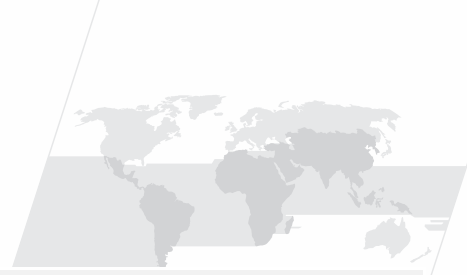




Ayeyawady-Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy (ACMECS) - Human Resource Development Programme


Case Study



Title of case study	A Case Study on the Ayeyawady-Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy (ACMECS) - Human Resource Development Programme
Involved countries	Cambodia (Receiver), Lao PDR (Receiver), Myanmar (Receiver), Vietnam (Receiver), and Thailand (Provider)
Case study funded by	TT-SSC, ADBI, and OECD
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Start date of case study	25/01/2011
Field work dates	24/02/2011-24/03/2011
Planned finalization date	31/05/2011
Summary	

The aim of this ACMECS Human Resource Development (HRD) case study is to explore synergies between South-South cooperation (SSC) and the aid effectiveness agenda through the mandate of the Accra Agenda for Action (AAA). Specifically, the study aims to examine critical success factors (CSFs) and failure factors, so as to reveal and record good practices and success stories for future replication; and failures, which will highlight problems and obstacles to be prevented and solved in future. Informants represent project policy makers, implementers, and beneficiaries from the Thailand International Development Cooperation Agency (TICA), other relevant agencies, and ACMECS countries. Secondary documents and primary data from a workshop as well as individual and focus group interviews are triangulated to validate the findings.

The ACMECS HRD programme aims to bridge the economic disparities within and among member countries, namely Thailand, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, and Vietnam. Such disparities include the uneven level of development and uneven distribution of the benefits of development, the persistence of poverty, especially in rural areas, unequal access to social, health and educational services and gender inequality, and problems related to environmental degradation. TICA has been designated as a core agency for Human Resource Development to enhance capacity of the personnel and institutions in the member countries of ACMECS and prepare them for global competitiveness. In adapting aid effectiveness principles, the programme is proved effective because it corresponds to the needs and the commonly shared development framework according to the eight priority development areas of Trade and Investment Facilitation, Agricultural Cooperation, Industrial and Energy Cooperation, Transport



Linkages, Tourism Cooperation, Human Resource Development, Public Health, and Environmental Cooperation among the participating countries. The mechanism designed to ensure such support at the policy level is the ACMECS Summit and Ministerial Meeting. Close coordination among the ACMECS countries is also encouraged through each sector working group to discuss and update implementation progress.

Ownership and mutual accountability is ensured by the mechanism to enhance strong commitment of participating country leaders through meetings at policy level and the signing of the Summit Declaration, which signifies common benefits, significant outcomes, reviews and progress, common needs of ACMECS countries and future directions for implementation. At the sectoral working group meetings, the mechanism to enhance effective cooperation is the set up of the coordinating country on a voluntary basis to discuss and update implementation progress. Involvement of other actors is promoted through the ACMECS Business Council.

The sense of ownership also increases through participatory learning and problem-solving processes. The challenge, however, is effective information management. ACMECS still needs a systematic measure or an agreed performance assessment tool with key performance indicators to follow up the results. Sound results-based management should be designed and implemented to show the scope, relevance, and impact of the programme.

The ACMECS HRD programme also acts as a catalyst to enrich the aid effectiveness agenda by involving Southern champions, knowledge exchange and mutual learning. The comparative advantage of South-South activity as reflected in the ACMECS HRD programme is the shared need for the same development framework leading to narrower gaps in social and economic development and common development issues. The horizontal cooperation relationship is further strengthened through peer learning and joint working processes. ACMECS HRD programme knowledge exchange seems to be more cost-effective and more adapted to human resources than traditional technical cooperation. The role of champions also increases incentives for policy and institutional reforms. The main difficulty, however, is the effective implementation of knowledge gained in the local context of the participating countries.

In the ACMECS HRD programme, complementarities between South-South and North-South cooperation are formulated by triangular cooperation. Though triangular cooperation among ACMECS participating countries is time consuming and faces difficulties in management and coordination among partners, it has a great potential for horizontal partnership and win-win-win situations. The strengths of ACMECS HRD triangular cooperation are lower transaction costs, technical know-how from the development partners, complementarity of technology transfer, and wider networking.

Context and background

The sub-region covered by the ACMECS programme is one of the most potentially dynamic in terms of development challenges and opportunities. It is rich in natural resources and diverse in agricultural production, with great potential for economic growth. However, these comparative advantages have not so far been utilized to gain maximum benefit. Both the necessary infrastructure and human resource capacity must be developed and the disparities in economic development among countries of the sub-region must be bridged in order to achieve this goal.

At the Special ASEAN Leaders' Meeting on SARS in Bangkok on 29 April 2003, the Thai Prime Minister informally introduced the possibility for the four nations to develop an Economic Cooperation Strategy (ECS) to fully harness their enormous economic potential. The leaders of Cambodia, Laos, and Myanmar welcomed the idea. Such cooperation is expected not only to bring about a win-win situation for all four countries, but also to facilitate deeper economic integration through greater intra-regional trade and investment.

The first meeting of Foreign Ministers on the Economic Cooperation Strategy (ECS) between

Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Thailand, held in Bangkok on 1 August 2003, discussed the concept, principles and strategic areas of economic cooperation among the four nations in order to increase trade and investment, enhance competitiveness and generate more employment and improved distribution of income and quality of life in the sub-region. Vietnam joined the group in 2004.

In order to implement the ECS, action plans have been drawn up to realize this strategy. The Economic Cooperation Strategy Plan of Action (ECSPA) is the first in a series of plans of action, building up to the realization of the goals of the ECS. The ECSPA has a 10-year timeframe from 2003 to 2012. The progress of its implementation is reviewed every two years. To facilitate implementation, the proposed investment programs, projects and cooperation arrangements are divided into phases: immediate-to- short term (2003-2005), medium term (2006-2008) and long term (2009-2012).

According to the ACMECS Plan of Action 2006, which is an updated version of ECSPA, the ACMECS countries shall implement initiatives in the eight priority cooperation areas: (1) Trade and Investment Facilitation, (2) Agricultural Cooperation, (3) Industrial and Energy Cooperation, (4) Transport Linkages, (5) Tourism Cooperation, (6) Human Resource Development, (7) Public Health, and (8) Environmental Cooperation. Among these eight areas, the Human Resource Development area has been used for this case study as it has been one of the key pillars of ACMECS cooperation since its inception in 2003, when Thailand announced that she would grant 100 fellowships for the participating countries during the next 10 years (2004-2014), in order to support development and capacity building among member countries. The success of other sectoral development is rather much concerned with the capacity development of human resources in related areas of cooperation, as agreed in the declaration.

TICA is a core agency in the human resource development theme, aiming to enhance capacity building of the member countries of ACMECS, namely Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Vietnam, also known as CLMV Countries. The purpose of such development cooperation is to bridge the gaps between Thailand and these CLMV countries, on the basis of each country's comparative advantages, with the recognition of the need for partnership building in order to grow and prosper together through a multi- sectoral approach. In addition, cooperation aims to address economic disparities within ASEAN, foster income-generating activities and carry out practical projects to achieve sustainable development, including poverty reduction, in line with the Millennium Development Goals.

