



# The Mekong-U.S. Partnership (MUSP)

March 2024

## Semi-Annual Newsletter

Greetings from the Department of State's Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs (EAP).

For those who I haven't met, my name is Melissa A. Brown and I am the Deputy Assistant Secretary responsible for Southeast Asia and Multilateral Affairs in EAP, which includes our Office of Multilateral Affairs, the U.S. government's lead for the Mekong-U.S. Partnership (MUSP). I was previously the Chargé d'Affaires at the U.S. Mission to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in Jakarta, Indonesia, and have more than 20 years working in and on Southeast Asia. I'm excited to collaborate with you to determine how we can advance our shared goals for the future of the Mekong sub-region. In the past six months, I have traveled to Cambodia, Thailand, and Vietnam to advance our bilateral and MUSP partnerships. I also started 2024 with a discussion with all our MUSP partners through the January 9 virtual Senior Officials' Meeting led by Assistant Secretary Daniel J. Kritenbrink.

This year marks 15 years of U.S.-Mekong cooperation, starting with the Lower Mekong Initiative from 2009 and expanding to the Mekong-U.S. Partnership in 2020. Our long-standing, collaborative relationship has promoted stability, peace, prosperity, and sustainable development, and my team and I look forward to continuing to work with you to provide lasting benefits to the people and communities of the Mekong sub-region.

We have exciting highlights from the past six months of collaboration to share with you! We learned from each other through exchanges, trainings, conferences, and workshops on a range of topics including water management, wildlife trafficking, air quality, and energy. We are happy to have successfully implemented the MUSP Plan of Action (POA) 2021-2023 and look forward to the next three years with an updated POA. If you have additional questions or concerns, please email the EAP Mekong team at [EAP-MLA-MEKONG-DL@state.gov](mailto:EAP-MLA-MEKONG-DL@state.gov).

Sincerely,  
Melissa Brown  
Deputy Assistant Secretary  
United States Department of State



### This Issue Will Cover:

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**To Stay Up to Date on the Work of the MUSP Visit**

<https://mekonguspartnership.org/>  
and [MUSP Facebook page](#)

# Economic Connectivity

## USAID and Australia Help Strengthen Local Economic Resilience

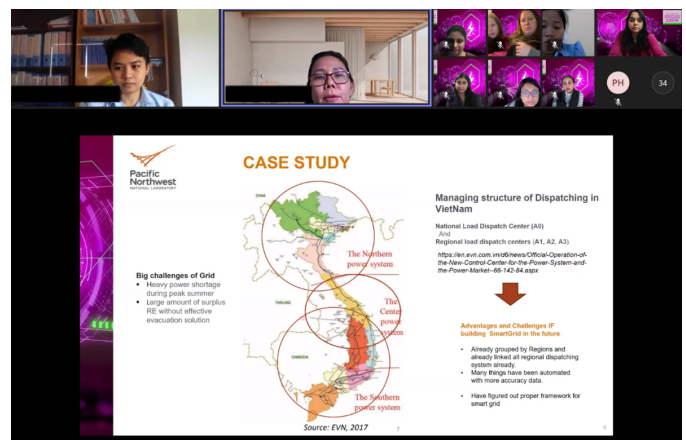
New infrastructure projects, like high-speed rail, can negatively impact communities and small businesses, yet developers and authorities lack consistent methods for local consultations. To meet this challenge, the USAID and Australia Mekong Safeguards Program collaborates with local authorities and civil society organizations to strengthen community resilience. On September 17, women who own small businesses in Ayutthaya, Thailand, participated in a capacity-building event supporting up to 200 households, 500 micro-businesses, and 50 small businesses that are at risk from high-speed rail development. This collaboration builds economic resilience and highlights potential opportunities from new high-speed rail development, providing a model that can be scaled up across the Mekong sub-region.



For more information on the Mekong Safeguards Program please visit <https://mekongsafeguards.org/>.

## Japan-Mekong-U.S. Power Partnership (JUMPP) Women in Renewables and Energy in Southeast Asia (WIRES)

The U.S. Department of State’s Power Sector Program of the Bureau of Energy Resources (ENR) concluded the WIRES professional development program in support of JUMPP for more than 40 women engineers from Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam in December 2023. The program featured six virtual technical talks, six mentoring sessions, and an in-person event that built technical capacity and provided mentorship on renewable energy integration for 42 early and mid-career women. In November, Pacific Northwest National Laboratory led presentations such “Fishy Facts about Hydropower” on environmental risks of hydropower to fish ecology following a September event in Hanoi on the importance of hydropower. Participants strengthened their leadership skills and technical capacity on clean energy integration, and expanded their professional network with other experts.



