

PRESS RELEASE

27-10-2023

Building youth leadership for water resources cooperation in the Lancang-Mekong Region



Photo: Natthawat Laphing.

[Chiang Rai, Thailand]- Around 40 participants from the Lancang-Mekong countries, including government officials and policymakers, youth leaders, researchers, civil society and academic institutions, gathered in Chiang Rai, Thailand for a regional consultation workshop towards building the leadership, knowledge, and capacity of youth and young professionals working on water resources and river basin management in the region.

In the Mekong-Lancang Region, many projects focus on education, awareness-raising, and capacity-building for youth groups and networks; however, sustaining these efforts beyond volunteerism is often difficult.

The Mekong-Lancang Cooperation (MLC) has always been interested in young experts, their capacity, and their social contribution to the development and environmental work in the region. As early as in the Sanya Declaration of the First MLC Leaders' Meeting in 2016,

MLC encouraged exchanges among the youth to build a think tank network across the six countries.

Most recently, the joint statement of the Sixth MLC Foreign Ministers' Meeting on 8 June 2021 reaffirmed "LMC's commitment to deepening cooperation in youth to deliver more benefits to the people. Education and human resources cooperation will be enhanced to help the Mekong-Lancang countries train more science and engineering professionals and a high-caliber and skilled workforce."

This regional consultation workshop is part of partnership building and capacity building efforts aimed at supporting youth and leaders/young professionals in the region to meaningfully engage in water resources cooperation in the future.

The workshop has led to enhanced regional water governance and cooperation under the MLC framework to make it more inclusive with the active participation of youth leaders and network members.

In particular, the workshop led to these successful outcomes:

- **Strengthened partnership among the youth leaders** from the MLC countries for future cooperation.
- Enhanced understanding of the opportunities and challenges of water resource cooperation by **learning from previous MLC transboundary projects**.
- Presentation of the preliminary findings from the **review of existing youth networks/initiatives**, that can be used for designing future plans involving water sector youth leadership networks in the region.
- **Enhanced youth leaders' capacity** in MLC Water Resources Cooperation, communications, and multi-country team planning and transboundary cooperation.



Photo: Rajesh Daniel/ SEI Asia.

Field visits for onsite learning about water governance

This workshop also featured field visits for learning and exchange about water governance in the region:

1. “Joint Assessment of Thailand and Myanmar on Flood and Drought for Transboundary Water Resources Management” in Mae Sai District, one of the previous MLC projects.
2. “Mekong School” to learn about local knowledge and changes in the ecology and community’s livelihoods along the Mekong River and how the school has engaged with the youth in the communities to conserve water.

This initiative is organized with the support of project implementing agencies: Office of the National Water Resources (ONWR), Thailand; Environmental Research Institute (ERIC), Chulalongkorn University; Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI) and Lancang Mekong Water Resources Cooperation Water Centre (LMC Water Centre) in close cooperation with several partners from the six MLC member countries and regional networks working with the young professionals in the region.

Participated in the first regional consultation workshop and contributed to the design of future water sector youth leadership network include the representatives from following organizations and networks.

- National Institute of Science, Technology & Innovation (NISTI), Ministry of Industry, Science, Technology & Innovation (MISTI), Cambodia
- Lancang Mekong Water Resources Cooperation Water Centre (LMC Water Centre), P.R. China
- International Economic & Technical Cooperation and Exchange Center (INTEC), Ministry of Water Resources, P.R. China
- Changjiang Water Resources Commission, Ministry of Water Resources, P.R. China
- Hubei University of Economics, P.R.China
- Lao National Mekong Committee Secretariat (LNMCS), Lao PDR
- Department of Water Resources (DWR), Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, Lao PDR
- Faculty of Water Resource, National University of Laos (NUOL), Lao PDR
- Directorate of Water Resources and Improvement of River Systems, Myanmar
- Office of the National Water Resources (ONWR), Thailand
- Environmental Research Institute (ERIC), Chulalongkorn University, Thailand
- Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI), Asia Centre, Thailand
- Hill Area and Community Development Foundation (HADDF), Thailand
- Mae Fah Luang University, Thailand
- Water Resources Institute (WRI), Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, Viet Nam
- Department of Water Resources, College of Environment and Natural Resources, Can Tho University, Viet Nam
- Vietnam Academy of Social Science (VASS), Viet Nam
- Sustainable Mekong Research Network Young Professional Network (SYP)

For media inquiries, please contact Rajesh Daniel, Lead Comms, SEI Asia, Bangkok, at rajesh.daniel@sei.org.

About SEI Asia

SEI Asia, based in Bangkok, has a diverse team of multinational experts that integrates scientific research with participatory approaches to co-develop and share knowledge, build partnerships, and influence policy for resilient development. It focuses on gender and social equity, climate adaptation, reducing disaster risk, water insecurity and integrated water resources management, transitional agriculture, renewable energy, and urbanization.