Human resource development and capacity building projects/ activities are provided to member countries in the aforementioned eight areas of cooperation as presented in a strategic framework of action which comprises strategic issues, overall strategic goals, and expected outcomes within the period of 2008 to 2011 as follows:

Strategic issue	Goals	Expected outcomes	Operating strategies / measures
1. Promotion of ability and readiness for trade and investment	1. To increase competencies of personnel and agencies related to national economic development in the ACMECS region in order to be ready for economic activity.	1. Main personnel and agencies with economic functions have enhanced potential and competencies in economic development administration as well as in investment.	1.1 Providing education/ training/ study visits for the officials from various government agencies to obtain experience and knowledge on forms and guidelines for modern trade. 1.2 To develop




			<p>regulations and privileges that support mutual investment.</p> <p>1.3 To develop a system and mechanisms that facilitate mutual trade such as tax and payment systems, electronic commerce, setting up a one stop service and a subcommittee for trade.</p> <p>1.4 To set up a database on investment opportunities.</p>
	<p>2. To enhance economic expansion in the ACMECS region leading to an investment market and imported raw material sources for Thailand.</p>	<p>2. Expanded trade, investment and economic activity between Thailand and countries of the sub-region results in Thailand becoming a trade and investment center for the sub-region.</p>	<p>2.1 To promote competency in conducting activities both in the public and private sector by raising the level of management ability and enhancing production and marketing ability.</p> <p>2.2 To create a network and emphasize close coordination between the public and private sectors of Thailand and countries of the sub-region, such as the business departments of ACMECS working in close cooperation.</p> <p>2.3 To promote the cooperation competency of agencies and personnel concerned with setting up border economic zones.</p>
<p>2. Agricultural cooperation</p>	<p>1. To develop agricultural effectiveness and potential in the sub-</p>	<p>1. Agencies and persons in countries of the sub-region have increased</p>	<p>1.1 Provision of study/ training/ study visits for personnel in agriculture, in order</p>




<p>region.</p>	<p>competency in agriculture.</p>	<p>to gain experience and knowledge on land development, and promote agriculture and agricultural science.</p>
<p>2. To create a basis for production in the form of an agricultural partnership whereby increased raw materials from neighboring countries are returned as processed agricultural products.</p>	<p>2. Thailand and countries of the sub-region are sources of agricultural raw materials, especially increased targeted economic crops, so as to become a major global base for production.</p>	<p>2.1 Setting out a productive network, undertaking “contract farming” of targeted economic crops by emphasizing application of knowledge, technique, and expertise to assist promotion and to solve technical obstacles, especially inspection for compliance with acceptable standards.</p> <p>2.2 Improvement of the agricultural database.</p>
<p>3. To develop health of livestock along the border of Thailand and countries of the region so as to reach set standards.</p>	<p>3. The problem of communicable animal diseases along the borders of Thailand and countries of the subregion is reduced, while there are to be more sources for distribution of meat of high quality from Thailand.</p>	<p>3.1 Improvement, solution and prevention of communicable animal diseases along the border, by promoting cooperation, expertise, research and development of human resources in the field of animal husbandry.</p> <p>3.2 Development of livestock production and establishment of a network for control and prevention of disease during trade in animals.</p> <p>3.3 Support for medical supplies and examination in the workplace.</p> <p>3.4 Promotion of training in animal health development and livestock</p>



			production.
3. Industrial and energy cooperation	1. To develop industrial efficiency and potential among the countries of the sub-region.	<p>1. Agencies and personnel of countries in the sub-region have the productive capacity to support or link up with Thai industry.</p> <p>2. Thailand has a leading role in production technology, management, quality control systems and standards.</p>	<p>1.1 Management of study/ training/ study visits for personnel in various fields concerned with industrial development, in order to impart experience and knowledge on production technology, production management and marketing.</p> <p>1.2 Promotion of joint production and investment between Thailand and neighboring countries.</p> <p>1.3 Promotion of cooperation between the public and private sectors, together with the role of regional agencies in work cooperation.</p> <p>1.4 Promotion of partnerships with international organizations and other sources of cooperation.</p> <p>1.5 Promotion of cooperation with SMEs.</p> <p>1.6 Promotion of joint discussions in order to specify border areas for promotion of industrial estates.</p> <p>1.7 Improvement of the industrial database.</p>
	2. To have a sustainable and efficient approach to energy resource management in	1. Thailand has a leading role in sustainable and environment friendly energy management.	2.1 Promotion of cooperation over the pooling of expert knowledge by the exchange of



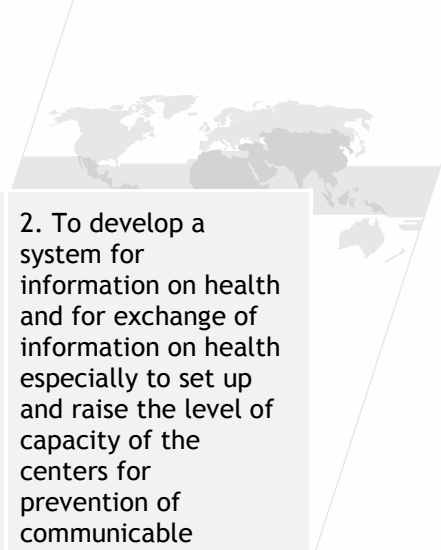
	<p>Thailand and the countries of the subregion.</p>	<p>2. Thailand and the countries of the sub-region can access energy sources and have sufficient energy for use.</p>	<p>information and experience and the transfer of technology for energy management.</p> <p>2.2 Promotion of cooperation for the development of alternative energy, such as biomass fuel, wind power, and biodiesel.</p> <p>2.3 Promotion of the economical use of energy, such as products labeled as “No.5.”</p>
<p>4.Communication and transport cooperation</p>	<p>1. To have lines of communication, both main and subsidiary roads, together with an efficient system of transport advantageous for Thailand and countries of the sub-region.</p>	<p>1. Thailand is a center for overland, sea and air transport and for many forms of continuous transport and international logistics.</p>	<p>1.1 Promotion of study/ training/ study visits for concerned personnel, in order to impart knowledge and experience in developing lines of communication and logistics management.</p> <p>1.2 Development of systems to facilitate transport under uniform standards.</p> <p>1.3 Development and improvement of regulations for travel under uniform standards.</p>
	<p>2. To promote the role of Thailand as a gateway to trade with the Indo-Chinese sub-region.</p>	<p>2. Increased opportunities are provided for expansion and investment.</p>	<p>2.1 Promotion of joint investment among countries of the subregion between the public and private sectors.</p> <p>2.2 Creation of a network and emphasis on close coordination between the public and private sectors of both Thailand, intermediate countries and destination countries.</p>




<p>5. Promotion of ability and readiness for tourism and hotel development</p>	<p>1. To promote Thailand's role as a center for development of tourism and hotel business.</p>	<p>1.1 Tourist spots of Thailand and of countries of the sub-region, especially home and cultural tourist spots, are internationally known and accepted.</p> <p>1.2 Thailand is a center for tourism in the sub-region.</p>	<p>1.1 To promote study/ training/ study visits for concerned personnel, in order to impart knowledge and experience of tourism and hotel management, especially hospitality management and sustainable eco-tourism.</p>
	<p>2. To provide tourism services of uniform standard.</p>	<p>2. Development and networking of tourist spots among the countries of the sub-region leads to increased revenue for each country.</p>	<p>2.1 Development of systems to facilitate tourism of uniform quality, such as the joint development of websites and databases in tourism.</p> <p>2.2 Joint development and improvement of regulations on travel and visa inspection policy.</p> <p>2.3 To create a network and emphasize close mutual coordination between the public and private sectors.</p> <p>2.4 To promote and support the Thai private sector in surveying the potential for and developing tourist spots.</p> <p>2.5 To develop tourism so as to link up with the economic directives of trade and investment.</p> <p>2.6 To promote the use of border passes for tourism.</p>
<p>6. Human resources and institutional development</p>	<p>1. To enhance the potential and capacity of human resources in areas necessary for</p>	<p>1.1 Personnel of countries of the sub-region have specific experience, especially in areas</p>	<p>1.1 Provision of study/ training/ study visits for civil service officials of countries of the sub-region, in</p>



