

Mekong Thought Leadership and Think Tanks Network Program

Open: 1-Year Fellowship | Call for 3rd Batch Applications

The Mekong Thought Leadership and Think Tanks Network Program hosts fellowship opportunities in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Vietnam. The program will award 12 entry- or mid-level professionals of all genders who are Mekong citizens (Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, Vietnam) with research, policy, or communication experience in water, energy, and climate sectors. Fellowship work status and durations are either 1-year full-time or 1-year part-time. One fellowship grant is for a maximum of AUD 25,000 (~USD 16,000), with the grant amount adjusted proportionally based on the work status and duration of the fellowship. The fellowship must be completed before June 2025. Lao citizens, women, individuals from diverse genders, Indigenous groups, people with diverse ethnicities, and persons with disabilities are especially encouraged to apply.

Launch of the Call: 15 March 2024.

Application deadline: 14 April 2024, 23:59 (Bangkok/Indochina time).

Submissions of applications will only be accepted through online submission platform:

<https://sei.submittable.com/submit/290749/mekong-thought-leadership-and-think-tanks-network-call-for-fellows-round-3>

1 Background

The Mekong Thought Leadership and Think Tanks Network Program, supported by Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), aims to work with national and regional knowledge-based policy influence organizations (KBPIOs)¹ in the Mekong Region to enhance their capacities to effectively engage stakeholders involved in policy processes. In particular, the program will work with KBPIOs to support strengthening policy and practice concerning equitable water security, energy security, as well as climate change mitigation and adaptation. This will be combined with communications based on high-quality research, practical advice generated by the program, and cross-learning among relevant regional organizations.

The program views that investing in diverse entry- or mid-level professionals of all genders working in research and policy engagement is essential to enhance their capacity to produce and promote practical and sustainable solutions. The program will spearhead capacity building through fellowships and trainings.

For more information about the Program, please visit

<https://www.sumernet.org/featuredproject/mekong-thought-leadership-and-think-tanks-network>

¹ Wellstead, A.M. and Howlett, M. 2022. (Re)Thinking think tanks in the age of policy labs: The rise of knowledge-based policy influence organisations. *Aust. J. Publ. Admin.* 81: 224-232.

2 Objectives

There are three main objectives for the fellowship program.

1. Strengthen knowledge, capacity, and skills of diverse Mekong entry- or mid-level professionals of all genders in policy research, engagement, and communication, as well as effectively integrate gender equity, disability, and social inclusion within each of these.
2. Support the program's implementation in enhancing effectiveness and inclusiveness of policy engagement at the intersections of water security, energy security, and climate change mitigation and adaptation, as well as in the crosscutting dimension of gender equality, disability, and social inclusion across these domains.
3. Provide opportunities for diverse entry- or mid-level professionals of all genders to increase their networking with other professionals across sectors, especially water, energy, climate change, as well as gender equity, disability, and social inclusion, across the Mekong Region.

3 Fellow Criteria

This call seeks to award 12 entry- or mid-level professionals.

- At least 5 grants are specifically allocated for **entry- or mid-career woman researchers** in the Mekong Region.
- **Citizens of Lao PDR** are strongly encouraged to apply.
- Other individuals from diverse genders, Indigenous groups, people with diverse ethnicities, and persons with disabilities are especially encouraged to apply.

Note: The MTT Secretariat reserves the right to maintain a balanced portfolio for its fellowship grants (of 3 batches), which may involve considering the countries of origin and gender diversity of grant beneficiaries.

4 Fellow Qualifications

4.1 Required

1. Entry- or mid-level professionals of all ages and genders.
2. Citizen of Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, or Vietnam.
3. Education qualification as appropriate for the role, but generally considered to be:
 - a. Master's degree with at least two years experience; or
 - b. Bachelor's degree with at least five years experience.
4. Available to commit to a 1-year full-time or 1-year part-time fellowship.

4.2 Preferable

1. Experience in working in at least one of the thematic areas:
 - a. Water security.
 - b. Energy security.
 - c. Climate change mitigation or adaptation.
 - d. Gender equality, disability, and social inclusion (GEDSI).

- e. Water, energy, and climate nexus.
2. Consider being physically based with a host institution for at least half of the fellowship period, whereby stays/visits should add up to half of the fellowship period. For prospective fellows who are not able to physically relocate to the host institution, other arrangements can be negotiated upon request and subject to approval by the Program Secretariat (Stockholm Environment Institute, Asia Center).
3. The fellow must be hosted by someone other than their existing employer.

5 Tasks

5.1 General Tasks

1. Attend meetings and relevant events organized by the program.
2. Engage with partners and other fellows in the program.
3. Report on the progress of the fellowship.
4. Actively engage with SUMERNET Young Professionals (SYP), a sub-network under the Sustainable Mekong Research Network (SUMERNET), working to inform and engage young professionals who are passionate about a just and sustainable Mekong future.
5. Engage in outreach activities of the program.
6. Engage in activities depending on available time and common interest of the fellow, mentor, and host institution.

