

# THE MEKONG-U.S. PARTNERSHIP SEMI-ANNUAL REPORT: AUGUST 2023

Greetings from Washington, D.C.!

As the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Multilateral Affairs and alternate Mekong Senior Official, I'm excited to share this semi-annual report detailing the U.S. commitment to the Mekong sub-region and laying out our wide-ranging cooperation under the Mekong-U.S. Partnership with our numerous friends and colleagues.

The first half of the year saw a return to in-person engagement. In February, we were excited to co-host the first in-person MUSP Policy Dialogue in Vientiane with our country co-chair Lao PDR. In April, I was pleased to lead the U.S. delegation to the Mekong River Commission Summit, Ministerial, and International Conference. During the ministerial meeting, the United States highlighted the MRC as a model among global river basin organizations dealing with everyday challenges, as Mekong partners reaffirmed the MRC's role in Mekong transboundary water management. Additionally in April, I was thrilled to co-host the MUSP and Friends of the Mekong senior official meeting to discuss our partnership and plans for the future.

The United States continues to partner on clean energy through the Japan-U.S.-Mekong Power Partnership (JUMMP). In April 2023, we finalized and publicly released the JUMMP Action Plan that highlights over 50 ongoing and planned technical cooperation activities and engagements to support national and regional power trade and market development, as well as clean energy integration. (See <https://www.state.gov/release-of-japan-u-s-mekong-power-partnership-action-plan> for more information.)

The pages of this semi-annual report illustrate the dynamic ways that the MUSP Plan of Action (POA) 2021 – 2023 is positively impacting the citizens of the Mekong sub-region and demonstrate that cross-border collaboration strengthens our collective efforts. The short success stories also can help link technical experts who wish to learn more or directly engage with on-going MUSP initiatives. In the coming months, we look forward to hearing your views and facilitating additional discussion on these programs as we consider a new MUSP POA 2024 – 26. Thank you for your support and continued partnership.

Sincerely,  
*Dr. Jung N. Pak*

Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Multilateral Affairs  
Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs

## This Issue Will Cover:

**Key Regional Visits 2023**  
(pg. 2-3)

**Economic Connectivity**  
(pg. 4-5)

**Sustainable Water, Natural Resources Management, and Environmental Conservation and Protection** (pg. 6-9)

**Non-Traditional Security**  
(pg. 10)

**Human Resource Development** (pg. 11-12)

**What's Next**  
(pg. 13)

**To Stay Up to Date on the work of the Mekong-U.S. Partnership Visit our MUSP [Website](#) and [Facebook](#)**





# Key Regional Events 2023

## MUSP Policy Dialogue

During the first ever in-person MUSP Policy Dialogue February 23-24, government representatives from Mekong countries and the United States shared perspectives on regional policies and transboundary challenges in the Mekong sub-region, lessons learned, and opportunities to build on our collective past successes. Representatives from U.S. Embassies Bangkok, Hanoi, and Vientiane and Ministry of Foreign Affairs from the MUSP countries participated, in addition to members of National Mekong Committees, Ministries of Environment, of Education, Youth, and Sport; of Interior, of Agriculture and Forestry, Agriculture Livestock and Irrigation, Agriculture and Rural Development; of Transport and Communication, and Planning and Investment. They discussed ongoing policy priorities and how the U.S. foreign assistance that is delivered under the framework of the MUSP clearly demonstrates the U.S. commitment to the Mekong sub-region.



MUSP Policy Dialogue in Lao PDR February 23-24.

## Mekong River Commission Summit

From April 2-5, DAS Pak led a large U.S. interagency delegation to the Mekong River Commission Summit, Ministerial, and International Conference in Vientiane, Lao PDR. The U.S. delegation included representatives from the U.S. State Department, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the U.S. Agency for International Development, the U.S. Geological Survey, and Mekong-U.S. Partnership (MUSP) program implementers. During the Ministerial Meeting, DAS Pak recognized the MRC's role in Mekong transboundary water management and reaffirmed U.S. support to the MRC and riparian countries to promote sustainable development. DAS Pak also participated in a panel with MRC CEO Dr. Anoulak Kittikhoun to close the International Conference on April 3, emphasizing the conference themes of innovation, cooperation, and action, and highlighting MUSP programs that work alongside the MRC, including the Mekong-Mississippi Sister Rivers Partnership implemented by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Mekong Water Data Initiative, and the USAID and NASA SERVIR-Southeast Asia program.