	<p>development, including education, public health, energy, workforce, industry, science and technology and finance, together with other fields affecting development of economic and social cooperation in the sub- region.</p>	<p>necessary and required for development.</p> <p>1.2 Personnel have the potential to accommodate and support economic and social development of countries of the sub-region networked with Thailand.</p>	<p>order to impart experience and knowledge in areas necessary and required for development, including: i) Vocational education; ii) Development of workforce skills; (iii) Financial management.</p>
	<p>2. To promote strong cooperation among institutes in Thailand and countries of the sub-region and to create a mutual network.</p>	<p>2. Thailand is a center of learning and development of human resources of the sub-region.</p>	<p>2.1 To raise the level of Thai technical agencies and institutes in readiness to sustainably provide international education and training services acceptable at global level.</p> <p>2.2 To create a cooperative network among technical agencies and institutes of Thailand and countries in the sub-region.</p> <p>2.3 To promote cooperation over the exchange of researchers and experts including the joint conduct of research.</p> <p>2.4 Agencies and institutes of Thailand and of countries in the sub-region make an agreement for cooperation among institutes (institutional linkage).</p>
<p>7. Increased level of public health</p>	<p>1. To lay a systematic and standardized foundation for basic public health, as well as to establish</p>	<p>1. Development and enhanced capacity of agencies and personnel concerned with basic public health.</p>	<p>1. To promote study/ training/ study visits for medical personnel for prevention and control of disease.</p>




	<p>the potential and strength for prevention and detection of disease.</p> <p>2. To solve the problem of communicable diseases among the respective countries, especially along the border.</p>		<p>2. To develop a system for information on health and for exchange of information on health especially to set up and raise the level of capacity of the centers for prevention of communicable disease along the border.</p> <p>3. To raise the potential for preparedness to meet an epidemic of communicable disease.</p> <p>4. To promote cooperation with international organizations and sources that emphasize development and enhancement of cooperation over public health.</p>
<p>8. Cooperation over natural resource and environmental development</p>	<p>1. To enhance the capacity for natural resource and environmental management of personnel and agencies concerned in countries in the sub- region, in order to promote mutual benefit.</p>	<p>1. Countries in the sub-region have sustainable and environmentally friendly natural resource management.</p> <p>2. Countries in the sub-region manage and solve problems of natural hazards and efficiently relieve emergency situations.</p>	<p>1. To promote technical cooperation by exchange of information and experience and by transfer of technology for natural resource management and environmental maintenance.</p> <p>2. To promote technical cooperation by exchange of information and experience and by transfer of technology for prevention and solution of problems arising from natural hazards and from changing atmospheric conditions, such as forest fires and fogs, and earthquake and</p>



			tsunami warning systems.
9. Expansion of cooperation between partners and donors	1. To expand Thailand's area of cooperation for development of the sub-region to cover a much wider range.	<p>1.1 There is more support for important cooperative activities under ACMECS.</p> <p>1.2 Thailand is the base for expansion of cooperation for development, together with other major sources of funding.</p>	<p>1.1 To expand cooperation by partnership with major sources of funding such as Japan, ADB, and the World Bank.</p> <p>1.2 To promote the role of funding sources in important activities under the ACMECS framework which require greater expertise.</p>
	2. To promote a cooperative network of various funding sources with Thailand so as to integrate cooperation throughout the sub-region.	<p>2.1 Coordination between sources of funding and Thailand in carrying out the task of cooperation for development in the sub- region is efficient.</p> <p>2.2 Personnel and agencies/institutes of Thailand and countries of the sub-region have more potential for work performance at global level.</p>	<p>2.1 To enhance coordination between Thailand and funding sources under the ACMECS framework.</p> <p>2.2 To seek for a new form of cooperation in carrying on work in partnership with the sub-region.</p> <p>2.3 To set up a framework for cooperation under ACMECS together with funding sources to press for total work performance in accordance with targets.</p>

The SSC activity

The objectives of cooperation under the ACMECS framework have been stated as follows: (1) To bring about strong and sustainable cooperation for economic and social development among the developing countries of the region. (2) To bring about cooperation over development as a means to promote the expansion of trade and investment in the region. (3) To bring about cooperation in order to solve technical problems that must be remedied in order to facilitate trade. On the basis of Human Resource Development, the ACMECS countries cooperate to enhance capacities of their people and institutions for global competitiveness through the following activities: 1) Identify each country's needs and expertise to mutually promote and implement capacity building and HRD in the strategic areas of ACMECS and related sectors; 2) Intensify and strengthen existing institutional linkages and university networks; 3) Develop ACMECS integrated HRD strategy; 4) Promote and strengthen effective technical cooperation in HRD, R&D, infrastructure development, SME and supporting industry development, information and industrial technology development; and 5) Encourage partnership cooperation with



development partners in promoting HRD activities. Specifically, the ACMECS HRD programme mainly emphasizes provision of education/ training/ study visits for the officials from various government agencies to obtain experience and knowledge and set up a framework for cooperation under ACMECS together with funding sources to achieve work performance relating to the targets.

Roles and responsibilities are distributed among the partners. Thailand initiated its programme under ACMECS with a view to economic and social development in areas where Thailand is regarded as a leader among neighboring countries. Each member country serves as Coordinating Country for the sector in which it takes particular interest: Trade and Investment Facilitation and Public Health - Thailand; Agricultural Cooperation - Myanmar; Transport Linkages - Lao PDR; Tourism Cooperation - Cambodia; Industrial and Energy Cooperation, Environmental Cooperation, Human Resource Development - Vietnam. A leader of each sector initiates and designs the cooperation framework for this particular sector. A leading country is a host to hold a working group meeting and follow-up the common projects, usually referring to activities and projects that benefit all member countries, as well as suggest new projects. For instance, Vietnam and Thailand signed the Memorandum of Understanding on Vocational Training Development in ACMECS in November 6, 2008 to establish a framework for implementing programs in vocational training development for the ACMECS countries. Both countries have to work closely on enhancing capacity of the ACMECS countries in vocational training development policies and plans, and enhance the quality of ACMECS country trainers via fellowship programs, training courses, seminars and exchange visits.

The benefit of the ACMECS HRD programme for the participating countries is the sharing of knowledge of best practices and experience in a horizontal relationship through peer-to-peer learning. Since the programme reflects the common development framework among the member countries and responds to the needs of the countries, it strengthens ownership and mutual accountability as well as mutual learning of the ACMECS countries.

In focus group interviews held among students from Lao PDR and Myanmar holding ACMECS scholarships, the purpose of the scholarships was seen to be sharing of technological knowledge and promotion of cooperation for development. There was a general consensus that the scholarships helped meet the needs in that the qualified persons could transfer their knowledge within their respective countries, especially in the field of HRD. Human Resource Development was seen as supporting national and institutional planning.