5.2 Specific Tasks

1. The specific tasks of the fellowship will be agreed upon between the fellow, their respective mentor, and the host institution. It will include, but not be limited to, research, communications, and policy engagement.

6 Duration

The duration of this fellowship is one year full-time or one year part-time (determined and agreed before the start of the fellowship). Changes to the fellowship duration will be based on evaluating the fellow's work and with the agreement of all parties concerned: fellow, mentor, and host institution.

7 Hosting Options

A reputable organization in the Mekong Region will host each fellow. The host organization will provide a mentor who will guide and engage directly with the fellow and provide supporting links to the wider Program activities and opportunities.

In this 3rd call, there are 12 hosts approved by the Program.

Hosts Linked with the Program Flagship Study Project

7.1 *Host No.1 Thailand Environment Institute, Nonthaburi, Thailand*

The fellow will be hosted at Thailand Environment Institute, Nonthaburi, Thailand. They will be mentored mainly by Dr. Jeeranuch Sakkhamduang and occasionally by Dr. Wijarn Simachya, TEI's president. The fellow will help with data collection, synthesis, and communication with the stakeholders of the project such as Bangkok Metropolitan Authority, the Department of Climate Change and Environment, Community Organizations Development Institute, the National Housing Authority of Thailand, the Department of Water Resource, and vulnerable communities in Bangkok, among others.

This work will contribute to the project titled "Urban Heat Resilience: Bridging Science, Policy, and Sustainable Design," which aims to tackle the issue of urban heat using science and nature-based solutions for the consideration of policymakers and urban planners. The fellow will use the opportunity to understand the utilization of data and technology to support policymakers, the nexus between climate change and energy consumption, and the roles of water (urban wetlands) in reducing heat. Learning opportunities include (1) data collection and synthesis, fields visit, and exchange experiences with vulnerable communities; (2) communication with stakeholders; (3) support organizing workshops and meetings together with the project consortium; (4) attending meetings related to urban issues and nature-based solutions; and (5) writing reports of relevant meetings, amongst other activities.

7.2 *Host No.2 Stockholm Environment Institute, Asia Center, Bangkok, Thailand*

The fellow shall be hosted at Stockholm Environment Institute, Asia Center. Dr. Thanapon Piman, Senior Research Fellow, will mentor them. The fellow will work under the Flagship Study Project "Opportunities and solutions in managing water storage to reduce transboundary water-related disaster risks and to address multiple water demands (OSWS)," funded by the Program. Learning opportunities include (1) hands-on experience in the delivery of the flagship study project in the aspects of research, policy engagement, and communications; (2) working with senior researchers and experts in the area of water, energy security, and climate change; and (3) collaborating with other prominent knowledge-based policy influence organizations in the Mekong Region.

7.3 *Host No.3 Faculty of Environmental Sciences, National University of Laos, Vientiane, Lao PDR*

The fellow will be hosted at Faculty of Environmental Sciences, National University of Laos. Dr. Oulavanh Sinsamphanh, Head of Postgraduate Division, Faculty of Environmental Sciences, will mentor them. The fellow will work under the Flagship Study Project "Opportunities and solutions in managing water storage to reduce transboundary water-related disaster risks and to address multiple water demands (OSWS)," funded by the Program, especially focusing on the Laos case study. The fellow will also have the opportunity to engage in other related environmental projects and activities by the Faculty. Learning opportunities include (1) hands-on experience in the delivery of the Flagship Study Project in the aspects of research, policy engagement, and communications; (2) working with senior researchers and experts in the area of water, energy security, and climate change; and (3) collaborating with other prominent knowledge-based policy influence organizations in the Mekong Region. Other opportunities will be explored during the fellowship.

7.4 Host No.4 Department of Women's in Development, Lao Women's Union, Vientiane, Lao PDR

The fellow will be hosted at the Department of Women's in Development, Lao Women's Union. Dr. Ninpaseuth Xayaphonesy, Director General, will mentor them. The fellow will support Dr. Ninpaseuth and other staff at the department in various development projects and activities, with strong focus on Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion, including the Flagship Study Project "Opportunities and solutions in managing water storage to reduce transboundary water-related disaster risks and to address multiple water demands (OSWS)". Learning opportunities include (1) experience in knowledge co-production, policy influence, and community engagement in the Mekong Region; and (2) working with senior researchers, policy influencers, and community representatives in the areas of water, energy security, and climate change. Other opportunities will be explored during the fellowship.

