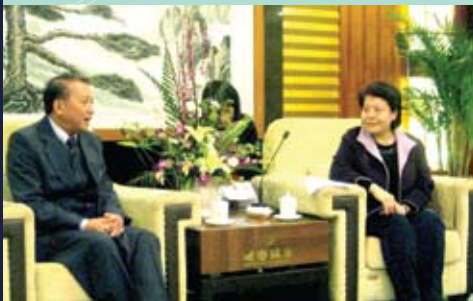
We welcome your suggestions and comments on this revised issue of the Mekong Connection.

We would like to wish our dear readers a Happy New Year and thank you for your long-term support.

Editor



OFFICIAL VISITS



Activities of the MI Director in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region of China, 5-6 March 2009

■ **The MI Director, Dr. Suchat Katima; MI Research Manager, Ms. Maria Theresa Medialdia; and MI Executive Assistant/ Marketing Officer, Ms. Pornwilai Pumira arrived in Nanning City, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region of China, in the evening of Wednesday, 4 March. This was their first official visit to Nanning City.**

MI's objectives of the visit to Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region were to appreciate the latest development in the region, establish connections and explore cooperation opportunities.

On Thursday, 5 March, Ms. Li Khang, Vice Governor of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region welcomed the delegation to Guangxi. She gave a presentation on the background of Guangxi region, and told the delegation that Guangxi is looking forward to work with MI in the future.

Mr. Lin Guoqiang, the Vice Chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference Guangxi Committee, hosted the dinner for the MI Director and delegates.

Other meetings that day included an official visit to Guangxi University for Nationalities, where the delegation met with Prof. Ron Benzhen, Vice President. They exchanged presentations on their learning programs and

Continued from page 1...

discussed about future cooperation between the two organizations.

Dr. Katima and MI delegates also continued their bilateral meetings at Guangxi University with Mr. Yang Guoliang, the Secretary of Guangxi University Committee of CPC. They discussed issues of mutual cooperation.



In the afternoon, a meeting with government officials of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region was held at Mingyuan hotel, Nanning City. Mr. Gu Hang, Deputy Director-General, Department of Foreign Affairs; Mr. Wei Gangqiang, Deputy Director-General, Personnel Department; Mr. Lin Ning, Director-General, Department of Education; Mr. Li Jiangliang, Deputy Director, Division 1 of ASEAN Affairs, Department of Commerce. They took this opportunity to invite the officials to

visit MI Residential Training Centre in Khon Kaen, Thailand. Guangxi government officials were interested in cooperating with MI.



A meeting with Guangxi Academy of Social Sciences took place on the morning of Friday, 6 March. MI delegation was welcomed by Mr. Lu Yu Sheng, Director of Guangxi Academy of Social Sciences; Mr. Zhao Minglong, Director of Institute of Ethnic Economy Studies; Mr. Gu Xiao Song, Vice Director of Academy and Director of Institute of Southeast Asian Studies; and Mr. Nong Li fu, Dean of Faculty of Southeast Asian Language and Culture, Guangxi Dongfang Foreign Langue College. The discussions were on cooperation between MI and Guangxi Academy of Social Sciences. Since Nanning City is hosting the 6th China-ASEAN Expo in October 2009, both organizations will work together on a regional workshop and structured learning visit from MI Residential Training Centre to Nanning via R9 (EWEC) and R5 (NSEC). The route also passes through Laos and Vietnam. They will engage in a joint research program on tourism opportunities on R5 and R9.



The delegation later met with Ms. Rattikul Chansuriya, Acting Consul-General from The Royal Thai Consulate in Nanning. The Thai Consulate is willing to support MI in terms of building relationship and cooperation with the Government and private sectors of Guangxi.

“The itinerary was full because we wanted to maximize the meetings we had while we were in Guangxi. However, each meeting was valuable and productive, as each organization complements MI and its programs in many ways. We look forward to working with Guangxi Government, the academic institutes and the business groups in the region.”, Dr. Katima concluded MI’s successful official visits to Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region.

Activities of the MI Director in Yunnan Province of China, 2-4 March 2009



■ Dr. Suchat Katima, the MI Director, and delegates officially visited Yunnan Province of China from 2-4 March, 2009.