An interview with high ranking officials in Lao PDR indicated a very active interest in HRD, which has been identified as a priority in the country's 7th 5-year National Socioeconomic Development Plan. Individual capacity in HRD leads to organizational capacity and thence to national capacity, important as the government is now trying to build human capital and to achieve cooperation within and outside the region. ACMECS technical cooperation and knowledge exchange in vocational training also leads to national implication in that Lao PDR can draw from the lessons learned in Thailand regarding the Five Years Educational Development Framework and the country can align to the policy framework.

The remaining challenge for the participating countries, however, is how to develop high quality and equitable education and a skilled workforce and how to transfer the knowledge and experience gained to reach the target groups, especially those in rural areas. There is also a need to develop agreed tools and indicators for monitoring and evaluation in capacity development to ensure sustainability in the long term.

Even though ownership and mutual accountability is strengthened at the policy and implementation levels as mentioned earlier, the extent to which the results of the programme can be outreached to the underdeveloped areas is still questionable.

Key challenge 1: Ownership and mutual accountability

The majority of the respondents report that the ACMECS HRD programme responds to the national development plans of the member countries by strengthening the commonly shared



development framework together with boosting aid coordination in the eight priority development areas. The programme has been designed to meet the needs of participating countries on a demand-driven basis. All the requests for short and long term training supported by Thailand correspond to the recipient countries' institutional needs for capacity development in specific fields. In sectoral cooperation, all participating countries mutually discuss directions, and share experience as well as set up appropriate strategies for effective development of targeted sectors. The programme has also established a working group for each cooperation sector to boost the sense of ownership.

Strong commitment in the ACMECS HRD programme depends on ownership, political support, and strong leadership of the participating countries. At the policy level, ACMECS Summit and Ministerial Meetings have been held every two years, where the ACMECS leaders sign the Summit Declaration that spells out, in every area of cooperation, common benefits, significant outcomes, reviews and progress, common needs of ACMECS countries and future directions for implementation. Ministerial meetings are held every year; senior official meetings every six months. Sectoral working group meetings and ACMECS working groups, among embassies, coordinated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to endorse the cooperation, are formulated. At the sectoral working group level, the mechanism to enhance effective cooperation is the set up of the coordinating country on a voluntary basis, which Thailand has endorsed; the design of the program and plan of action by participating countries; the mobilization of resources and implementation; and the sectoral working group meetings on a regular basis. However, some respondents raised the issue that the challenge for the ACMECS HRD Programme contribution is very much concerned with the continuity of support to implement the key projects as agreed upon in the meetings, particularly the proposal of work plans and voluntary work in planning the activities and supporting the expenses. Besides the working groups, a civil society organization, namely the ACMECS Business Council, has been formed to hold business meetings to promote trade and investment among member countries. Other actors such as farmers and businessmen are involved in contract farming projects aimed at promoting agriculture through price and agricultural product insurance which further enhances farmers' confidence. The private sectors are also interested in vocational training and help promote the training.

In November 6, 2008 Vietnam and Thailand signed the Memorandum of Understanding on Vocational Training Development in ACMECS in order to establish a necessary framework for implementing co-operation programs between Vietnam and Thailand in vocational training development for the ACMECS countries. Both countries have to coordinate and cooperate on capacity building for vocational training and training of trainers for Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam, strengthen capacity of the ACMECS countries in formulation and execution of vocational training development policies and plans, and enhance the quality of trainers of the ACMECS countries through fellowship programs, training courses, seminars and exchange visits.

Compared with North-South cooperation, in the ACMECS programme the needs are shared in addressing the same development framework, since each participating country presents a similar social and economic development scenario. As a result, the programme responds to the needs of the participants due to fewer gaps of social and economic development and common development issues. Furthermore, the ACMECS programme promotes ownership and mutual accountability through joint working processes which enhance commitment among participating countries. The horizontal cooperation relationship further leads to more ownership of initiatives and mutual accountability. All participating countries cooperatively plan, operate, and are responsible for the common results.

In contrast, North-South cooperation reflects a more vertical or more donor-recipient relationship. In North-South cooperation, there seem to be wider gaps and development framework issues due to different social and economic development environments. The developed country has more advanced knowledge and technical instruments which may not be suitable for the local context of the receiving countries. Moreover, the donor countries usually come up with a package of tools to implement in the receiving countries without considering the feasibility of the tools and adjusting them to suit the local context.



Key challenge 2: Transparency and information

Information management and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) are included in the design of the ACMECS HRD programme through the ACMECS website (www.acmecs.org) which updates information on work plans and ongoing activities and projects. Progress reports of activities and projects at every level of meeting, namely working groups, senior official meetings (SOM), ministerial meetings, and summits are also included in the website. Each participating country's focal point can update information and access information on ACMECS. Other multilateral and civil society organizations can also access the website to observe the progress of project implementation. The design for monitoring and evaluation (M&E) has also been included in the ACMECS Plan of Action 2006-2010, stating that the coordinating countries will regularly report the progress of their respective sectors of cooperation to ACMECS Member Countries through diplomatic channels and a review will be conducted every two years.

Information management strengthens the programme results in that all related information and data have been shared among member countries at all levels of meeting from the working groups for each area of cooperation up to the summit meeting of top leaders. This would help the participating countries have more useful data available for preparation of future work plans as well as results design. The exchange of information at a sector level also involves planning of activities and projects and solving problems which further leads to success of the projects and better results.


The promotion of regional cooperation and information sharing among partnering countries within and outside ACMECS is also enhanced through exchange of information and cooperation via the ACMECS Business Council, information sharing on animal disease control and quarantine inspection improvement, promotion of best practices and appropriate standards for renewable energy, border trade investment and tourism via assigned central agencies. At the regional and sub-regional levels, exchange of information and best practices are by strengthening regional cooperation within ACMECS and with other regions such as ASEAN, and Mekong Basin Disease Surveillance Cooperation (MBDS), setting up a mechanism to coordinate and cooperate among ACMECS members and the existing regional cooperation mechanisms such as the Greater Mekong Sub-region Strategic Framework and Mekong River Commission.

However, applying the practice of management for results is still a challenge for the ACMECS HRD programme, especially with small-scale capacity development projects and activities. The project outputs such as numbers of fellowship receivers or increased knowledge and skills are easily identified, but there is still a lack of systematic measures and lack of agreed tools for monitoring and evaluation to assess the impact. Despite the database in the ACMECS website, the results and the impact of the HRD programme have not been clearly identified. Next, even though each participating country has assigned agencies responsible for M&E, such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), Department of Planning and Cooperation (DPC), and Department of Higher Education (DHE) in Lao PDR, there is still no central agency accountable for M&E information.

Moreover, evaluation of the long-term impact has not been achieved for the whole programme since many projects have just been implemented and it needs more time to see the progress made. The evaluation, however, has been done on specific project groups particularly on short term training after its termination. The recommendation is that the ACMECS HRD programme should develop common tools and indicators in the eight sector areas that are agreed upon by all participating countries. Next, there should be more responsible persons to support information management in each participating country. Last, the database of ODA financed projects and programmes should be stable and reliable.

Key challenge 3: Development challenges

The ACMECS HRD programme has emphasized mutual learning through training courses designed specifically for addressing the development challenges of the member countries. For example,



the training programme on road and bridge planning, design, construction, and maintenance held in Thailand in 2010, which involved participants from Lao PDR, Myanmar, Vietnam and Cambodia, could provide knowledge to the participants to maintain and repair their roads, especially along the economic corridor. On November 3, 2005 the leaders of the five ACMECS countries, issued the Declaration on a Partnership in Combating Avian Influenza and other Infectious Diseases, at their summit in Bangkok. The tailored training programme on effective surveillance for avian influenza has also led to the reduction of the epidemic disease among participating countries.