DAS Pak at 4th Mekong River Commission Summit in Vientiane, Lao PDR April 2-5.

## Friends of the Mekong Senior Officials Meeting

On April 6, DAS Pak chaired the Friends of the Mekong (FOM) senior officials meeting in Vientiane. The highlight of the meeting was the [public release](#) of the Japan-U.S.-Mekong Power Partnership (JUMPP) Action Plan, which outlines priority projects and activities to help Mekong countries achieve their clean energy, cross-border, and regional power market development goals. In addition, several delegates expressed support for exploring mechanisms to map ongoing and future regional Mekong programs to find synergies and identify gaps. Delegates from all 14 FOM partner countries and organizations attended the meeting. India and the UK also participated as

## Key Regional Events 2023

### **Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs (OES) Acting Assistant Secretary (AA/S) Jennifer Littlejohn Visits Lao PDR, Highlights One Health, Environment, and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM)**

OES AA/S Jennifer Littlejohn visited Lao PDR June 19-20 to elevate One Health, environment, and STEM issues. While in Vientiane, she held separate meetings with CEO of the Mekong River Commission Secretariat, a group of Lao women working in STEM fields, and senior officials from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Agriculture and Forestry, and Natural Resources and Environment. She also visited a traditional live bird market to see a CDC-funded avian influenza surveillance program in action and “That Luang” or Golden Stupa, one of the most important and sacred landmarks in Lao PDR. During the visit she emphasized the importance of working together to combat environmental pollution, conserve biodiversity, and protect people and places. Both sides are keen to strengthen cooperation as Lao PDR prepares to assume its role as the ASEAN 2024 Chair.



OES AA/S Littlejohn with women working in STEM fields in Lao PDR June 19-20.

## Economic Connectivity

### Mekong Inspiring Women Entrepreneurs (WE) Inspire

Throughout the first half of the year, the MUSP WE Inspire program, launched by the Mekong-U.S. Partnership (MUSP) in 2021, has been actively empowering women in the Lower Mekong sub-region across Cambodia, Thailand, and Vietnam. In May, WE Inspire launched the “Good Health, Good Life” workshop for 120 women in Chiang Rai, Thailand, with participation from the Department of State and in collaboration with local healthcare professionals and community health volunteers. The workshop promoted the importance of health insurance for women, in particular those from ethnic minorities or other vulnerable communities. In June, the project emphasized the importance of financial literacy and savings practices through a workshop developed in collaboration with the local Thai Government Bank, Chiang Rai. Through interactive activities and practical exercises, participants gained insights into real-life financial scenarios, set savings goals, learned money-saving tips, and utilized digital banking and money-saving applications. The WE Inspire project continues to make significant strides in empowering women in the Mekong sub-region, offering them access to affordable healthcare services, personal financial planning consultations, and programs to improve their entrepreneurial skills. The project aims to transform healthcare behaviors and financial capabilities in the long run, ensuring a brighter future for women in the region. For more information on the WE Inspire program, please visit:

<https://weinspire.kenan-asia.org/>



WE Inspire participants in Chiang Rai, Thailand in May.

### Japan-U.S. Mekong Power Partnership (JUMPP)

The U.S. Department of State’s Power Sector Program (PSP) and USAID continued its work under JUMPP by hosting capacity-building workshops for Mekong sub-region utilities, energy ministries, and regulators on topics related to enhancing cross-border trade and regional power market development, including two events in April in Bangkok. PSP advanced a pilot on interconnector transmission code and methodology to calculate available transfer capacity on existing interconnections in Southeast Asia. If implemented, the pilot would enable reserve sharing, commercial power trading, and optimization of renewable energy resources among Mekong governments. JUMPP’s Technical Advisory Group met in April in Bangkok to review ongoing and planned cooperation activities and advance new areas of technical assistance. PSP also helped develop a roadmap that recommends actionable steps for Mekong regulators to move toward a regional power market. Mekong officials learned about leading practices for moving from bilateral power trade to a regional power market and on developing a regional transmission system operator, creating common rules for technical and commercial interconnection operation, and establishing national wholesale markets.

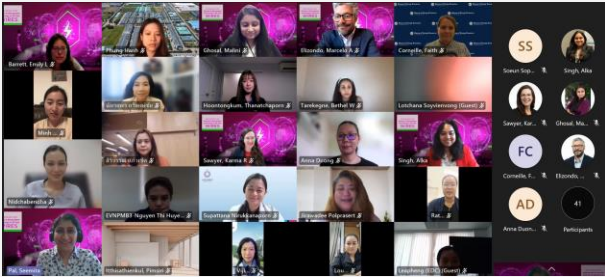


JUMPP Technical Advisory Group in Bangkok, Thailand in April.

