

## **Professional Development of Water Governance and Regional Development Practitioners in the Mekong Basin**

**Led by:** Mekong Sub-region Social Research Centre (MSSRC)

Faculty of Liberal Arts, Ubon Ratchathani University, Thailand

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The deadline for submission is **22<sup>nd</sup> May 2015, 17:00 (ICT)**

Submit your application to [wle.mekongfellowship@gmail.com](mailto:wle.mekongfellowship@gmail.com)

### **Background to the project**

Within the Greater Mekong Region, riparian states are drawing up plans to use the Mekong mainstream as a source of hydropower, and decisions made in the next few years are likely to have significant and irreversible implications for the flow of the river and for the millions of livelihoods that depend on it. Water resources are inextricably linked to community livelihoods and well-being, agricultural production and food security, local and national economies, and various development initiatives that may involve a range of small- and large-scale water infrastructure. The magnitude of this dependence has been extensively identified by many researchers. Water resources in the Mekong basin have undergone rapid changes since the battlefield has gradually been replaced by the marketplace from the mid 1980s. Transition in the Mekong basin is a complex and multifarious phenomenon, contingent on political-economic and ecological systems that have fostered particular aspects of development through hydropower development over the past 30 years. Many research attempts have tried to improve knowledge and understanding of both wider and local political- economic contexts of the Mekong basin development and its impacts on local livelihoods as the Mekong Basin population is primarily rural and the livelihood sources of the majority of them are related to different kinds of natural resource use. Thus, to strengthen governance and increase the likelihood of sustainable and fair decisions, there is considerable need to build knowledge and research capacity within the basin, and to support research networks capable of informing the rapid changes underway.

## Introduction to Fellowship Program

- **12 fellowships** are available for young or mid-career **university, civil society and government researchers** in China, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, Myanmar and Thailand to research the Mekong River Basin
- Each research fellow is **partnered with an experienced mentor** for individual support, and will also join a series of workshops. You will produce timely and needed research, and share your findings through: producing a conference paper, a policy brief and blogs; writing a research report; and joining national and international conferences/ policy seminars
- Research fellowships are of 16 months duration. Fellowships are on a part-time basis, **starting in June 2015**, with US\$15,000 available per fellow for research costs and honorarium.
- Research with a **clear focus on gender** is especially encouraged, with one third of projects to be supported on this topic; **all projects must consider gender**; the project is highly committed to support **women researchers**
- **Past M-POWER fellows** are welcome to apply, if collaborating with another past or current fellow in a cross border research project (contact us for more details)

## Research themes

- Water Governance
- Healthy Rivers
- River Food Systems
- Healthy Landscape and Ecosystems
- Gender and Social Justice

Further details on the themes can be found here: <http://wle-mekong.cgiar.org/about/our-focus/>

## **Gender**

This project is highly committed to fully incorporating gender considerations into the research that it supports, and to supporting women researchers:

- At least 40% of the research fellows will be women
- At least 4 out of the 12 fellowships awarded are committed to support the “gender and social justice” theme. For these research projects, gender will constitute the principle research question of the project
- All research projects are expected to be gender sensitive, including at a minimum disaggregating data by gender.

## **Opportunities for research fellows**

- *Capacity building and networking*
  - Individual mentoring by an experienced practitioner
  - Each current fellow will also be paired with a past research fellow to build relationships across fellowship cohorts, and facilitate experience sharing and networking
  - 3 regional workshops on research design, fieldwork methodologies, and writing (2015-2016), joining research fellows from the Red and Mekong basins. The first workshop will be held on 20 – 22 June 2015 in Hanoi, Vietnam
- *Organizational capacity building*
  - Water governance curriculum workshop (2017) for university researchers, government officials, and civil society
- *Policy engagement*
  - Participate in three annual “WLE Mekong Forums on Water, Food and Energy”
  - Competitive funds available to join additional relevant conferences and policy forums

Eight research fellows will be invited to extend their fellowships to produce a book chapter or academic paper (late 2016-2017)

## **Fellowship application process**

Potential fellows are invited to submit a short proposal in English, which includes:

- Summary of objectives (100 words or less)
- Rationale and background (200 words or less)
- Chose one focus from the research themes
- Research questions (no more than five)
- Research methodology (300 words or less)
- Expected outcomes (300 words)

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## **Individual fellowship budgets**

The total value of each individual fellowship is US\$15,000.