On the first day of the visit, Dr. Katima co-chaired the opening ceremony of the regional workshop on “Regional Power Interconnection and Trade in the GMS” in Kunming City. The workshop was organized by MI and Yunnan Power Grid Corporation (YNPG), and supported by Yunnan Provincial Government. Ms. Zhu Hong, Director General of Yunnan Foreign Affairs Office (YNFAO); Mr. Jin Cheng, Director General of International Relations Office, YNFAO; Mr. Zhao Bingsong, Vice President of YNPG; and Mr. Cheng Jun, Director of International Relations Department, took part at the opening ceremony.

On Tuesday, 3 March, Dr. Katima met with Mr. Suraphan Boonyamanop, Consul-General of The Royal Thai Consulate General, and later visited Yunnan Provincial Chamber of Commerce. He was greeted by Mr. Zhao Zhou, Director of Liaison Department. They discussed about potential cooperative options for the “GMS E-commerce” regional workshop, expected to run from 3–6 June in Kunming City.



The delegation also met with Mr. Wang Zehua, Director-General of Yunnan Academy of Science and Technology Development (YLMCO), also an MI Coordinating Agent in Yunnan Province, to discuss possibilities of YLMCO staff joining the MI research team.

On Wednesday, 4 March, Dr. Katima presented about Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) to 19 participants of the SIDA sponsored program on ESD in Water Resource Management at Yunnan University.

The 2009 MI Research Round Table Meeting

■ Twenty-three researchers from the six GMS countries participated in the 2009 Mekong Institute (MI) Research Round Table Meeting on January 19-20, hosted by the MI Research and Development (R&D) Department. This marked the culmination of a one-year sub-regional research projects cycle carried out under guidance of MI Research Advisory Committee (MIRAC).

The four sub-regional research projects carried out in 2008 are: a) SME development in 13 twin cities on eight Cross-Border Points along North-South, East-West and Southern Economic Corridors, b) Comparative Analysis of Public Health Service Delivery, c) Contract Farming; and d) Upland Cultivation/Ethnic Minorities. These research projects received financial support from New Zealand Agency for International Development, Rockefeller Foundation and Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation.

Participated in the meeting were the members of MIRAC, MI Development Partners, senior researchers and experts. The young researchers were given the opportunity to present their findings in a research forum; validate and increase the reliability of research



findings with GMS stakeholders; gain feedback from experts; revise the research reports in a publishable format; and discuss the utilization of the research results to enhance MI's learning programs.

Assoc Professor Dr. Kittichai Triratanasirichai, Khon Kaen University's Vice President for Research and Technology Transfer Affairs, précised over the meeting and delivered the key note speech on the use of these sub-regional research results.

The research results will be published as MI Research Working Paper Series for 2009.

"Decentralized Education Planning in the Context of Public Sector Management Reform" course opens at the Mekong Institute



■ On February 23, Dr Ibtisam Abu-Duhou, UNESCO Senior Advisor (Bangkok) graciously presided over the opening ceremony of the learning course at MI, while Dr Suchat Katima, the MI Director, delivered the welcome remarks.

Twenty participants from the six Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) nations attended the two-week training course, which was co-organized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Bangkok Asia and Pacific; Regional Bureau of Education (Education Policy Reform Unit), Thailand; New Zealand's International Aid & Development Agency (NZAID); and MI.

The course titled, "Training of Trainers from the Greater Mekong Subregion on Decentralized Education Planning in the Context of Public Sector Management Reform," is running from February 23-March 6, 2009 in Khon Kaen, Thailand.

The course focuses on the modernization of education sector management. It also introduces planning approaches and to familiarize course participants from GMS countries with planning tools to upgrade their professional and technical know-how.

In addition, the course provides an opportunity to introduce cross-cutting themes such as Gender in Education, Inclusive Education and Rights-Based Education. It supports the GMS countries in their efforts to ensure Education for All (EFA) goals and targets can be achieved by 2015, and promotes regional exchange and cooperation.