# Economic Connectivity

## Women In Renewables and Energy in Southeast Asia (WIRES)

In support of the Japan-U.S.-Mekong Power Partnership, in June, the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Energy Resources' Power Sector Program (PSP) proudly announced the launch of Women in Renewables and Energy in Southeast Asia (WIRES), a professional development program that will partner women engineers from the Department of Energy's Pacific Northwest National Laboratory (PNNL) with women engineers from Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Vietnam. WIRES will build technical capacity and mentorship on renewable energy integration for 42 early and mid-career women engineers. The program will help them step into technical leadership roles in the clean energy transition and expand their professional network in the Mekong region and globally as they interact with PNNL engineers and other experts.



Virtual kickoff of WIRES in June.

## USAID and Australia Safeguards Program

The USAID and Australia Mekong Safeguards Program collaborates with civil society organizations in northern Thailand to strengthen community empowerment to reduce and prevent any harm from infrastructure development. On May 24-25, Mekong Safeguards, along with other USAID and U.S. government activities in Chiang Rai province, launched village-level research on overdevelopment impacts, an air quality pilot project, and a digital library housing local community effort to protect the environment. This collaboration between Australia and the United States illustrates how working with regional allies can strengthen local communities and enhance resilience in Thailand and throughout the Mekong sub-region.

## Sustainable Biomass in the Lower Mekong through USAID Mekong Sustainable Manufacturing Alliance

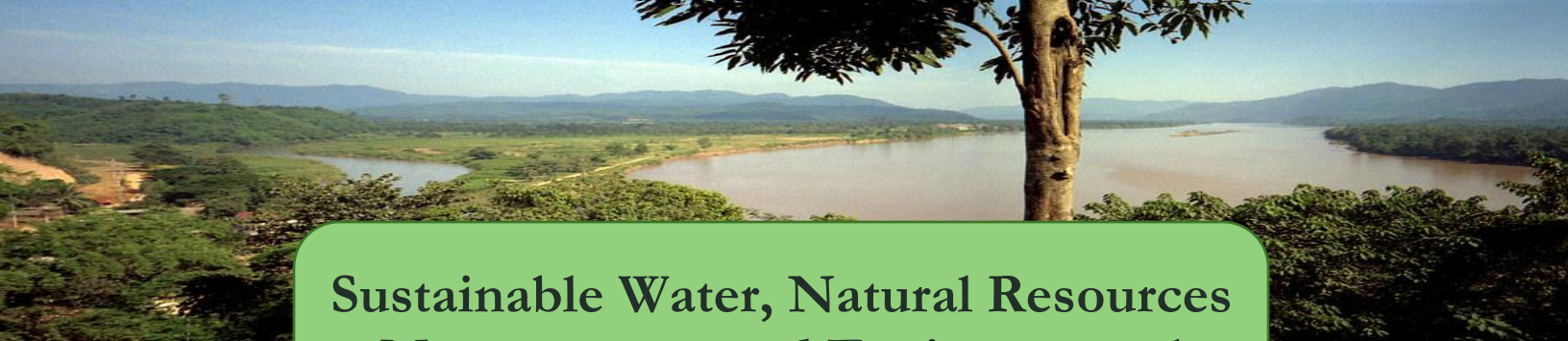
The adoption of sustainability standards will drive long-term competitiveness in international markets and lower costs. In April, the Mekong Sustainable Manufacturing Alliance – in partnership with the Textile, Apparel, Footwear, and Travel Goods Association in Cambodia, the Thailand Textile Institute, and the Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry – hosted sustainable supply chain events in Cambodia, Thailand, and Vietnam. Leading textile and food suppliers, along with climate policy experts, discussed challenges and a guiding framework to increase the use of sustainable biomass, a key source of renewable energy, throughout the manufacturing process. The Alliance's draft Sustainable Biomass Guidelines and Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) Risk Assessment tool can help manufacturers understand the different biomass types and assess the sustainability of biomass as an energy source throughout the value chain.



Mekong Sustainable Manufacturing Alliance.



USAID/RDMA staff members with Australian partners in Chiang Rai, Thailand May 24-25.