The success factors for capacity development through mutual learning are as follows. First is the sharing of a common development framework. When the social and economic development gap is narrow, the participating countries can draw on experience and easily adapt such good practice to their countries. Second is the awareness of the social-cultural context. The exchanged knowledge and technology should be applicable to the local context and appropriate to the existing capacity of the participating countries.


Last is full and active participation by the participating countries. Participation of the member countries in the common training projects has brought complementary knowledge and technology to all members. On the other hand, the weaknesses to be avoided are as follows. The first concerns the knowledge background level of each participant. The ACMECS HRD programme has to ensure that the participants share the same level of knowledge background and experience in order to share and exchange information more effectively and actively. Second is the language medium. Participating countries seem to lack language proficiency in English, which is the medium of instruction. Third is the delay in coordination procedures due to the bureaucratic structure in each participating country. Thailand has a comparative advantage as a leader in providing knowledge and technology to neighboring countries due to our similar cultures, traditions, and common development challenges. Particularly, in the case of the agricultural sector, Thailand has studied the needs and capacities of its neighboring countries and designed training programme content appropriate to the local capacity of the countries such as low-cost agricultural tools and machines and utilizing local resources instead of introducing high-technology instruments.

Thailand has learned from working hand-in-hand with the participating countries that the national plans and directions and needs of the member countries should be considered thoroughly in order to develop more effective activities under the ACMECS framework. Next, each country should have a clear development framework on common issues and identify good practices and failures of such issues, and be able to draw the lessons learnt into policy action. Moreover, ACMECS and other cooperation frameworks in the GMS sub-region should be revised and coordinated to reduce overlap of frameworks leading to redundant activities, a major obstacle to active participation.

The aforementioned mutual learning in the ACMECS HRD programme differs from that of North-South cooperation because it reflects a two-way solution through peer-to-peer exchanges such as joint training and joint problem-tackling and problem-solving. Conventional donors can learn from the joint cooperation among ACMECS member countries in applying the bottom-up approach in specifying agenda which respond to needs of member countries. Next, while the conventional approach mostly looks into the one country situation, ACMECS cooperation can connect participating countries with each other in order to find effective solutions to common problems.

Key challenge 4: Role of champions

ACMECS activities fit into the national capacity development and technical cooperation plans of the participating countries. The support from Thailand responds to specific demands and needs of member countries through common development framework issues and needs analysis of the institutional priorities. The programme puts emphasis on both long-term fellowships and short-term training for capacity building in order to facilitate the real development activities under the programme. The model of HRD for institutional building has been designed for



long-term sustainability as a key to development solutions. In designing the activities, Thailand has taken into consideration the cultural context of participating countries. For instance, in terms of tourism promotion, Thailand has considered the existing tourism areas and looked for what could be done better in order to preserve the local people's ways of life and their traditions rather than persuading the local people to change their traditional beliefs. The best practices and sources of expertise have been prepared in document form to share with other countries in order to meet particular needs.

One of the champions in ACMECS technical cooperation and knowledge exchange is the technical vocational school in Suwannaket, Lao PDR with Thailand and in Udomsai with Vietnam. Such bilateral cooperation helps improve the curriculum in Lao PDR to respond to the needs of the people and of industry. For instance, Thailand has developed a mobile teacher project and Lao PDR can adapt this concept to reach the unreached children who have never attended school. Lao PDR can also draw from the lessons learned in Thailand regarding the Five Years Educational Development Framework and the country can align to the policy framework. HRD has now been identified as a priority in the 6th and 7th Five-Year National Socioeconomic Development Plans of Lao PDR with the declaration that in 2020 the country will be upgraded from among least developed countries.

Another champion is the response to the emerging regional issue of infectious diseases on which all member countries signed the ACMECS Leaders' Declaration on Partnership in Combating Avian Influenza and Other Infectious Diseases. The ACMECS Health Sector Plan was formulated and various mechanisms, such as a coordinating office for the ACMECS public health sector and meetings at policy and implementation levels, have been developed by Thailand to share her successful experience in public health and disease control with other members, including surveillance and laboratory capacity building, information sharing on disease surveillance systems, cross-border disease control, and HRD. The training in such best practices can help increase the effectiveness of avian influenza surveillance systems and reduce avian influenza epidemics in ACMECS participating countries.

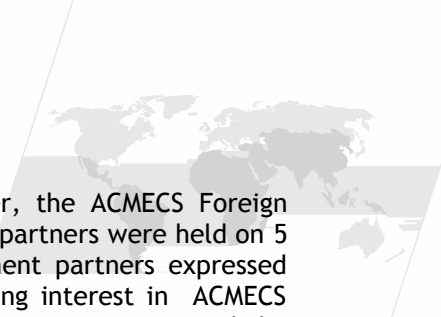
Furthermore, as Thailand has advanced capabilities in the development of bio-fuel and technical cooperation in this area at the community level, it can serve as another mechanism in the transfer of knowledge on bio-diesel production to its neighboring countries which further leads to cost reduction by reducing fossil fuel dependence and decreasing greenhouse gas emissions from fossil fuels as a major source of climate change. The successful implementation of bio-diesel production can bring about sustainable management of natural resources in the region.

Champions help develop the participating countries' capacity and they can apply the knowledge gained to their local context. The role of champions also leads to increasing incentives for policy and institutional reform as evidenced in the 6th and 7th Lao PDR Five-Year National Socioeconomic Development Plans which regard HRD as a development priority in the country. Through peer-to-peer participatory learning by champions, ACMECS member countries have developed a sense of trust and mutual respect which builds their confidence and self-reliance to plan and cope with challenging problems at hand.

The challenge lies in the application or adoption by each country to its local context. The difficulties generally arise from lack of effective public management, inadequate transfer of knowledge and technology to various target groups, budget limitations, and insufficient and unqualified personnel. To overcome such difficulties, the governments in the participating countries have to continuously take ownership of the activities and cooperate with private and civil society.

Key challenge 5: Triangular cooperation

In the ACMECS Ministerial Meeting on November 2004 in Krabi Province, Thailand provided an opportunity for non-members (i.e. Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Germany, France, and ADB) to discuss ways and means in order to participate in ACMECS projects. Following this particular meeting, various countries and international organizations have shown their interest



in becoming development partners in moving ACMECS forward. Later, the ACMECS Foreign Ministers' Meeting and the ACMECS Ministers' Meeting with development partners were held on 5 August 2005 in Siem Reap, Cambodia and the participating development partners expressed support for the goals and objectives of ACMECS, while displaying strong interest in ACMECS cooperation and projects, aimed at further enhancing connectivity, competitiveness and the spirit of regional community, as well as expanding the growth of regional economies and reducing poverty.