Hosts Linked with a Program Rapid Response Project

7.5 Host No.5 Institute of Technology of Cambodia, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

The fellow will be hosted at the Institute of Technology of Cambodia, Phnom Penh, Cambodia. They will be mentored by Asst. Prof. Dr. Saret Bun. The fellow will help address water scarcity in rural areas through groundwater use, specifically focusing on the development of treatment technology for groundwater. This work will contribute towards drinking water solutions with renewable energy supply under climate change circumstances. Learning opportunities include (1) water treatment technology, solar power energy, groundwater quality, and use; (2) social survey and assessment addressing the needs of local community women and men; and (3) application from research to real-life solutions.

7.6 Host No.6 Faculty of Fisheries Technology and Aquatic Resources, Maejo University, Chiang Mai, Thailand

The project titled "Enhancing Fisheries Resilience and Managing Fisheries Resources Sustainably through Local Community Participation in Lao PDR." The fellow will be hosted at the Faculty of Fisheries Technology and Aquatic Resources, Maejo University, Chiang Mai, Thailand, and/or Northern Agriculture and Forestry College, Luang Prabang, Lao PDR. Dr. Khajornkiat Srinuansom and Mr. Alounxay Pasithi will mentor them. The fellow (social science background) will help with the project team on community engagement and gender equality, disability, and social inclusion (GEDSI) in the project. This work will contribute towards community engagement and GEDSI in the project, such as project workshops, consultations, and planning meetings with the community.

7.7 Host No.7 Nghe An Centre for Forestry Development and Consultation, Vinh City, Vietnam

The fellow will be hosted at Nghe An Centre for Forestry Development and Consultation, Vinh City, Vietnam. Dr. Ho Thi Phuong will mentor them. The fellow will help coordinate with the project team to implement project activities funded by the Program. This work will contribute to promoting equitable sharing of water resources for ethnic minority communities living downstream of small hydropower projects in Vietnam. Learning opportunities include: (1) participating in project activities such as policy research, engagement with local women and men, and communication; (2) participating in fieldwork in the project area; and (3) collaborating with experienced experts in the fields of community

development, environment, and natural resources, to enhance the empowerment of local women, ethnic minorities, and people with disabilities.

Hosts Linked with Projects of Other Program Partners in the Mekong Region

7.8 *Host No.8 VietInsight, Hanoi, Vietnam*

The fellow will be hosted at VietInsight in Hanoi, Vietnam. Dr. Bach Tan Sinh will be the mentor. The fellow will help prepare the research project proposal "Enhancing the multiple-sectoral, participatory and inclusive engagement of concerned stakeholders in managing urban solid wastes in Lao Cai City, Vietnam," to be submitted for potential funding. This work will contribute towards (1) climate change mitigation and adaptation; (2) water, energy, and climate nexus; and (3) gender equality, disability, and social inclusion. Learning opportunities include (1) help in reviewing the existing research related to the theme of the project proposal, (2) help in preparing the proposal, and (3) help in identifying the potential funding institutions, agencies, and programs, including the SUMERNET and Mekong Thought Leadership and Think Tanks Program.

7.9 *Host No.9 Vietnam National University Central Institute for Natural Resources and Environmental Studies (VNU-CRES), Hanoi, Vietnam*

The fellow will be hosted at the Vietnam National University Central Institute for Natural Resources and Environmental Studies (VNU-CRES), Hanoi, Vietnam. Dr. Le Thi Van Hue, an expert on gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) in the Mekong Region, will be the mentor. The fellow will support Dr. Hue in co-producing research with small-scale fish farmers in the Red River Delta to better understand past and current nature-based and climate-adaptive practices using critical social science perspectives such as political ecology and feminist political ecology. This work will contribute towards providing marginalized farmers in the Red River Delta with climate adaptation options that are nature-based and people-centered. Learning opportunities may include (1) conducting global and local literature reviews related to GESI; (2) participating in data collection such as in-depth interviews, photovoice methodologies, and focus group discussions; and (3) contributing to GESI-focused research and communication products.

7.10 *Host No.10 Mekong Sub-region Social Research Center (MSSRC), Ubon Ratchathani University, Ubon Ratcharhani, Thailand*

The fellow will be hosted at the Mekong Sub-region Social Research Center (MSSRC), based at the Faculty of Liberal Arts, Ubon Ratchathani University, Thailand. Associate Professor Kanokwan Manorom will mentor the fellow. The fellow will help to conduct research using feminist political ecology, gender, and social justice perspectives, which will help shape the fellow's research questions, methodology, and discussion. This work will contribute towards fisheries and water-related issues linked to climate change adaptation and GESI perspectives. The fellow will learn about an ongoing research project, "Nature-based practices and aquaculture adaptation to climate in Thailand and Vietnam," and other research, such as "Slow violence and water (in)justice: (Feminist) Political ecologies of intergenerational struggles in the Mekong Region." The fellow will be able to share their research results with MA and PhD students who are part of the social science and development program through seminars and meetings.