MI managers and the staff of Programs and Research departments trained at the "Breakthrough Coaching Program"

■ The "Breakthrough Coaching Program" was held at the Mekong Institute (MI) from February 12 -16, 2009. The program was aimed at complementing and supporting MI's human resources development initiatives, and to transform MI's managers and the staff of Programs and Research departments to be model coaches, in order for them to kick off a culture of coaching at MI.



The Co-Active Coaching Technology espoused by Vision & Breakthrough International Inc., was transferred to the new coaches (i.e. managers, team leaders and Program staff) of MI. The participants experienced being coaches through a holistic integration of their personal and professional lives.

Coaches and participants own the process of learning on how to coach, and jointly commit themselves to the objectives of the program (the vision and competencies of MI staff).

The participants learned about basic coaching principles, designing the partnership between the coach and the coachees, integrating all their learning in their body, mind and spirit, and applying this learning at work or home.

MI participants had the opportunities to explore the paradigms of coaching practices, and to evaluate themselves, and be evaluated on their coaching abilities and their willingness to become coaches.

Our newly trained coaches gained confidence and self-awareness as part of the coaching practice. They will be ready to coach MI staff who want to fast track their career, demonstrate bottom-line results and meet MI partner expectations.

We thank, Ms. May Sj Soriano and Ms. Wowie Hidalgo, highly experienced coaches from Vision & Breakthrough International Inc. for their efforts in making this training useful, memorable and exhilarating for our staff.

A Glance at MI's learning and development

■ Looking back into the past and ahead into the future, MI continues to hold the distinction of being the only Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) “breakthrough” learning center promoting, exchanging, conceptualizing and incorporating the GMS spirit into its human resource development programs.

In 1996, MI began as a development assistance project for the six GMS countries, partnered by the Thai Government and the New Zealand International Aid and Development Agency (NZAID). MI was functioning under the supervision and steering of Khon Kaen University.

In 2003, the six GMS Governments-with supports from MI development partners-recognized that MI had a strong potential as a ‘facilitator’, helping to promote regional development, cooperation and integration of the GMS through its program and regional research activities. The six governments then signed MI Charter, setting MI as “a non-profit, autonomous, international organization, working in close collaboration with other GMS institutions”, allowing it to operate independently of Khon Kaen University, but with its continuing support.

“It was a vital step for both the institute and the region. The Charter signified an influential MI in terms of regional capacity building and a stronger collaborative approach of GMS member countries.” Mr. Sa-nga Sattanan, Associate Program Manager and one of MI’s longest serving employees, pointed out.

MI was officially confirmed as an intergovernmental organization (IGO) in 2007-another step in being recognized by other international institutions. An agreement was signed by the Thai Government and the MI Director, Dr. Suchat Katima. This signified the move towards achieving MI goals in developing capacity for regional cooperation by:

- Conducting high quality and relevant capacity building programs for senior and mid-level government officials, private enterprises and civil society, who are involved in areas of regional development, cooperation and integration
- Carrying out GMS focused research;
- Facilitating policy dialogues.

The operations of MI as an IGO were streamlined, in order for the organization to administrate, manage and organize training courses and conduct GMS focused-research. This benefits GMS member countries by making it even more possible for the GMS governments to achieve regional policy targets and objectives through human resource development.

At present, the institute is supporting the GMS nations in endorsing the targets of the ‘Vientiane Plan of Action for GMS Development (2008-2012)’. The plan emphasized the need for participating countries to make progress in areas of transport, energy, telecommunications, agriculture, environment, tourism, human resource development, trade facilitation, and investment¹.

The number of programs conducted by MI since 1996 has quadrupled. MI held four learning programs in 1996 in comparison to 16 programs carried out in 2008. Other program and research activities delivered by MI in 2008 include 16 training courses, 12 workshops and meetings, and two policy dialogues.

We have incorporated the four MI thematic areas into our learning programs. Conceptualized by our program and research bodies and MI Coordinating Agencies, the initiation and development of the four MI

thematic areas was a collaborative effort between our partners and the institute to deliver successful core learning programs for building capacity in the GMS. The four thematic areas include Rural Development and Project Management, Leadership and Good Governance, Trade and Investment Facilitation, and Effective Regional Cooperation.