In the Japan-Thailand Foreign Ministers' Meeting on November 28, 2004, the ministers discussed cooperation between Japan and Thailand in their efforts to develop the Savannakhet Airport in Lao PDR which is situated near its border with Thailand. The triangular cooperation activity among Thailand, Lao PDR, and Japan in the Savannakhet-Mukdaharn area is to explore the possible shared use of Savannakhet Airport in the future. Japan, at the request of Thailand and Lao PDR, would conduct a study on Savannakhet Airport, and the three countries would establish a joint working committee to ensure coherence of the studies and discussions between Thailand and Lao PDR on this matter. Another Thai-German triangular cooperation programme is a joint partnership programme to support neighboring countries of Thailand. Based on the 50 years of experience with Thai-German technical cooperation, support provided by the partnership covers the areas of education/vocational education, rural development and health. Thailand and France are also developing joint cooperation projects within the ACMECS strategy for the benefit of the ACMECS countries. Under this program, a workshop on "food traceability and food safety" was opened to participants from ACMECS countries to address the need for food safety expertise and food traceability among the regulatory and scientific communities of governmental food safety agencies in ACMECS countries. Thailand, Cambodia and the French Government also worked closely to build a fruit tree development center in the northern provinces of Cambodia.

Since triangular cooperation involves a larger range of actors than North-South and South-South cooperation, the operation is more time and resource consuming for involved partners. Therefore, challenges in triangular cooperation are delays in management, coordination, and implementation. Nevertheless, the incentives for triangular cooperation are cost sharing by co-sponsoring, technical know-how from the development partners, complementarity of technology transfer, and wider networking. The comparative advantage of the cooperation is a great potential for horizontal partnership in win-win-win situations. All partners can learn and benefit from each other, leading to less boundary between donors and recipients. The exchange of experts and technology can be transferred from the development partners to the recipient countries through the cooperating agency. The North has funds and technology and Thailand, through the Thailand International Development Cooperation Agency (TICA), acts as a cooperation agency to provide cost-effective training within the region. Triangular cooperation involves lower transaction costs on communication, accommodation, food and beverages, training expenses, and expert fees, including travel expenses. Moreover, the long-term gains in horizontal partnership are lessons in triangular cooperation that can be scaled up.

North-South cooperation can learn from the strengths of triangular cooperation as follows. First, the cooperative activities represent a synergy of comparative advantages of each member country. Second, the activities strengthen ownership and self-reliance among member countries. Third, the activities align with the local context, whereas North-South cooperation focuses more on a ready-made plan and embeds it in the local context. Fourth, the lessons learned in triangular cooperation can be scaled up to produce broader impacts involving more stakeholders and innovative learning. Despite the aforementioned strengths, the weakness lies in limited initiatives among participating countries due to limited financial resources.

Key challenge 6: Mechanisms

Even though the ACMECS HRD programme is not directly designed to involve other regional and global mechanisms, the ACMECS cooperation programme has intentionally welcomed other



development partners to support activities or work on a partnership basis with ACMECS. ACMECS has invited other funding agencies to participate in the related meetings and forums. This would provide the opportunity for the agencies to work closely with the participating countries and Thailand. For example, Japan has actively participated in the discussion and attempted to support some development activities. Thailand has acted as a major facilitator to mobilize all partners to work together as well as to have a close link with other regional and global forums, particularly any related to the development of the GMS.


ACMECS member countries have benefited from regional and global mechanisms since they have the opportunity to exchange development strategy as well as develop networks with wider partners. Besides, the regional and global mechanisms strengthen ACMECS through in-depth case study documents, lessons learned, and support of experts. ACMECS member countries have an opportunity to participate in IT platforms, workshops, knowledge sharing, etc. The yearly HRD global forum in Seoul helps the participating countries understand how to work on educational reform and how they can appropriately implement such reform in their countries. Similarly, the ASEM forum (Europe-ASEAN dialogue) helps the participating countries reconsider how to develop an ASEAN community like that of the EU community, how to bridge the gaps at different levels among developing countries, and how to help the countries benefit from technology, cooperative training, and funding. Since the vitality of South-South learning is restricted by lack of knowledge management, regional and global mechanisms have a pivotal role to innovate tools, methods, and modalities as well as manage lessons learned so that South-South learning can mobilize resources for information gathering and data collection on supporting and impeding factors.

The innovation developed from regional and global mechanisms is the work of communities of practice (CoPs) among member countries. This practice helps extend knowledge and experience to wider development networks in Asia and beyond. CoPs refer to groups of people, organizations, or countries which create, generate, nurture, and share knowledge and experience as well as lessons learned in their specialized and selected fields. Formal CoPs of ACMECS have been created in the form of committees and working groups to steer policy, to provide strategic directions, and to give advice to the practitioners from the experienced. Informal CoPs comprise members from various groups of stakeholders, such as staff, consultants, and academia, to exchange ideas, best practices, or technical transfer and exchange. ACMECS tries to promote CoPs as a lesson learned for member countries to share their experiences in order to provide more efficient ways of working together.

While boosting South-South learning and knowledge exchange, the emergence of many regional and global mechanisms also leads to overlapping efforts. Some respondents report that several similar thematic and cooperation frameworks are implemented in the GMS region. There is still little communication and no coordination among the different global and regional mechanisms. Hence, an umbrella for joint discussions or general platforms for different global and regional partners is necessary. A more united development framework at global, regional, and national levels is another issue needing to be explored in order to reach synergy and avoid duplication at differing levels.

Lessons learned

In adapting the aid effectiveness principles to South-South cooperation, the ACMECS HRD programme proves more effective when the member countries work together on capacity development and needs assessment, and when the programme meets the demands of the sector/institution development priorities. The major factors that ensure ownership and mutual accountability are political support and strong leadership of the participating countries. The impeding factor for the ACMECS HRD contribution lies in the continuity of support to implement the key projects agreed upon at the meeting, such as delay in submitting work plans and voluntary work in planning the activities and supporting the expenses.



Sense of ownership also increases through mutual learning via peer-to-peer participatory learning and problem-solving processes with a shared common developmental framework and similar social and cultural environment among ACMECS member countries. The training participants can easily apply shared experience and good practices appropriate to the countries' existing capacity, as evidenced in Thailand's sharing her successful experience in public health and disease control with other members which finally resulted in the reduction of avian influenza epidemics among the participating countries. Nevertheless, the reported impeding factors for mutual learning are different levels of background knowledge among participants, inadequate language proficiency, and delay in coordination procedures in participating countries.

Despite the reported success factors, the areas for improvement in the ACMECS HRD programme are as follows. First is lack of a systematic monitoring and following up process for results or impacts. The major mechanisms for monitoring project progress are meetings at both policy and implementation levels and regular updates of information in the ACMECS website.

Second is that existing evaluation merely focuses on short-term training after evaluation rather than on the longer term impact. Sound results-based management should be designed and implemented to show the scope and relevance of impacts of the programme.

Next, the ACMECS HRD programme enriches the aid effectiveness agenda by involving Southern champions, knowledge exchange and mutual learning and strong commitment by participating countries. On the other hand, North-South cooperation reflects a more vertical or donor-recipient relationship due to wider gaps in development framework issues and more advanced knowledge and technical tools which do not match the existing knowledge and skills of the recipient countries.

The ACMECS HRD programme also demonstrates that South-South knowledge exchange seems to be more cost-effective and more adapted to human resources than traditional technical cooperation. The role of champions leads to increasing incentives for policy and institutional reform as in the Lao PDR context which puts HRD at the core of development policy in her national plan. A sense of trust and mutual respect is built upon the peer-to-peer learning atmosphere which strengthens the participating countries' confidence and self-reliance to deal with challenging problems.

Complementarities between South-South and North-South cooperation are of increasing interest among traditional donors and further lead to the emergence of triangular cooperation. Since triangular cooperation comprises more variety of actors, the major weaknesses in cooperation are time consumed and difficulties in management and coordination among partners. However, it has a great potential for horizontal partnership and win-win-win situations. North-South cooperation can learn from the strengths of triangular cooperation as it reflects the synergy of comparative advantages of each member country, strengthens ownership and self-reliance among member countries, aligns to the local context, and can be scaled up to produce a broader impact.