# Sustainable Water, Natural Resources Management, and Environmental Conservation and Protection

## U.S. Geological Survey Climate Adaptation Science Centers

In May, Embassy Bangkok presented to the Thai government a report entitled “Supporting Climate Resiliency for Mekong River Basin Fisheries,” produced by subject matter experts from the United States Geological Survey (USGS) Climate Adaptation Science Centers. The report synthesizes the impacts of climate change, current adaptation approaches, and possible future strategies for a local community in Ban Muang sub-district in the northeastern “Isaan” province of Nong Khai. This community, which traditionally relied on fisheries and agriculture, faces the impacts of climate change and upstream development. A key objective of the report is to provide policy options that will help Mekong communities build resiliency in light of unpredictable and fluctuating river levels, as well as to apply scientific and innovative methods helping address the Mekong River Basin’s environmental and economic challenges. The report built upon an extensive literature review and on-the-ground research done by one of the authors, Dr. Holly Embke, during a four week stay in Ban Muang in October 2022. Local villagers formed a group called “Rak Mekong,” dedicated to protecting their home, way of life, and culture. During that time, Dr. Embke interacted with residents in Ban Muang and nearby areas, and met frequently with local, provincial, and national government officials on the climate change challenges faced by Mekong riparian communities, including by Ban Muang villagers.



Rak Mekong group in Ban Muang, Thailand in October.

## Mekong Environment Forum

At a March 20 workshop in Can Tho, Vietnam, the Mekong Environment Forum (MEF), a local NGO, assembled academic experts, local government officials, and civil society members from Vietnam, Thailand, and Cambodia, to share findings from phase one of the MUSP-funded Women’s Vulnerability Tracker project (WV Tracker). With a \$75,000 grant and technical support from the MUSP Pathfinder Health Program, MEF launched the WV Tracker in 2022 with the goal of boosting health security in rural areas, particularly for women. The project has focused on identifying outbreaks of zoonotic, climate-sensitive, and waterborne diseases linked to contaminated water and poor hygiene. In collaboration with Colorado State University (CSU)’s Citizen Science Program, MEF built and trained a network of roughly 75 “citizen scientists” comprising rural youth, women, journalists, civil society, and local authorities to collect and contribute data for analysis and policy recommendations. The workshop noted that women experience the impacts of climate change, water insecurity, and disease both differently and at disproportionately higher rates than men. MEF received an additional \$25,000 award from Mekong Connections to support ongoing work on the WV tracker, including scientific workshops and hack-a-thons to introduce and test the WV Tracker Mobile Application in rural Vietnamese communities.



The Mekong Environment Forum (MEF) workshop participants in Can Tho, Vietnam.

# Sustainable Water, Natural Resources Management, and Environmental Conservation and Protection

## Mekong Dam Monitor

The [Mekong Dam Monitor](#) (MDM) team launched its monthly Mekong Water Data Hour virtual webinar series in February. This online series invites experts and local discussants to take a deep dive into the methods and results of recently published research on issues related to the Mekong River. To learn more, please view the video recordings of past webinars, which include discussions on [flooded forests in Cambodia](#), [sandmining](#), [dam impacts to the Mekong Delta](#), [dam impacts on the 3S River System](#), and [dam development and fish biodiversity loss](#). The MDM team also recently published an extensive and interactive [technical report on how 20 dams in Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Vietnam are changing hydrological flows in the 3S River System and the Mekong mainstream](#). This report was supported by the USAID Wonders of the Mekong project.

## Lower Mekong River Basin NASA Satellite Observations

In the Lower Mekong River Basin, prior remote sensing studies have focused on large watersheds, leaving smaller watersheds largely unexplored. NASA's recent work focused on these underrepresented watersheds and investigated using different satellite sensors with varying spatial resolutions, including GRACE Terrestrial Water Storage (100 kilometers), GPM precipitation (10 kilometers), SMAP soil moisture (10 kilometers) and downscaled 1km SMAP soil moisture. NASA used these satellite sensors to examine hydrometeorological variations of the historic 2015-16 Lower Mekong River Basin drought, a natural disaster that affected over 9.56 million people and caused economic damage estimated at \$1.7 billion in Thailand alone. One of the key findings of the study was high-resolution monitoring of top-soil moisture can allow for informed agricultural decision-making, particularly regarding water availability during drought periods. The study emphasized the contribution of Earth observations, at various spatial scales, in aiding water resources and land management decisions at the regional level. Study details can be found here:

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2214581823000496?via%3Dihub>

## Mekong Research Symposium 2023

March 14-16, the Sustainable Infrastructure Partnership (SIP) convened the 2023 Mekong Research Symposium, with more than 200 participants from government agencies, universities, and civil society in Chiang Rai, Thailand, for discussions on the theme, "Data into Action for a Resilient Mekong." (SIP). Speakers and participants considered the value of citizen engagement in deciding what data is useful, who needs the data, why local communities should be involved in collecting and analyzing data, and who has rights to data and knowledge. A special feature of this year's event was the availability of simultaneous interpretation of proceedings in the five Lower Mekong languages, which enabled a greater diversity of participants to contribute to discussions. Five half-day field trips enabled participants to observe community-led conservation efforts, indigenous women's leadership, and participatory research and action on development and change in the Lower Mekong Basin. Immediately following the close of MRS 2023, a half-day "Mekong Implementers Workshop" sought opportunities to apply lessons learned in programming and coordination with development partners, including government agencies and international organizations.



Christy Owen, Chief of Party at Pact Thailand, welcomes all participants to the Mekong Research Symposium in Chiang Rai, Thailand March 14-16.

# Sustainable Water, Natural Resources Management, and Environmental Conservation and Protection

## NexGen

NexGen successfully hosted 37 early career professionals and students at the 2023 NexGen Day and Mekong Research Symposium (MRS) in Chiang Rai, Thailand, March 13-16. NexGen Fellows represented Cambodia (10), Lao PDR (8), Thailand (9), and Vietnam (10). On NexGen Day, participants worked with mentors to develop proposals in a collaborative science workshop at Mae Fah Luang University. Each team, with help from their mentor, developed research proposals related to the co-management of basin resources. Many of the proposals focused on community engagement and community-led action, a testament to the efficacy of the MRS and this year's theme—Data into Action for a Resilient Future. An expert panel reviewed and ranked each of the nine proposals, and four contributors to the winning proposal will travel to Tulane University for a month-long, fully-funded fellowship to do research in the fall of 2023. NexGen has several exciting upcoming opportunities, including funding for Lower Mekong Basin early career professionals/students to attend and present their original research at the American Geophysical Union 2023 annual meeting (abstract to AGU due August 2 and application to NexGen due August 9) and 2024 World Fisheries Congress (due August 28). All information pertaining to the application process can be found on its [website](#).



All 37 NexGen fellows, regional and international mentors, and NexGen staff at Mae Fah Luang University in Chiang Rai, Thailand March 13-16.