This year MI is expected to work together with our partners and strategic alliances to carry out over

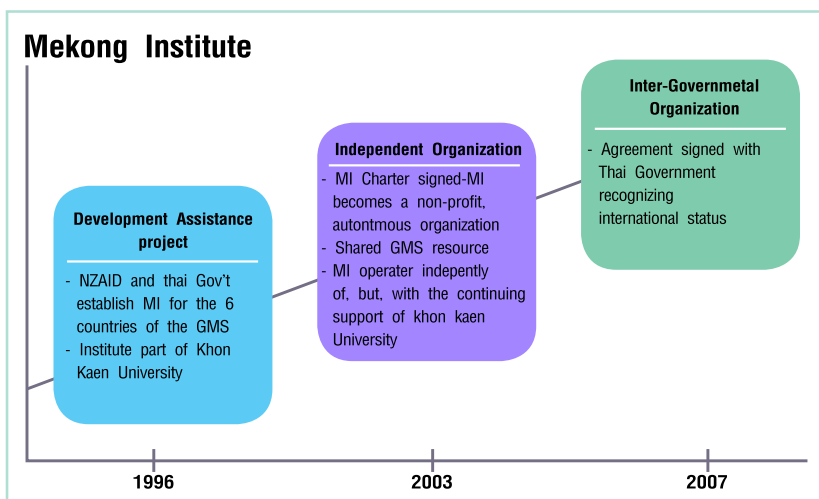
40 capacity building activities. Nine learning programs and two regional workshops are open to the public to participate. Full details of our 2009 programs, research and other service activities can be found on the MI website at <http://www.mekonginstitute.org>.

Since 2007, MI has produced 14 research Working Paper Series, 2 Policy Dialogue Proceedings and a referenced journal titled “Review of Development and Cooperation”.



MI has created an in-house research capability by establishing the Research and Development Department (R&D). R&D is currently in the process of improving the 2009 GMS-based research cycle, training young GMS researchers to carry out good quality research based on GMS emerging issues, and preparing for the Symposium on Impacts of Economic Integration on Upland Cultivation and Ethnic Minorities. The Mekong Development Program unit (MDP), governed by the Research Department, was initiated to take on the task of working closely with MI Programs Department to develop new customized programs. The new customized programs will cater human resource development needs of senior and mid level government officials and private enterprises of the GMS.

MI currently employs 38 full-time staff, representing all six GMS countries, and one international expert from abroad. In terms of staff learning and growth, the Swiss International Development Agency (SIDA) granted four MI staff a SIDA scholarship to help improve MI’s internal human resource development (HRD) capacity. The staff



¹ The full version of the Vientiane Plan of Action for GMS Development can be found on <http://www.adb.org/gms>

MI staff facilitated the Regional Power Interconnection and Trade in the GMS Workshop

■ Two of MI Program staff, Ms. Nisarawan Phaiboonpornpong and Ms. Siriluk Champasri, facilitated the course on Regional Power Interconnection and Trade in the Greater Mekong Sub-region in Kunming City, China. The course was running at GMS Electric Power Technical Communication and Training Centre from 2-20 March 2009.



The objectives of the course include: to develop participants' regional perspectives in trading and interconnection of electric power; introduce skills in organizing, managing and evaluating sub-regional power sector projects through specific methods and tools; develop an awareness of GMS energy status and demand growth of the GMS; promote and establish contacts with peers across the GMS; and

strengthen their knowledge on regional power interconnections and trade operating agreements, which was facilitated by the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank.

During the second week of the workshop, participants were taken to the Transnational Road No. 3a as part of the Structured Learning Visit.

familiarize with local power sector structures and development plans through analysis and study visits.

Participants came from various backgrounds in the power trade such as power professionals, mid-level managers and engineers of Yunnan Power Grid, and respective power companies and energy ministries from other five GMS countries. They could further

REGIONAL NEWS

ASEAN leaders pledge to avert global economic crisis

■ Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) leaders have agreed to work in partnership to tackle the global economic crisis hitting the ASEAN economies.