WIRES virtual technical talk on “Fishy Facts about Hydropower” attendees November 2023.

# Sustainable Water and Natural Resources Management

## JUMPP Technical Engagements

In support of JUMPP, the U.S. Department of State hosted several technical assistance activities and capacity-building workshops for Mekong officials of energy ministries, electric utilities, and energy regulators on topics related to enhancing cross-border trade and regional power market development, nodal pricing, variable renewable energy, and grid codes for existing cross-border electrical interconnectors.

In October, JUMPP's virtual Technical Advisory Group (TAG) surpassed 100 events and engagements completed under JUMPP since its launch in 2019. The next TAG meeting is planned for April 2024 in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, alongside the JUMPP Clean Energy Investment Conference. ENR's latest JUMPP trainings and workshops covered cost/benefit methodologies and market mechanisms for Vietnam's National Load Dispatch Centre (NLDC) as well as a methodology used for synchronizing grid operations.

JUMPP completed additional training in Vietnam in January 2024 on nodal pricing and cybersecurity along with a variable renewable energy strategy and roadmap for Cambodia's Electricite du Cambodge. An event in November 2023 in Vientiane focused on regional interconnectors and in December 2023 in Phnom Penh on battery energy storage systems.

Delegates from Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Vietnam joined a five-day U.S. study tour to the West Coast in January 2024. Participants learned about U.S. modeling tools and operations, essential for regional electricity independence.

With hundreds of individuals benefitting from JUMPP programming, we are excited to strengthen our relationships with partner countries and expand our work promoting clean energy in the Mekong sub-region.



JUMPP study tour attendees at a hydropower research facility in Oregon January 2024.

# Sustainable Water and Natural Resources Management

## United States Engagement at the Mekong River Commission Regional Stakeholder Forum

As the 2023-2024 chair of the Mekong River Commission (MRC) Development Partners Troika, the United States, led by the U.S. Department of State Regional Environment Office for East and Southeast Asia (REO Bangkok), discussed coordinated and inclusive transboundary water management at the Regional Stakeholder Forum. REO Bangkok, representatives from international NGOs - including USAID Mekong for the Future implementer World Wildlife Fund (WWF) - and research institutions, participated in a panel on the MRC's 2023 State of the Basin Report.



MRC Development partners and REO Bangkok at MRC Regional Stakeholder Forum in Lao PDR October 2023.

## United States Leads Development Partners at Mekong River Commission Council Meeting

The United States coordinated joint Development Partner efforts at the minister-level 30th MRC Council Meeting in Siem Reap, Cambodia, on November 24. Led by REO Bangkok and the USAID Regional Development Mission for Asia Mission Director, Development Partners announced major new funding contributions and their shared reiterated commitment to supporting the MRC as it seeks to promote sustainable economic development in the Mekong River Basin.



MRC Development partners, REO Bangkok, and USAID at MRC Council Meeting in Cambodia November 2023.

## USAID Enhances Civil Society Engagement in River Conservation

To enhance local engagement in the conservation of the Salween River, USAID's Mekong for the Future led a three-day workshop in late July 2023 that convened 12 community organizations from Thailand and Burma on free-flowing rivers, energy, and advocacy.

The event resulted in the development of a plan for the Salween River that provides a pathway for community actors to advocate more effectively to promote river conservation. Strategic engagement with communities helps to identify challenges and prioritize locally-led solutions to ensure the Salween River remains free flowing.

# Sustainable Water and Natural Resources Management

## U.S.-ASEAN Water Smart Engagements Program (WiSE) in the Mekong Sub-Region

The U.S.-ASEAN Water Smart Engagements Program (WiSE), a program under the U.S.-ASEAN Smart Cities Partnership (USASCP), has active projects in the Mekong sub-region in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, Phuket, Thailand, and Vientiane, Lao PDR. WiSE pairs U.S. and ASEAN cities to promote the delivery of essential water services.