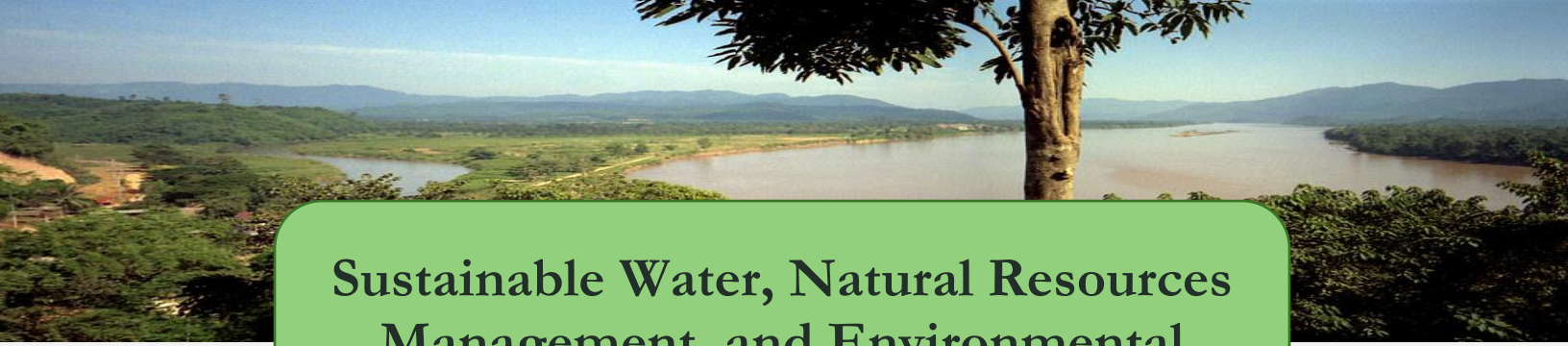
## MRC Shared Vision Planning

The Sustainable Infrastructure Partnership (SIP) partnered with the Mekong River Commission (MRC) Secretariat to support a April 26-28 training workshop in groundwater modeling. Five representatives from Thailand's Department of Groundwater Resources (DGR) delivered the training in Pattaya, Thailand, for 12 technical professionals from government agencies in Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Vietnam to gain hands-on experience in the use of the Groundwater Vistas software. The Groundwater Vistas training was organized in response to a request from the MRC Secretariat for assistance to achieve the groundwater objectives set out in its 2021-2025 strategic plan. In their post-workshop evaluations, trainees suggested national-level workshops in addition to regional ones, organized site visits for groundwater assessment, and use of site-specific data in project stimulations.



Groundwater Vistas Workshop participants in Pattaya, Thailand April 26-28.





## Sustainable Water, Natural Resources Management, and Environmental Conservation and Protection

### USAID Mekong for the Future Draft Report on Energy Infrastructure

The draft report entitled “Towards a Green and Inclusive Power Sector in the Greater Mekong: Regional Grid Interconnection for Low Cost, Low Carbon, Low Conflict Energy” explores the potential of a smartly designed and institutionalized regional power grid in the Greater Mekong Sub-Region, combined with cross-border trade, to facilitate a transition to a 100 percent renewable electricity supply without sacrificing rivers, nature, or people. The report will be soft-launched at the Third ASEAN International Conference on Energy and Environment in August 2023.

### USAID Wonders of the Mekong

U.S. Ambassador to Cambodia Patrick Murphy joined visiting University of Nevada Reno (UNR) President Brian Sandoval and officials at the Cambodia Fisheries Administration January 12 to officially open a new limnology laboratory with state-of-the-art equipment to monitor water quality across the Mekong and Tonle Sap basins. During his January 11-13 visit to Cambodia, UNR President Sandoval participated in an endangered fish species release back into the Tonle Sap River and an MOU signing between UNR and the Royal University of Agriculture for enhanced research collaboration along the Mekong.

### Infrastructure Development in ASEAN through USAID Mekong for the Future

On June 23, USAID Mekong for the Future launched a report that proposes establishing domestic regulations among all ASEAN member states for planning, designing, and constructing resilient and inclusive linear infrastructure (including roads, railways, powerlines, and canals) across the region. Over 100 people from 70 organizations attended the event, which highlighted collective action that can enhance inclusivity, climate resilience, and biodiversity-based sustainability. Ensuring that inclusive strategic planning underpins all linear infrastructure development in the ASEAN region minimizes environmental risks, reduces downstream costs, and maximizes the social benefits of individual projects.

### United States Assumes MRC Development Partners Troika Chair Role

MRC CEO Dr. Anoulak Kittikhoun and staff updated member countries and development partners on a wide range of MRC initiatives and activities during the June 28 MRC Informal Development Partners Meeting. At the meeting, the United States, represented by the Regional Environment, Science, Technology, and Health Office for East and Southeast Asia in Bangkok, formally took over from Switzerland the role of chair of the development partners leadership “troika.” For the next 12 months, the United States will coordinate joint communications and activities of the MRC Development Partners group, which includes Australia, Belgium, Germany, the European Union, Finland, France, Japan, Luxembourg, Sweden, Switzerland, the United States, Asian Development Bank, and the World Bank.

### USAID Mekong for the Future Enhancing Civil Society Engagement at MRC

USAID Mekong for the Future ensured the participation of five civil society organizations (CSOs) in Thailand and Laos at the [Mekong River Commission Summit](#) from April 2-3, with an additional Lao CSO joining from April 4-5. The organizations met with the MRC CEO and representatives, and their critical knowledge of on-the-ground issues for Mekong communities enhanced discussions during the event. Strengthening cooperation among CSOs so they are actively engaged in and informing high level events and decision-making platforms, such as the MRC Summit, encourages sustainable and equitable actions that are locally led and implemented. At the MRC Summit, USAID Mekong for the Future also supported the organization of two sessions which explored private sector stewardship and gender equality, respectively.



# Non-Traditional Security

## Mekong Mosquito International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP)

In August, 10 IVLP participants will travel to Washington, D.C., Jacksonville, Florida, and San Juan, Puerto Rico to learn strategies and tactics developed in the United States and the Mekong sub-region to improve the forecasting, prevention, and control of mosquitoes and diseases they carry, such as dengue, Zika, and malaria. The group will contribute to a meeting report at the conclusion of the trip.