Mechanisms to support and fund South-South cooperation are now available and it is time to connect with partners at regional and global levels. Regional and global mechanisms can enable knowledge, accumulation of good practices and modalities, and provide platforms where innovation, lessons learned, experience, and forms of coordination can be taken up and established. However, the emergence of many regional and global mechanisms may lead to overlapping efforts, and communication and coordination among different global and regional mechanisms is still limited. This reflects a new need for the development of joint discussions or general platforms for different global and regional partners as well as a more united development framework for global, regional, and national levels of policy which enhance synergy and avoid redundancy at various cooperation levels.



Annexes

Annex 1: List of interviewees and participants in workshop

A. List of Interviewees

Mr. Seng Sary, Director PDRD /PVR, Department of Rural Development of Phreah Vihear Province, Cambodia

Mr. Touch Saroeun, Director, Koh Kong Rural Development Department, Cambodia

Mr. Nguyen Xuan Tien, Deputy Director General, Foreign Economic Relations Department, Ministry of Planning and Investment, Vietnam

B. List of Participants in the Focus Group Workshop

Lao PDR

Mr. Sengsomphone Viravouth, Director General, Department of Planning and Cooperation, Ministry of Education, Lao PDR Dr. Bounpanh Xaymounry,

Deputy Director General, Department of Planning and Cooperation, Ministry of Education, Lao PDR
Mr. Khamsavanh Keapasurt, Domestic Trade Officer, Ministry of Industry and Trade, Lao PDR

Myanmar

Mr. Kyaw Ngwe, Lecturer, Yezin, Agriculture University, Ministry of Agriculture, Myanmar

Mr. Aung Toe, Deputy Assistant Fishery Officer, Department of Fisheries, Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries, Myanmar

Ms. May Myat Khine, Lecturer, Ministry of Science and Technology, Myanmar

Thailand

Mrs. Jitkasem Tantasiri, Director, Thai Cooperation Branch 1

Ms. Pin Sridurongkatum, Development Cooperation Officer, Thai Cooperation Branch 1

Annex 2: Memos of interviews

The focus group workshop was conducted on February 24, 2011 and the participants were students from Lao PDR and Myanmar holding ACMECS scholarships; and another focus group workshop involved the relevant persons from TICA. Another focus group workshop was held in Lao PDR on March 4, 2011 with high ranking officials in Lao PDR. Further, there was an interview conducted with ACMECS related participants who responded to the questionnaire by email. The following are issues gathered from the participants.

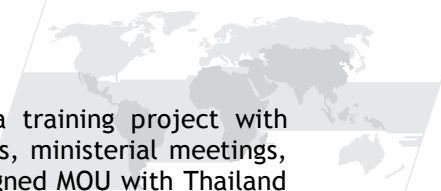
Key Challenge 1. Ownership and mutual accountability in horizontal partnerships

1.1 Does your country take a leading role in cooperation under the ACMECS programme

- In general, Thailand has initiated the programme under Thaksin government. The main objective of ACMECS is to develop the economics and society in 8 areas in which Thailand is the leader of neighboring countries.

- The role of the leading countries: Trade and Investment and Public Health: Thailand is a leading country; Agriculture: Myanmar is a leading country; Industrial and Energy Cooperation, Environment, and HRD: Vietnam is a leading country; Transport Linkages: Lao PDR; Tourism: Cambodia

- A leading country is a host to hold a working group meeting and following-up the common projects (activities and projects that benefit all member countries i.e. disease along the



border; or bilateral projects such as Lao PDR would like to hold a training project with Myanmar) as well as suggesting new projects. There are senior meetings, ministerial meetings, and summits to endorse the cooperation. For example, Vietnam has signed MOU with Thailand in terms of vocational training and hold training courses in Vietnam or Thailand.

- TICA is a focal point of HRD (all sectors: Public Health; agriculture; etc.) in Thailand. In each sector, Public Health Ministry holds a working group and formulates an action plan (collecting data from each country, discussions on how to reduce the severity of the disease such as Avian Influenza) with member countries.
- Lao PDR takes the role on sharing experiences and strategic development of the country, especially on HRD. The government is now trying to build human capital and searching for the way to achieve ASEAN community and regional cooperation, especially cooperation with Vietnam, Thailand, China, Australia, and Japan.

1.2 Do ACMECS activities fit in with the institutional strategic plans among the participating countries?

- ACMECS activities correspond to the national development plans and government policy. ACMECS activities strengthen the territory development cooperation. The cooperation among neighboring countries helps boost the aid coordination and is specific to each area i.e. agriculture, public health, etc. Furthermore, it helps facilitate trade and investment among the countries.
- The scholarship responds to my organizational needs and complies with ACMECS because our university needs high qualified persons to teach our students and our student will share agricultural knowledge to farmers.
- Myanmar needs the scholarship to respond to developing sectors, especially knowledge and appropriate collaboration with neighboring countries.
- HRD supports our national and institutional plans. Higher human capacity will support high-level planning.
- As I am in an educational sector, human resource development is very important. If we have more human resource development, we can gain knowledge to support the national development.
- Yes, a lot indeed. Human Resource Development is the national strategic development plans in which the Lao PDR government puts emphasis on in order to get rid of poverty.

1.3 Have the participating countries made specific commitments to contribute to the ACMECS programme? How?

- The leading countries have made commitments and contributed to the working group meetings. The leading countries have to host working group meetings, invite member countries, and pay for meeting expenses (commit the budget).

1.4 What are the challenges to ensure that these contributions are actually made?

- There are meetings at various levels and there are mechanisms used to follow-up progress from these countries.
- The proposal of the work plan (i.e. vocational training by Vietnam). The voluntary work in planning the activities and paying for the expenses is the challenge.

1.5 How aware of these commitments are organizational heads?

- They are strongly aware of the commitments because there are summits, ministerial meetings, and SOM meetings (senior officials).

1.6 How are other national actors, such as parliament and civil society, involved in the ACMECS programme?

- There is ACMECS business council which holds business matching to promote trade and investment among member countries.
- Contract Farming project (involving farmers and businessmen) promotes agriculture by price insurance, agricultural product insurance, etc. which brings confidence to farmers.
- The private sectors promote vocational training by themselves.

1.7 Do other external development partners, donors, international organizations exchange information and coordinate with one another?


- There are guidelines for development partners' participation in ACMECS projects
- ACMECS forums have formulated initiatives to involve development partners to cooperate and support the projects under ACMECS
- There is exchange of information and coordination with one another i.e. flagship projects which have high impact to member countries have been supported by donor countries, i.e. fruit tree development center in the Northern provinces of Cambodia (TICA has negotiated with the French government to support in terms of funding to Cambodia (Trilateral cooperation), however, there is still no progress.
- There is the exchange of information and coordination with one another i.e. feasibility study for the establishment of the center of excellence in Siem Reap (TICA has negotiated with the French government to support in terms of funding to Cambodia (Trilateral cooperation)).
- There is exchange of information and coordination with one another such as collaboration between Thailand, Lao PDR, and Japan in the development of the Savannakhet-Mukdaharn area to explore the share use of Savannakhet airport in the future.