The Phuket Provincial Water Authority (PWA) and the Water Council of Milwaukee focuses on reducing water loss. Milwaukee Water Works facilitated an intensive training program for PWA staff in October and produced a detailed training manual translated into Thai to share with utilities across the country. Ho Chi Minh City's Saigon Water Corporation (SAWACO) and San Francisco Public Utilities Commission is working together to improve Ho Chi Minh City's water quality. Through a series of in-depth capacity-building workshops and staff exchanges in 2024 and 2025, SAWACO staff will be trained on best practices of water quality labs a water resource management.

Vientiane's City Office for Management and Services and Clean Water Services of Hillsboro, Oregon are tackling challenges to wastewater systems. The city pairing will pilot a nature-based treatment solution in 2024-2025 using an artificial wetland to filter and clean wastewater in the Vientiane residential area. In February, the USASCP Program Manager, WiSE Program Manager, and representatives from VCOMS, Clean Water Services, and Biohabitat, the Oregon-based firm specializing in artificial wetland filtration systems, visited the location of the proposed pilot project to survey, collect data, and draft a blueprint for the project.



Vientiane's City Office for Management and Services and Clean Water Services of Hillsboro, Oregon representatives at location for proposed pilot project in Lao PDR February 2024.

# Sustainable Water and Natural Resources Management

## Mekong-Mississippi Sister Rivers Partnership Exchanges

The Mekong River Commission (MRC) and top water officials from its four member countries (Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Vietnam) joined their counterparts from the Mississippi River Commission, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), and the U.S. Department of State for an exchange of water resource knowledge and experience in Southern California from August 13-18, 2023. The Exchange offered a unique platform for these water management experts to explore common challenges and seek collaborative solutions. U.S. and Mexican Commissioners from the International Boundary and Water Commission shared experiences from the U.S.-Mexico transboundary water relationship, and the delegation visited a transboundary water treatment plant at the U.S.-Mexico border to see pollution challenges firsthand. In visits to the NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) and Scripps Institution of Oceanography, Mekong officials viewed applications of the latest U.S. research and technology, including NASA's Surface Water and Ocean Topography (SWOT) satellite, as well as USACE and Scripps joint research on Forecast-Informed Reservoir Operations (FIRO).



MRC and Mississippi River Commission at the Sister Rivers Partnership Exchange August 2023.

The Sister Rivers Partnership convened in Thailand and Vietnam January 22-26, marking the Mississippi River Commission's first-ever visit to Vietnam's Mekong Delta. This visit marks the 14th year of the Sister Rivers Partnership, which is funded by the U.S. State Department and implemented by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). Hosted by the MRC Secretariat, the four MRC Member Countries and U.S. representatives from the Mississippi River Commission, USACE, USAID, and the State Department discussed changing river flows, climate impacts, salinity intrusion, infrastructure operations, fisheries management, and sediment management. Witnessing firsthand the Mekong's challenges in water management, the U.S. and Mekong delegations strengthened collaboration by sharing best practices and ideas for tackling similar water resource issues across both rivers.



MRC and Mississippi River Commission at the Sister Rivers Partnership Exchange January 2024.

# Sustainable Water and Natural Resources Management

## Mekong Dam Monitor Report Outlines Contributions to Data Transparency, Environmental Protection

The U.S.-funded Mekong Dam Monitor (MDM) published its 2022-2023 [report](#) on December 15, showcasing increased Mekong regional water data transparency and progress on transboundary environmental sustainability planning and assessments. The report called for increased data sharing, coordinated dam management, and incorporating lessons from the Sekong A dam project's transboundary environmental impact assessment. The report highlighted concerns about weakening Mekong River flows due to both infrastructure development and climate change, emphasizing the need for deeper research to understand their combined impacts on people and ecosystems, ultimately informing effective flow mitigation strategies.

## USAID and the Republic of Korea (ROK) Commit to Expanded Partnership at the Mekong-Korea Water Forum

At the second Mekong-Korea International Water Forum on September 7-8, 2023, in Incheon, RDMA Mission Director Steven G. Olive signed a Letter of Intent with the ROK Ministry of Environment and K-Water to formalize cooperation on [SERVIR Southeast Asia](#), which uses geospatial data to improve decision-making on regional natural disaster response and climate adaptation priorities. To promote water security and climate resilience in the Mekong River Basin, USAID/Regional Development Mission for Asia (RDMA) prioritizes regional partnerships to maximize results on shared priorities. The partnership will enhance climate resilience and sustainable water management in the Mekong River Basin.