On 1 March 2009, the Heads of the ASEAN Member States met in Cha-am, Thailand, at the 14th ASEAN Summit, where issues and risks of the global financial crisis topped the Summit's agenda.

The BBC reported Asian countries are likely to face 7.2 million job losses in 2009¹. The ASEAN economies have already begun to feel the effect of the crisis. Thousands of factory workers are being laid off as factories are shut down throughout the region.

The leaders promised to work closer together on formulating financial policies and bringing about actions which will minimise the impacts of the worldwide economic crisis. Building a united ASEAN similar to the European Union was made a priority.

The Summit's Press Statement on the Global Economic and Financial Crisis revealed countries agreed to stand firm against protectionism; and called for a bold and urgent reform of the international financial system to achieve a more comprehensive, equitable and inclusive system that realises the interests and voices of the emerging and developing economies².

¹Full BBC report on "Asia to 'lose 7.2 million jobs'" can be viewed at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/business/7896878.stm>

²The Press Statement on the Global Economic and Financial Crisis can be viewed at: <http://www.aseansec.org/22323.htm>



14th ASEAN SUMMIT
THAILAND 2009

BOOK REVIEW

Flirting with Disaster: Why Accidents Are Rarely Accidental

■ Marc Gerstein with Michael Ellsberg
Union Square Press 2008

Tilly, a ten year old schoolgirl from Britain, noticed that the ocean water was rapidly receding from the shore when she was on vacation with her family in Maikhao Beach, Thailand. She remembered what her geography teacher taught in the class that the phenomenon was a sign of an impending tsunami. Tilly told her mother in no time and they alerted the hotel manager who then evacuated everyone on the beach. No one was injured in Maikhao while more than 150,000 lives perished in the 2004 Asian tsunami.

Mr. Gerstein, an organizational psychologist, used a wide range of examples to illustrate a central argument: there are human factors in every catastrophe and we can control the aftermath of disasters or avert them outright. Evidences are indeed everywhere. From *Challenger* to *Chernobyl*, bystanders holding critical information in organizations failed to take action and whistle-blowers were ignored and silenced. Corrupted organizational culture played an instrumental role in the downfall of companies like *Arthur Anderson*, and looking into the future, Mr. Gerstein forewarned that this kind of human distortion and self-serving conduct will lead to a new wave of economic disaster. Unfortunately, he is right.

So what can leaders do? Mr. Gerstein offered some obvious but sound advices in the book. To prevent and cope with accidents, we need to first understand the risk we are facing and avoid being in denial. We should pay attention to weak signals and should not wait for full proof to act. Simple enough, but leaders, will you take heed?



ALUMNI NEWS

The Mekong Institute's Alumni Directory is now available online!

The directory can be found on the Mekong Institute's website at <http://www.mekonginstitute.org/miads/alumni/general.php> where you can search for our alumni information. If you are an MI alumnus, you can access your information and find your alumni peers here.

1998 : Economies in Transition



■ Mr. Li Hua (China PR)

After 10 years, Mr. Hua was able to return to MI to join our workshop in Enhancing Entrepreneurship in the Greater Mekong Sub-Region (GMS) (24-29 November 2008), in Khon Kaen, Thailand. He is currently working at Kunming Haozhou Co., Ltd, as the General Manager's Assistant.

2005: Poverty Reduction



■ Mr. Gyanendra Shrestha (Nepal)

Mr. Shrestha attended the "Regional Workshop on Monitoring and Evaluation of Population, Health, and Nutrition Program", organized by Institute for Population and Social Research, Mahidol University, Bangkok (25

November – 12 December 2008). During the training he was able to explore some parts of Thailand. We hope he had a very nice stay!

2007: Enhancing Entrepreneurship in the Greater Mekong Sub-Region (GMS)



■ Mr Teerasak Suwannatan (Thailand)

Mr. Suwannatan, one of our alumni from Enhancing Entrepreneurship in the GMS training in 2007. Mr. Suwannatan is a valuable alumni member who supported MI in the organization and joined the field

trip of the Enhancing Entrepreneurship in SME Development and Export Consortia course (August 2008). Mr. Suwannatan also took part with us at the field trip of the NSEC Investment and Trade Opportunities course. MI sincerely thanks Mr. Suwannatan for his encouraging supports in our program activit

MI alumni are encouraged to continue building relationships and network with their fellow alumni and MI after MI program completion. We support our alumni to stay in touch, be connected and share experiences.