7.11 Host No.11 The Joint Graduate School of Energy and Environment, King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi, Bangkok, Thailand

The fellow will be hosted at The Joint Graduate School of Energy and Environment (JGSEE), Bangkok, Thailand. They will be mentored by Dr. Shabbir Gheewala, an expert in Life Cycle Assessment (LCA). The fellow will support Dr. Shabbir in assessing the performances of nature-based climate solutions (NbCS) in aquaculture, using tools such as LCA, economic evaluation, and ecosystem services assessment. This work will contribute towards adaptation and mitigation efforts in the aquaculture sectors of Thailand and Vietnam. Learning opportunities may include (1) conducting literature reviews on aquaculture food systems, (2) participating in field surveys and data collection, and (3) engaging stakeholders in the value chain, particularly the private sector.

7.12 Host No.12 College of Aquaculture and Fisheries, Can Tho University, Can Tho City, Vietnam

The fellow will be hosted at the College of Aquaculture and Fisheries of Can Tho University. Can Tho is located in the Mekong River Delta of Vietnam. Dr. Nguyen Thanh Phuong, Professor of Aquaculture, will mentor the fellow. Dr. Phuong is a well-known teacher and scientist in aquaculture in the Mekong Delta and Vietnam. The fellow will support Dr. Phuong in exploring nature-based climate solutions in aquaculture and the enabling factors for their adoption. This work will provide fish and shrimp farmers in Vietnam with climate adaptation options that are nature-positive and accessible. Learning opportunities may include (1) conducting literature and policy reviews, (2) participating in data collection such as large-scale surveys and in-depth interviews, and (3) supporting multi-stakeholder engagements and policy-informing outputs.

8 Benefits and Allowance

8.1 Highlighted Benefits

1. Unique opportunity to be mentored by senior experts in various fields of research, policy and practice relating to issues of water, energy and climate with a gender equality, disability, and social inclusion lens.
2. Be part of an interdisciplinary and international program that includes partners in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, Vietnam, Australia and beyond.
3. Have access to capacity development activities within the program and those organized by partner organizations.
4. The opportunity to participate in program regional forums or other regional activities.
5. Receive an official certificate for successful completion of the fellowship.

8.2 Allowance Summary

One fellowship grant is for a maximum of **AUD 25,000** (~USD 16,000), with the grant amount adjusted proportionally based on the work status (full-time vs part-time) and duration of the fellowship (up to 1 year and completed before June 2025). The grant covers the following expenditures.

1. One return flight, work permit and visa for the fellow to be physically placed in the host institution.

2. Travel support for the fellow to join regional fora and other activities.
3. Health and travel insurance.
4. Monthly allowance for the fellow.
5. Accommodation support.
6. Overhead to host institute.
7. Honorarium for the mentor of the fellow.

Detailed breakdown of the grant will be finalized between the fellow and host institution, according to the Fellowship Grant Guideline, before the start of the fellowship period. Arrangements are subject to approval by the Program Secretariat (Stockholm Environment Institute, Asia Center). The total grant will not exceed AUD 25,000 in total.

9 Application Submission

9.1 *Mandatory*

1. Recent CV/resumé.
2. Motivation letter (500 words maximum). The letter should address the following questions:
 - a. What is your motivation to apply for this fellowship opportunity?
 - b. How is your current work/study relevant to the host and position you are applying to?
 - c. What are your expectations/hopes for this position?
 - d. What unique perspective and insights do you bring to this position? (Please address here cultural, minority, gender, disability, etc. issues)
3. At least one reference letter from current or former work/academic supervisor.

9.2 *Optional*

1. Relevant samples of work (reports, academic papers, other media outputs, etc.).

10 Important Dates

Step	Date
Application submission deadline	14 April 2024
Application review	17 April to 1 May 2024
Host interviews	6-26 May 2024
Endorsement by Program	3-7 June 2024
Announcement	10-14 June 2024

Note: Dates are tentative and may be subject to change.

Subject to restrictions related to the application process for visa and work permit and other considerations, fellows will start their activities with the host institution as soon as possible, ideally by **July 2024**.

The fellow may initially undertake activities online or remotely if necessary. The fellowship starting date will be determined considering the conditions listed above and will last for a period of 1-year full-time or 1-year part-time from the starting date.

Lao citizens, women, individuals from diverse genders, Indigenous groups, people with diverse ethnicities, and persons with disabilities are especially encouraged to apply.

11 Contact

Please contact Mr. Boripat Lebel, Unit for Social and Environmental Research (USER), Thailand for inquiries. Email: boripat@sea-user.org.