## USAID and Mekong River Commission Support a Sustainable Mekong River Basin

The Mekong River Commission (MRC) guides responsible development and protection of an economically prosperous, socially just, environmentally sound, and climate change resilient Mekong River Basin. On September 5, USAID and the MRC kicked off the design of a prospective USAID Greater Mekong River Basin Management Activity with the MRC, which continued during an in-person workshop in Vientiane September 19-22. MRC expressed interest in working with USAID to improve transboundary river management, sediment monitoring, hydropower coordination, and proactive regional planning, using data from the latest U.S. satellite tools to improve existing MRC platforms and understanding. USAID Asia Bureau Assistant Administrator Michael Schiffer also met with the MRC CEO, Dr. Anoulak Kittikhoun, on February 14, 2024. This prospective partnership and senior-level engagement demonstrates USAID's commitment to locally-led strategies to improve transboundary water resource management in the Mekong River Basin and enhanced coordination among Mekong countries.



USAID/RDMA at Mekong-Korea Water Forum September 2023.

# Sustainable Water and Natural Resources Management

## Lao PDR-Thailand-U.S. Partner to Boost Air Quality Monitoring and Management

SERVIR is a joint initiative of NASA, USAID, and leading organizations in Asia, Africa, and Latin America that supports locally led environmental decision-making by co-developing Earth data and geospatial applications with regional partners. The Asian Disaster Preparedness Center (ADPC), based in Bangkok, implements the program.

In January, USAID's Regional Development Mission for Asia (RDMA), the Thailand International Cooperation Agency (TICA), and the Lao Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (Laos MONRE) announced a trilateral partnership to boost regional capacity in air quality monitoring and management. SERVIR Southeast Asia will develop further applications of SERVIR Southeast Asia's Air Quality Explorer tool, specifically tailored for use by agencies in Lao PDR, as well as Thailand's Pollution Control Department.

SERVIR, ADPC, the Thai Pollution Control Department, and Thailand's Geo-Informatics and Space Technology Development Agency (GISTDA) co-developed a tool that was originally designed for the Lower Mekong region, but is in the process of being expanded to cover the wider ASEAN region.



USAID/RDMA, TICA, and Lao PDR MONRE announce trilateral partnership to boost regional capacity in air quality monitoring and management January 2024.



# Sustainable Water and Natural Resources Management

## NexGen Mekong Scientists Collaborate on Environmental Research

The U.S. Department of the Interior implements the NexGen Mekong Scientists (NexGen) program and provides educational and mentorship opportunities for early career professionals and scientists from the Lower Mekong River Basin. The program is designed to bring attention to missing voices in the research space, including women and younger scientists, and inspire the next generation of researchers to bring a fresh perspective to Mekong subregional challenges. Under the NexGen Mekong Scientists (NexGen) program, 23 early career professionals visited the United States in late 2023 and early 2024 to enhance their research skills and attend prominent international meetings in their fields.

In October, Tulane University hosted the winning team from the Mekong Research Symposium research proposal competition. The four team members from Vietnam, Lao PDR, Cambodia, and Thailand spent four weeks at the university's ByWater Institute, collaborating with students and faculty to further their research around nature-based solutions and sustainable agricultural practices.

Later in the year, NexGen supported twelve early career scientists attending the American Geophysical Union (AGU) annual meeting in San Francisco and in early 2024, seven NexGen fellows participated in the World Fisheries Congress. Upon arrival in the United States, the fellows participated in a two-day orientation in Washington D.C. and then 1.5 weeks at a mentor's research institution, collaborating with staff and refining their original research for presentation at AGU or the World Fisheries Congress.



Mekong Research Symposium winning team at Tulane University's ByWater Institute October 2023.