Sharing message



■ From Ms. Rasha Mohsen Qudisat, our Jordanian alumnus (Project Monitoring & Evaluation, 2007):

"I miss the times we all had in Khone Khean.. I resigned my position from the head of Monitoring Division at Ministry of Planning. I am now working for the Minister of Social Development Ministry. It's really an

interesting work but hard work, though. Miss you all and wish you the best times."



■ From Mr. Sok Socheat, an MI Cambodian alumnus (Regional Workshop on Public Participation and Reconciliation, 2008):

"I shall never forget seeing all things that had happened in Bangkok and Khon Kaen. All smiles that show on your faces still alive in my mind.

Everything and all aspects that I had have with all of you are a part of my life. I hope that I will see you again. Thank you very much for your warm welcome during staying in Thailand."



■ From Ms. Juwan Mandalage Shiranthi Damika Ratnayake, an MI alumnus from Sri Lanka (Enhancing Entrepreneurship in SME Development in Export Consortia, 2008):

"From mornings first light, till the day softly ends. Among all my blessings, I am grateful we're friends. I just

wanted you to know that I think about you all, and I'm really glad we share the friendship we do.

Quote of the day

"We can't solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them"
(Albert Einstein)

UPCOMING EVENTS

MI Stakeholder Consultation Meeting



■ An upcoming meeting under the theme 'Aspiring for Regional Impacts', will be held at Mekong Institute in Khon Kaen on 9 July, 2009, a day before the MI Steering Committee and Council meetings on 10 July.

About 50 representatives of MI stakeholders will participate in the meeting, which aims to report on the progress towards the Institute's strategic goals and revised business plan for

2007 to 2010. We also expect to see requests for input and recommendations from key stakeholders on how best to achieve these strategic goals.

MI is also organizing the meeting to report to the Institute's key figures – government agency representatives, development partners, training and research institutions and NGOs from around the GMS – on the progress of its ongoing activities.

Participants will include MI Council members, MI Steering Committee members, Mekong Institute Foundations, development partners and representatives from our donor organisations.

Upcoming learning programs (April-June 2009)

■ Regional Research Development and Research Methodology

MI will be organizing a training course on *Regional Research Development and Research Methodology*, from May 25 – June 12, 2009. The course aims at improving GMS participants' capacity on the key issues and concepts of research process and operationalization of the applied research.

The course is intended primarily for university students, members of research institutes and officials from government agencies who are working in various areas of research. The course contains three modules: Conceptualization of Research; Operation of Research and Report Writing; and Dissemination of Research Outputs.

■ Leadership for Competitive Enterprises

MI will organize a learning program on *Leadership for Competitive Enterprises* in April and June 2009, at MI residential Centre, Khon Kaen, Thailand. The program, under the leadership and good governance theme, will be divided into two courses:

- Course A – Regional Training Program for Public Institutions and State Enterprises in the GMS Countries (27 April - 22 May 2009)
- Course B – International Program for Government Officials from Developing Countries (22 June – 17 July 2009)

The program is aimed at improving the GMS-based participants' knowledge on leadership skills requirements

for competitive enterprises and relevant issues in managing enterprises. It will enhance their professional skills through experiences and lessons learnt from selected enterprises, and promote the communications, cooperation and trust among professionals across the GMS.

The course participants will be senior and/or mid-level government officials involved in the competitive enterprises, senior managers and executives of state-owned and/or private enterprises. MI also encourages participants from provincial, local and rural areas to take part.

■ Sustainable Rural Development

The *Sustainable Rural Development* program, under the Rural Development and Project Management theme, will be held at MI Residential Centre from May 25 – June 19, 2009. The course is a response to the needs of public sector and civil society officials of developing countries, for a training program in rural development that will enhance their capacities and promote regional cooperation.

