



MEKONG-U.S. PARTNERSHIP AT WORK

July-September 2024



KEY EVENTS

July

- Mekong-U.S. Partnership Regional Workshop on Seed Sector Development for Ensuring Food Security (Hanoi, Viet Nam)
- Third Mekong-U.S. Partnership Foreign Ministers' Meeting (Vientiane, Lao PDR)
- WE Inspire Workshop: Business Incubation (Prektoal, Cambodia)

August

- International Visitor Leadership Program on Sustainable Economic Development for Mekong Community Leaders and Participation in Lake Tahoe Summit (Washington, D.C.; New Orleans, LA; and Lake Tahoe, NV)
- WE Inspire Training: Finance and Accounting (Tra Vinh, Viet Nam)

September

- Digital Innovations for Female Entrepreneurs in ASEAN Meeting (Vientiane, Lao PDR)
- Building Emergency Management Programs for National One Health Programs
- WE Inspire Grant Showcase (Chiang Khong, Thailand)

THIRD MUSP FOREIGN MINISTERS' MEETING



U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Lao Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Saleumxay Kommasith at the MUSP FMM (July, 2024)

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of the Lao People's Democratic Republic Saleumxay Kommasith co-chaired the Third Mekong-U.S. Partnership (MUSP) Foreign Ministers' Meeting (FMM) on July 27, 2024, in Vientiane, Lao PDR. The co-chairs convened the MUSP members to formally approve and adopt the MUSP Plan of Action 2024-2026 and released a joint statement to affirm the cooperative relationship between the Mekong countries and the United States. Thai Foreign Minister Maris Sangiampongsa announced Thailand would assume the role of MUSP co-chair in 2025. Key priority areas Thailand seeks to address as co-chair include digital economy and digitalization, tackling transboundary air pollution, and combatting non-traditional security issues including drug-trafficking, human trafficking, and online scams.

WE INSPIRE GRANT SHOWCASE EVENT

Implemented by Kenan Foundation Asia, the MUSP's Women Entrepreneurs (WE) Inspire program amplified its Thailand-based activities by hosting a grant showcase event in Chiang Khong on September 19 and identifying recipients for a new round of financial support. Nineteen women entrepreneurs and community business owners reported how they used the last round of seed funding to grow their businesses and delivered pitches on how they would potentially use additional funding. Ten businesses received between 20,000-40,000 baht (US \$600-\$1200) for additional inventory purchase, equipment purchase, or strategic market positioning through branding, e-commerce, and certification. Two businesses that participated were owned and run by women from ethnic minority groups (Yao and Hmong) who highlighted that funding helped them preserve traditional arts in their respective communities.

Read testimonials from some WE Inspire participants on the next page!

UPCOMING EVENTS

October

- **7-8** | MRC-USACE-ASU Shared Vision Planning Tool Inception Workshop (Vientiane, Lao PDR)
- **9-11** | WE Inspire Training: Marketing & Branding (Tra Vinh, Viet Nam)
- **15** | MOHIP Research Project Orientation and Introduction (virtual)
- **16-18** | Stimson Track 1.5 Policy Dialogue on Online Scam Operations (Bangkok, Thailand)
- **21** | WE Inspire Workshop: Social Security Access (Prektoal, Cambodia)

November

- TBD | WE Inspire Workshop

December

- **8-12** | 13th Mekong-Mississippi Sister Rivers Partnership Exchange (Nashville, TN, and New York, NY)
- **12-13** | Mekong-U.S. Partnership Policy Dialogue (Vientiane, Lao PDR)
- TBD | Track 1.5 Policy Dialogue Report Launch

October 2024

TESTIMONIALS FROM WE INSPIRE GRANT RECIPIENTS



"I'm very happy to have won the scaling grant—it feels like a dream come true. We started as a group of regular folks. Joining the project has allowed us to improve our product standards, and before, we didn't have a fish-drying facility, but now we do. And winning this new round of grants will enable us to have a proper packaging facility — I feel like we've been progressing step by step, with Kenan by our side from the very beginning. We have witnessed the improvement of our group. Even though the grant amount may not be huge, the sense of accomplishment is enormous. We want to be a role model and share our experience with others who aspire to start their own businesses."



CHANANYA JOKEW
Chiang Kong New-Gen Farmers Group
CHIANG KONG DISTRICT



RIANTHONG KHUNKIANG
Ready-to-Plant Soil by Rianthong Farm
WANG KAEN DISTRICT

"Before this, I had to manually mix the soil by hand. After receiving the first round of grants, I used it to buy a soil mixer, which has saved a lot of time and effort, helping the business grow significantly. However, when the floods recently hit Chiang Rai, I suffered heavy damage to my home, farm, and raw materials for the business, especially the soil that was completely ruined. Even though the water has receded, it will take a long time to recover, causing quite a bit of lost opportunities. That's why I feel incredibly happy and overwhelmed that the judges recognized the significance and awarded the scaling grant to me... If I get a storage facility (from the new grant), it will make mixing the soil much easier, faster, and more convenient, further helping my business to grow even more."

"This project has played a significant role in building my business knowledge, helping me understand both my strengths and weaknesses, and enabling me to truly improve my business. Coupled with the previous round of funding, I nearly doubled my profits from before. I believe that, without joining the training [from WE Inspire], I might not have been able to improve my business at all. As a Laotian with many restrictions living here, I am especially grateful to the project for accepting and providing equal opportunities to people of all nationalities."



SOMJIT SRISUDA
Nania Fresh Seafod by Somjit
WANG KAEN DISTRICT

For additional information visit mekonguspartnership.org