# Sustainable Water and Natural Resources Management

## Ambassador's Water Expert Program (AWEP) Supports Technical Engagements

In support of the President's Global Water Strategy, AWEP recruits U.S. experts to implement short-term water technical assistance programs. This year, fifteen water-sector experts participated in a workshop at the Institute of Technology in Cambodia in October focusing on interpreting hydrological data in relation to the Tonle Sap Lake. Also in collaboration with U.S. Department of State and U.S. Embassy Phnom Penh, the U.S. Department of the Interior's International Technical Assistance Program hosted a technical workshop on understanding and interpreting water-related data from multiple sources. Participants received instruction in the use of the latest scientific methods and techniques to address environmental challenges and understand the flow of water in the basin, with a focus on sharing findings and potential solutions with decision-makers and relevant stakeholders.

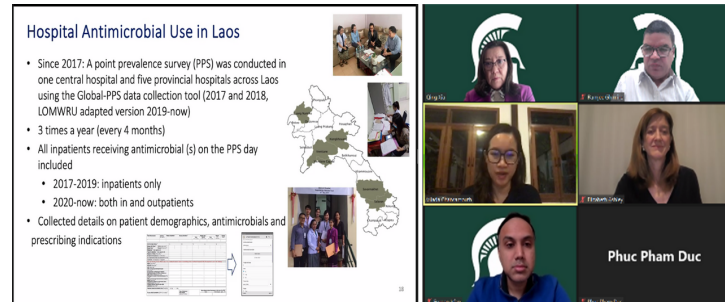


AWEP workshop participants at the Institute of Technology in Cambodia October 2023.

# Non-Traditional Security

## Mekong One Health Innovation Program (MOHIP) Supports Health Security

The Mekong One Health Innovation Program (MOHIP) connects diverse experts, researchers, and other stakeholders from the Mekong sub-region and the United States to collaborate with stakeholders on health security. The MOHIP successfully organized four webinars on household water security and wastewater treatment, health impacts of air pollution, soil health, the nexus between animal health and human health, and antimicrobial misuse and resistance in humans and animals.



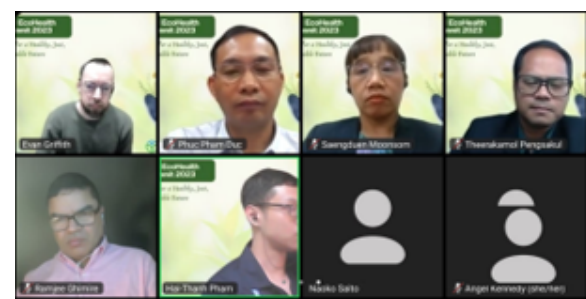
MOHIP team at the webinar on “Antimicrobial Use and Resistance in Humans and Animals” November 2023.



Six Michigan State University (MSU) faculty attended the ASEAN Health Symposium (October 23-27) in Bangkok where they highlighted health initiatives and shared various tools, technologies, and approaches that help bolster transdisciplinary research to support and sustain health security. They discussed writing grant proposals and finding funding sources; interdisciplinary team building in global health research and development; pursuing seed funding for research; and fostering international collaborations.

MOHIP team and Mekong alumni at the ASEAN Health Symposium in Bangkok October 2023.

The MOHIP team participated in the hybrid annual One Health Day event at MSU on November 3. The principal investigators of the three MOHIP research projects introduced their research at the event to MSU students, faculty, and stakeholders from MOHIP countries.



MOHIP and THOHUN team at the Grant Writing Workshop in Thailand November 2023.

The MOHIP team served on the panel at the virtual Second Annual Eco-Health Conference November 30-December 1. The team highlighted the importance of respecting values and practices of beneficiary communities and empowering them for programmatic sustainability.



The MOHIP also supported the Thailand One Health University Network (THOHUN) workshop titled “Grant Proposal Development Workshop to Strive toward THOHUN Sustainability”, held December 18-20, 2023 in Chonburi, Thailand.

MOHIP and THOHUN team at the Grant Writing Workshop in Thailand December 2023.

# Non-Traditional Security

## United States, Lao PDR, and Vietnam Discuss Wildlife Prosecution

The U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Overseas Prosecutorial Development, Assistance and Training (OPDAT) and the Wildlife Conservation Society co-hosted a trilateral prosecutor exchange August 23-24 with Lao PDR, Vietnam, and the United States, funded by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL). About 50 prosecutors from Lao PDR's Office of the Supreme People's Prosecutor (OSPP) and 13 prosecutors from Vietnam's Supreme People's Procuracy (SPP) attended. The OSPP delegates repeatedly remarked that they had a lot to learn from the SPP. During the exchange, the OPDAT Counter Wildlife Trafficking Regional Resident Legal Advisor presented on mutual legal assistance and species victim impact statements to offer ways to gather evidence and determine the true value of lost wildlife. The Lao and Vietnamese prosecutors committed to working closer together on cross-border issues going forward.