The course main objective is to help develop the professional capacity of public sector and civil society officials of developing countries to assist sustainable development for better living standards in rural communities. The participants from the six GMS countries will be able to explore three interrelated topics on:

- Rural development issues and problems,
- Rural development methods and tools,
- Sustaining rural development

Continued from Page 4...

undertook training in gender and development, and facilitation skills. An Annual Planning Workshop and Retreat was also held to strengthen working relationships among MI staff.

We developed and implemented the Young GMS Professional Programs to provide young graduates from GMS countries with skills and knowledge relevant to regional development and cooperation. The program has produced a pool of talented young HRD professionals, who attained specialized skills and knowledge through our structured learning programs and gained practical experience, over a six-month period. Many of them are now working at the institute, utilizing their skills, experience and knowledge to support MI operations.

There are many challenges and opportunities ahead and we are hoping to improve MI's technical and academic services and supports, and focus more on our research activities in various areas of human resource development. MI is in a position to help the GMS governments encourage sharing of skills and knowledge in the region. With continuing support from our development partners, MI can be a centre of excellence producing high quality and relevant human resource and professional development programs for the GMS nations.

VISITORS



■ **Vietnamese group visits MI :** The Vietnamese delegation from the Institute of South East Asian Studies (ISEAS), Hanoi, Vietnam met with Mekong Institute management on January 8, 2009.



■ **MRC Monitoring & Evaluation Team Visits MI :** A exploratory team of consultants representing The Mekong River Commission (MRC) led by Ms. Noelle O' Brien, Chief Technical Advisor for Integrated Capacity Building Program, visited MI on January 15, 2009.



■ **The Japanese diplomat visits Mekong Institute :** The Japanese Ambassador to Thailand H.E. Mr. Kyoji Komachi and nine delegates paid a special visit to Mekong Institute (MI) on January 21, 2009.



■ **A Visit to MI by Students from Sciences Po. Paris:** On 13 February 2009, five master's degree students from French university 'Sciences Po' visited MI to discuss about enhanced regional cooperation in research and development projects.

The SIDA Education for Sustainable Development in a River Basin Context training workshop - Kunming City



■ **The fourth phase of SIDA Advanced International Training Programme in "Education for Sustainable Development in a River Basin Context" was carried out in Kunming City, China,**

from 23 February - 6 March 2009.

The entire regional workshop has been divided into five phases, for the duration of 9 months. The program was a collaborative effort between Ramboll Nature AB (Sweden), the Nile Basin Initiative (Africa), and Yunnan University (China).

Twenty participants came from countries of the Mekong River Basin, including China, Lao, Thailand and Vietnam. MI's attendees, from the Programs Department, Ms. Jutamas Thongcharoen, Ms. Van Nguyen Thi Hong, Mr. Khampaseuth Senyawong and Ms. Luiyi Huang.

The fourth phase training provided participants with better understanding of education for sustainable development (ESD) and integrated water resources management, at international and regional levels; increase abilities to analyze various development challenges of environmental, social and economic aspects in sustainable water resource management, how they can integrate their gained knowledge into the education sector of their countries as formal and informal systems.

MI Program Manager, Ms. Sanda Thant said the training "will enhance capacities of MI faculties in designing, developing,

implementing and evaluating MI learning courses." Each attendee was assigned different assignments, which will ultimately contribute to the betterment of MI's learning process.

"All methodologies: participation approach, stakeholder analysis, SWOT analysis, logical framework through communications tools from this training course can be applied to MI's training programs.", said Ms. Van Nguyen Thi Hong.

Because the participants could experience various real world case studies, "they could then reflect on how a change of attitude in understanding ESD and integrated water resource management was vital in helping them apply the gained knowledge to their work and daily lives.", noted Ms. Jutamas Thongcharoen.

"Some case studies we learnt from the workshop can be applied to MI's programs, such as the organic restaurant case study, which involved educating customers about organic products and the benefits of paying more for sustainable and higher quality products." Ms. Thongcharoen explained one of the training's important benefits to MI.

Another benefit which stemmed out of this training was that MI staff were able to network with participants from other organizations in the Mekong region.

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