## USAID Cooperation with Thailand International Cooperation Agency (TICA)

A two-week training on entomology and foci investigation hosted by the Thai Division of Vector Borne Diseases from March 20-31, for 15 Laotian and six Thai participants, marked the first of several planned activities arising out of expanded cooperation with the Thailand International Cooperation Agency and USAID. The training demonstrated Thailand’s regional leadership in public health and contributed towards ending malaria in the Greater Mekong Sub-region by 2030. This training not only improved the technical capacity of the two countries to eliminate malaria but also demonstrated stronger cooperative partnerships across the Mekong sub-region.



TICA Deputy Director General, Thailand Advisor to the Department of Disease Control, and Director of RDMA with 15 participants from Lao PDR & Thailand.

## Mekong One Health Innovation Program (MOHIP)

Since its inception in October 2022, the Mekong One Health Innovation Program (MOHIP) has achieved multiple milestones, including conducting a training needs assessment and gap analysis on One Health research and education; establishing a One Health database, networking with relevant stakeholders including One Health University Networks; organizing monthly webinars covering a wide range of topics on or related to One Health; organizing the first professional development course “Health Security, One Health, and Zoonoses” ; and launching the MOHIP research grant targeting three lower Mekong countries (Lao PDR, Thailand, and Vietnam). Experts from many U.S. and international organizations including the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the United States Geological Survey (USGS), and the World Health Organization (WHO) have provided technical expertise for MOHIP seminars. The MOHIP has reached beyond the lower Mekong region, with researchers, practitioners, and students of public health, animal health, and environmental health from non-MOHIP countries in Asia and Africa all keenly interested in and joining the MOHIP programs (e.g., webinars). Implementing partner Michigan State University has also arranged for up to 15 MOHIP participants to enroll in a data science class in fall 2023.



DAS’ Levy and Pak providing opening and closing remarks at “Health Security, One Health, and Zoonoses” course.

# Human Resource Development

## Mekong Connections

The Mekong Connections program brought together 19 civil society leaders from around the Lower Mekong region for an in-depth exchange of knowledge and experiences from May 31-June 1, in Chiang Rai, Thailand. Grantees in this Mekong Connections Learning Forum received \$25,000 to conduct 12-month projects in one of three thematic areas: protecting water-related ecosystems; combating illegal wildlife trade; and learning how changes in biodiversity and ecosystems are affecting human health. They discussed their respective challenges in community network formation and capacity building, and of bridging generational and rural-urban differences. Many participants described how they worked closely with local government authorities and specialist government agencies. Many also adopted participatory research and citizen science approaches. Capacity-building sessions led by Pact Thailand helped participants build skills in proposal writing, public messaging, and budget preparation and reporting. At the close of the Forum, participants expressed interest in cooperating to seek further funding to conduct research, create publications, and develop transboundary projects arising from their current work.



Mekong Connections Learning Forum in Chonburi, Thailand  
May 31-June 1.

## Third Country Training Program (TCTP)

The Third Country Training Program is a partnership between The U.S. Department of State and the Singapore Ministry of Foreign Affairs to jointly conduct capacity building training courses for ASEAN member states, the ASEAN Secretariat, and Timor-Leste. The final two courses for the 2022-2023 cycle focused on cybersecurity and health security. To date, the program has trained over 1,800 participants.



Participants from Risks to Health Security  
workshop in February 2022.

# Human Resource Development

## MUSP Track 1.5 Policy Dialogue Series on Trafficking and Cyber-enabled Crime

The Sixth Mekong-U.S. Partnership Track 1.5 Policy Dialogue took place in Bangkok on May 8-9, with a thematic focus on Trafficking and Cyber-enabled Crime. More than 60 participants from 13 countries gathered to discuss challenges in combatting human, drug, and wildlife trafficking, and to explore emerging issues related to cyber-scams and scam compounds. NGO and Mekong government representatives participated, as well as U.S. government representatives from the U.S. Department of State, the Department of Justice, the FBI, the Drug Enforcement Agency, and the Department of Defense. A report outlining policy recommendations generated by participants at the workshop is forthcoming.



Sixth MUSP Track 1.5 Policy Dialogue in Bangkok, Thailand May 8-9.