- Up to US\$7,500 is offered as an honorarium for the researcher. The honorarium is paid in three installments: 40% on signing the contract (June 2015); 40% on submission of the interim report (January 2016); and 20% on submission of the final report (September 2016). If desired, the researcher is welcome to redistribute a portion of the honorarium to increase the amount available for research costs; overall, a 40% allocation (US\$6000) of the total individual fellowship to the honorarium is encouraged.
- US\$7,500 (or greater if the honorarium is redistributed) is provided to cover the cost of research, including all expenses to join the three training workshops and curriculum workshop. The research fees are paid in three installments: 50% on signing the contract (June 2016); 40% on submission of the interim report (January 2016); and 10% on joining the curriculum workshop (January-March 2017).

Total hardware (laptop computer, camera etc) is not permitted to be greater than US\$800 of the research costs to be covered. The total cost allocated to joining the three workshops should be anticipated to be up to US\$2,400.

In addition:

- The project covers the cost for phase 1 research fellows to join the annual Mekong Forum on Water, Food and Energy in 2015 and 2016, and for phase 2 research fellows to also join in 2017.
- Seven individual grants of up to US\$1,200 are available for research fellows to join a relevant policy event. These grants will be competitively awarded to research fellows in addition to the main fellowship grant.

Each fellow is expected to work an average of at least 2.5 days per week on their research project. We welcome fellows who are working with an organization that is willing to permit the research fellow to undertake the fellowship program. A signed letter of support from your host institution endorsing the application and committing to the proposed research.

### **Fellowship program goal and anticipated outcomes**

This project's goal is to strengthen the capacity for undertaking research and policy engagement of scholars and practitioners of water, land and energy use, management and governance in the Mekong Basin. A particular cross-cutting focus of the project is research on gender and other forms of social marginalization. It also intends to build a learning community amongst these scholars and practitioners, and link them with similar initiatives in the Ayeyarwady, Salween and Red River basins.

As a result of the project:

- Early career researchers will have an enhanced ability and confidence to engage in reasoned analysis, critique and policy advocacy in pursuit of more equitable and sustainable modes of water, land and energy use, management and governance in the Mekong Basin.
- Policies in the fields of water, land and energy relevant to the specific research topic of research fellows will be more inclusive of, and responsive to, the concerns of hitherto marginalised groups.
- A learning community will be established within and beyond centres of higher education in the region for research and training in the field of progressive use, management and governance of water, land and energy.

### **Cross-basin fellowship collaboration**

The Mekong Fellowship program is partnered with parallel programs in the Nu-Thanlwin-Salween River basin and Red River basin.

- Mekong Sub-region Social Research Centre, Ubon Ratchathani University (Mekong River Basin)
- Centre for Social Development Studies, Chulalongkorn University (Nu-Thanlwin-Salween River Basin)
- Vietnam Academy of Water Resources (Red River Basin)

### **Implementing consortium members**

The following consortium members will support the project, including through mentoring individual fellows and providing trainings during the workshops:

- Faculty of Development Studies, Royal University of Phnom Penh (RUPP)
- GMS Centre, Yunnan University
- Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI)
- Mekong Research Group (AMRC), University of Sydney
- The Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) (Australia)
- Department of Geography, Ryerson University, (Canada)
- Regional Centre for Sustainable Development (RCSD), Chiang Mai University
- Myanmar Environment Institute (MEI)

### **Submit your application and all inquiries to:**

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Email: [wle.mekongfellowship@gmail.com](mailto:wle.mekongfellowship@gmail.com)