Due to the illegal trade of their scales and meat, pangolins are the most heavily trafficked mammals in the world.

## DOJ and INL Work with Judges to Improve Handling of Wildlife Crime Cases

On January 23 and 24, the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Overseas Prosecutorial Development, Assistance and Training (OPDAT) organized and presented at the Sharing Judicial Experiences in Handling Wildlife Crime Workshop, funded by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. Participants included 16 judges from Vietnam, five judges from Lao PDR, and Chief U.S. District Court Judge Sharon Gleason of the District of Alaska. The OPDAT Counter Wildlife Trafficking Regional Resident Legal Advisor presented on the intersection of money laundering with wildlife trafficking crimes and led a roundtable discussion as well as a practical exercise on sentencing convicted wildlife trafficking defendants.



Workshop attendees in Ho Chi Minh City January 2024.

# Non-Traditional Security

## Shifting to a Survivor-centered Approach through USAID's Evidence2Action Summit

The USAID Asia Counter Trafficking in Persons (CTIP) team hosted the fourth annual Evidence2Action Summit in Bangkok, Thailand. The conference emphasized the necessity of shifting the counter-trafficking paradigm towards survivor-centered and survivor-led approaches in a series of participatory workshops, dialogues, and conversations among a diverse network of stakeholders. With over 140 participants from 22 countries, including survivors, migrant workers, grassroots CSOs, INGOs, and researchers, the conference illuminated challenges, inspired hope, and energized stakeholders to pursue a world free from exploitation and trafficking.



Participants at Evidence2Action Summit in Thailand November 2023.

## USAID Partners with Like-minded Donors to Address Trafficking in Persons

To better understand and address ever-evolving transnational crimes and trafficking in persons (TIP), and to elevate donor coordination on these complex issues, USAID/Regional Development Mission for Asia (RDMA), along with the Australian Embassy (AUS), Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Thailand Office, and Thailand International Cooperation Agency (TICA), support collaboration, programming, and visits to the areas in Thailand most affected by trafficking. Together, these development partners conducted a joint trip to the Golden Triangle region to meet provincial government representatives, engage with academics, and convene local non-government organizations to share information and exchange experiences related to the complex and damaging impacts of transnational crime.

The Golden Triangle visit by AUS, JICA, USAID, and TICA was the catalyst for other visits in Thailand and Cambodia, broadening these partnerships and increasing the four countries' commitment to combat human trafficking. The inter-governmental partnership supports a critical network of organizations and their ongoing initiatives to coordinate closely with Thailand on unified cross-border counter-trafficking efforts. These partnerships are critical in countering trafficking in persons and implementing a victim-centered response that ensures vulnerable individuals receive equitable, appropriate, and protective support.

USAID and JICA representatives on Mekong River boat trip in Thailand September 2023.



# Human Resource Development

## Mekong Inspiring Women Entrepreneurs (*WE Inspire*)

The *WE Inspire* joint initiative by the Mekong-U.S. Partnership (MUSP) and the Kenan Foundation Asia continued its mission to empower women in the Lower Mekong sub-region by promoting healthcare and financial access and providing skill building opportunities. In Thailand's Chiang Rai Province, the project has engaged more than 180 women, with interventions in the past six months focusing on enhancing entrepreneurial skills and opportunities.

Monthly workshops from July to October aimed to equip participants with fundamental business skills, including business idea creation, internal resource analysis, marketing, customer analytics, and business model canvas, with over 100 women joining each training topic. November brought technical skills training in organic product production for 112 women in response to a prior training needs survey. December's workshops sought to empower 128 women through discussions on women's rights and gender equality, followed by an interactive session on boosting self-confidence through self-expression.

Additionally, participants in the small business incubation track received one-on-one business consultations to help grow their businesses. The call for seed grant applications was also launched in November, with 20 women-owned enterprises successfully securing the grants at the pitching event on January 20, 2024. Mentoring support will soon follow to maximize the impact of the grants on the grantees' businesses.