## MUSP Track 1.5 Policy Dialogue Series on Transboundary Water Governance

The Stimson Center and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) hosted the Seventh Mekong-U.S. Partnership Track 1.5 Policy Dialogue on Transboundary Water Governance in Chiang Rai on July 17-18. 60 government and non-government participants discussed transboundary water governance challenges in the Mekong sub-region. The Office of Multilateral Affairs Director, Holly Lindquist Thomas, provided closing remarks and expressed the Department of State's strong support of the MUSP Track 1.5 Policy Dialogue Series. Julien Katchinoff from the Bangkok Regional Environmental Affairs Office announced the winners of a NexGen Mekong Young Scientists Program research award, which provides funding for educational and professional development opportunities and places fellows with private organizations, universities, and government agencies within the U.S. and lower Mekong countries. A report outlining policy recommendations generated by participants at the workshop is forthcoming.



Seventh MUSP Track 1.5 Policy Dialogue in Chiang Rai, Thailand July 17-18.



## What's Next

### WE Inspire Cambodia

The Kenan Foundation in collaboration with SHE Investments has just launched the WE Inspire project in Cambodia. The first WE Inspire event in Cambodia was an Information Session Road Show hosted in the Battambang Province, which introduced the WE Inspire project to women in surrounding villages of Battambang. WE Inspire collaborated with local finance and health insurance providers to raise awareness and share information on the importance of having access to healthcare services, insurance plans, and even provided health check-ups to women who attended. Interested women will be able to sign up to participate in the WE Inspire program and benefit from workshops on healthcare, insurance, and business skills.

### MUSP Track 1.5 Policy Dialogue Series

Following the two most recent Track 1.5 Policy Dialogues on Countering Trafficking and Cyber-Enabled Crimes and Transboundary Water Governance, the Henry L. Stimson Center will release reports summarizing policy recommendations on the discussed topics. The release of these reports will be accompanied by a virtual report launch event in which Policy Dialogue speakers will further discuss opportunities for policy recommendations on Countering Trafficking and Cyber-Enabled Crimes and Transboundary Water Governance.

### Additional Resources

1. <https://mekongpartnership.org/>
2. <https://www.facebook.com/MekongUSPartnership/>
3. <https://www.state.gov/release-of-japan-u-s-mekong-power-partnership-action-plan/>
4. <https://www.stimson.org/project/mekong-dam-monitor/>
5. <https://www.stimson.org/event/mekong-data-discussion-flooded-forests/>
6. <https://www.stimson.org/event/mekong-water-data-hour-sand-mining/>
7. <https://www.stimson.org/event/mekong-water-data-hour-how-dams-impact-the-mekong-delta/>
8. <https://www.stimson.org/event/mekong-water-data-hour-dam-impacts-in-the-3s-basin/>
9. <https://www.stimson.org/event/mekong-water-data-hour-dam-development-fish-biodiversity-loss/>
10. <https://www.stimson.org/2023/analysis-of-hydropower-impacts-in-the-mekongs-3s-basin/>
11. <https://www.nexgen.mekongwater.org/>
12. <https://www.mrcsummit.org/>

### MOHIP Research Grants

MOHIP will provide up to \$90,000 in support for research awards in August 2023. MOHIP intends to award at least three awards of no greater than \$30,000 for two-year research projects developed by researchers from Lao PDR, Thailand and Vietnam. Selected research projects will address cutting edge research in the disciplines of animal health, human health, and environmental health utilizing a One Health approach.

### Third Country Training Program

The courses for the 2023-2024 cycle include Countering Transboundary Trafficking in Persons (TIP) in ASEAN, Strengthening the Understanding of the Regulatory Landscape of Digital Economy, Healthy Green Buildings, the Role of Competition Law in Supporting Micro, Small, and Medium Sized Enterprises (MSME), Cybersecurity, and Environmental Drivers of Health Security. The first course for 2023-24 is the TIP in ASEAN workshop, which will be held October 23-27 in Singapore.

### YSEALI and USAID

By the end of this year, the Department of State and USAID expect to formally launch the YSEALI Mekong Program. This new, three-year initiative will enhance the leadership capabilities of youth with a specific focus on issues relating to climate change, environment, and biodiversity within the Mekong sub-region. Through strengthening the knowledge, experience, and ties of the youth leaders within the region, with the greater ASEAN region and Timor Leste, as well as with the United States, YSEALI Mekong will forge a community of leaders to work locally and across borders to address shared issues. Vietnam National University in Ho Chi Minh City (VNU-HCM) will host YSEALI Mekong and its Institute for Leadership Development will implement the program in partnership with Education Development Center and Columbia University.