For more information on the *WE Inspire* initiative, please visit: <https://weinspire.kenan-asia.org/>.

## Women Entrepreneurs (*WE Inspire*) in Vietnam's Mekong Delta

MUSP's *WE Inspire* project partners with the Women's Union of Tra Vinh province and the People's Committee of Tra Cu District in Vietnam to bolster women's empowerment at the grassroots level with health and financial mobility trainings. With sessions focusing on bookkeeping, marketing, sales, and digital skills, the program builds entrepreneurial acumen and introduces the 100+ women participants in Tra Vinh province to microfinance institutions over the next two years. *WE Inspire* formally began in Tra Vinh province after the Kenan Foundation Asia signed an MOU with the Tra Vinh Women's Union to kick off the project in Vietnam in January 2024. Vietnam is the *WE Inspire* project's third country of implementation after Cambodia and Thailand. The project looks to transform healthcare behaviors and financial capabilities in the long run, ensuring a brighter future for women in the Mekong.



Project kick-off ceremony Tra Vinh, Vietnam January 2024.

# Human Resource Development

## USAID Promotes Gender Equality in the Southeast Asian Energy Sector

After piloting the first-ever Regional Internship Program with 40 tertiary education students, [USAID Enhancing Equality for Energy in Southeast Asia](#) held a knowledge exchange event in Bangkok on July 31 to provide a platform for interns to share their experiences and recommendations for future internship programs.

The hybrid event drew 98 representatives from regional energy companies, universities, and development organizations. Interns agreed that an 8-week internship was too short, and many employers highlighted the value of internships during the fourth year of university so they can offer full-time positions at the conclusion of the program. More women in the transitioning energy workforce in Southeast Asia increases concrete opportunities to gain employment and advance within the clean energy industry.

## USAID Supports Open and Inclusive Digital Economies

USAID's Digital Asia Accelerator (DAA) program held two Digital Economic Forums in Cambodia that addressed a broad range of topics related to digital economy policy issues. Speakers from the private sector, think tanks, and government discussed how to build a free and open digital ecosystem. Endorsed by U.S. Ambassador to Cambodia Patrick Murphy and covered by leading news agencies in Cambodia, the forums facilitated a regional network between the American Chambers of Commerce in Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Mongolia, Burma, and Thailand. The Chambers strengthened their capacity to engage in digital economic policy advocacy, equipped with knowledge and skills to advance an inclusive, safe, and interoperable digital economy.



Panelists at Digital Economic Forum in Cambodia September 2023.

# Human Resource Development

## USAID Supports Female Participation in Cybersecurity Fields

USAID's Digital Asia Accelerator (DAA) program, in partnership with the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) and Amazon Web Services (AWS), launched the "Cyber for Her - Upskilling and Competition" activity as part of the Women in Cybersecurity Empowerment program. This month-long activity ended with an in-person session in August in Thailand to promote increased female participation in the cybersecurity workforce in four countries: Thailand, Cambodia, Indonesia, and Mongolia.

The Cyber for Her competition provided participants the opportunity to develop digital literacy and cybersecurity skills and enhance their careers in the digital world, helping to address the digital gender gap. "Cyber for Her" created a pathway for the next generation of cybersecurity talent to jump-start their careers and break the barriers women face within the cyber workforce.



"Cyber for Her" participants in Thailand August 2023.

### Additional Resources

1. <https://mekonguspartnership.org/>
2. <https://www.facebook.com/MekongUSPartnership/>
3. [https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2022-10/USAID-Australia\\_Mekong\\_Safeguards\\_Jan\\_2022\\_R1.pdf](https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2022-10/USAID-Australia_Mekong_Safeguards_Jan_2022_R1.pdf)
4. [https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2023-08/FS\\_SERVIR\\_SEA\\_Aug\\_2023\\_0.pdf](https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2023-08/FS_SERVIR_SEA_Aug_2023_0.pdf)
5. <https://www.ctsaonehealthalliance.org/news/2nd-annual-ecohealth-global-summit-2023>
6. <https://www.stimson.org/2023/mekong-dam-monitor-annual-report-2022-2023/>
7. <https://weinspire.kenan-asia.org/>
8. <https://www.usaid.gov/asia-regional/fact-sheets/enhancing-equality-energy-southeast-asia>