1.8 How does the Human Resource Development Programme promote national capacity to lead the development process?

- First, one official who obtained a master degree through ACMECS Human Resource Development Programme has been equipped with higher knowledge and analytical thinking skills and has since then been able to produce analytical papers. The official was later appointed as Department Director of International Cooperation.
- Second, Individual capacity in HRD leads to organization capacity in analyzing the organization structure/department/ bureau which later leads to national capacity which implies institutional capacity in policy formulation and policy analysis
- I once received training on productivity improvement and I have brought the knowledge gained to introduce the Laos investors the systems of productivity and bring the knowledge gained to develop a master plan. I also have been trained on industrial estate and come back to develop industrial estate in Laos.
- The knowledge from this programme can be shared to grass root people. We can share the knowledge to the farmers or students in class.
- The government in Lao PDR has issued the poverty reduction strategy with the statement that the development of human is a priority to the development in other areas.

1.9 Compared to North-South cooperation in the same context, are there differences in how this ACMECS programme promotes ownership and mutual accountability?

- In ACMECS programme, there is more commitment in terms of joint working. South-South cooperation is more horizontal cooperation relationship, which leads to more ownership of initiatives and mutual accountability (cooperatively plan, operate, and responsible for the common results). However, North-South cooperation is more vertical (donor-recipient).
- In ACMECS programme, the needs are shared together in addressing the same development due to similar social economic development. Therefore, the programme responds to the needs of the participants and there are fewer gaps of social economic development and common



issues of development. In North-South cooperation, the cooperation has wider gaps and wider issues of development. For example, Singapore is 40 years ahead of us. Therefore, the knowledge and technical instruments may not be suitable for us.

- We can learn from Thailand easily because the spoken language is very similar.

Key Challenge 2. Information and results management in ACMECS for capacity development

2.1 How is information management and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) included in the design, implementation and evaluation of the ACMECS programme?

- The information management of ACMECS programme is through ACMECS website (www.acmeecs.org) which updates information on ongoing activities and projects.
- There is a report in every level of meetings (working groups, SOM, Ministerial meetings, Summits) in the website. Each member country focal point can update information and access information on ACMECS.
- There is monitoring mechanism for all meetings. There are progressive reports of activities and projects.
- The design of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) has been included in ACMECS Plan of Action 2010-2012.

2.2 Do external actors, such as multilateral organizations, regional organizations, parliaments or civil society, have access to the related data?

- Yes (Through website)

2.3 Are there any lessons on how to use a results-based approach, not only inputs and outputs?

- ACMECS aims at a programme level which focuses on result management in 2003. For example, the success of single-visa between Thailand and Cambodia (issued in Thailand and can be used in Cambodia or issued in Cambodia and can be used in Thailand) could lead to increase tourism development.
- There are no agreed tools on monitoring and evaluation to assess the impact. We have data base in ACMECS website. However, we should attempt to identify the outcome or impact of HRD programme. ACMECS should have tools and indicators that are agreed upon, i.e develop common tools and indicators in eight areas. Performance assessment tools should have monitoring system network.
- There are three agencies involved: Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), Department of Planning and Cooperation (DPC), and Department of Higher Education (DHE) There is no central M& E information.

2.4 How could information management help strengthen the results?

- There is exchange of information at a sector level (such as agriculture, public health, etc.) to plan the activities and projects and solve problems together, which finally lead to success of the projects and better results.

2.5 Regarding aid management, how can the systems of your country and Thailand be used and improved to support information management for ACMECS?

- At present, the government has created strategic dialogues among its partners and tries to maximize aid effectiveness. Regarding information management for ACMECS, the number of persons who support this is quite limited.
- There should be greater co-ordination between Department of Planning and Cooperation (DPC), Department of Higher Education (DHE) and Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA). Department of Planning and Cooperation (DPC) should maintain a sustained database of ODA financed projects and programs.
- ACMECS website is used to support information sharing among CLMV countries and Thailand.



Key Challenge 3. Addressing capacity development through mutual learning and local solutions

3.1 How does mutual learning among member countries enhance national capacity to cope with development challenges?

- The mutual learning has occurred through the training courses designed specifically for addressing the development challenge of the member countries. For example, the training course on road and bridge maintenance held in Thailand in 2010 which involved member countries (Lao PDR, Myanmar, Vietnam, and Cambodia) can provide knowledge for the participants to maintain and repair their roads, especially among the economic corridors.
- Each country should have a clear development framework on common issues, identify the good practice and failure of such issues. Once the member countries participate in the workshop, they should be able to draw the lessons learned into policy action. The clear development framework should be agreed upon among countries. We should try to synergize, consider how to monitor the process, and look at the outcome. We should not focus on the workshop only, but also focus on sustained cooperation.
- ASEAN, SEAMEO, and UNESCO Regional Office in Bangkok have provided capacity building opportunities.

3.2 What are the success factors? And what weaknesses need to be avoided?

The success factors of capacity development through mutual learning

- The success factor is we share the same development framework. The more advanced country already has more experience than the less advanced country. As a result, the experiences can be shared, i.e., Lao PDR could draw Thailand experience in literacy programme and adapt such good practice to Lao PDR. Success factor also depends on the awareness of social-cultural context (Development issues are similar to Lao PDR context). My suggestion is ACMECS should develop institutional linkage programme.
- Capacity development must be systematic and linked to an overall country development plan.
- Full and active participation of the member countries in common projects (participation of more than two countries (the projects which bring mutual benefits to all members)).
- The exchange of appropriate knowledge and technology: The knowledge and technology is appropriate for the capacity of the member countries and applicable to the local context.
- Appropriate technology which suits the member country capacity is the key success for South-South cooperation.

And what weaknesses need to be avoided in terms of capacity development through mutual learning?

- The level of knowledge background from each participant in terms of information sharing
- The language medium of instruction is English and there is lack of language proficiency in member countries.
- The delay in coordination procedures due to the bureaucratic procedures in each member country.
- The weakness in such mutual learning lies in communication deficiency since Lao people are not proficient in English.

3.3 What comparative advantage does Thailand offer, and how can it be adapted to the local context?

- In terms of agricultural sector, Thailand has studied the needs and capacity of neighboring countries and designed the training course content which is appropriate to the local capacity of the countries such as low cost agricultural tools and machines and utilize local resources



instead of introducing high-tech instruments.

- Thailand shares common development issues and has similar social economic background. For example, Thailand developed a mobile teacher project and Lao PDR could adapt this concept to reach the unreached since there is 6 -7 percent of children with the age of 6 to 14 years old who have never attended school.
- Another example is vocational training in which we can draw from the lessons learned in Thailand. I have talked with TICA on Educational Development Framework in five years and we will align to the policy framework. However, in North-South cooperation, the cooperation has wider gaps and wider issues of development. For example, we find it more difficult to adjust to Japan vocational training because the language is not similar. Besides, the aid is based on yearly funding support or is more geared towards the programme-based approach.
- Cultural and linguistic similarity
- I study about tropical soil. I can learn tropical paddy soil in Thailand. This is a comparative advantage in Thailand.
- Thailand has nearly the same traditional style like my country. So I can stay here for a long time with cheap prices for all things, food, etc. when compared with western countries. For the educational sector, there is not that much gap compared to my country and we can apply the knowledge directly. In contrast, the western countries employ very high technologies which may not match our budget and capacity.
- Thailand and Lao PDR share the same language, culture, and climate which lead to nice environment for education.
- In Thailand, the quality in education is higher than that in neighboring countries and we have similar languages.
- The environment helps my studying: The same climate, more or less similar culture, and suitable technology to easily apply to neighboring countries, especially agriculture.
- Thailand indeed helped provide a number of good experiences and skills to Cambodia. If without political dispute, the two countries would be good partners. Cambodia and Thailand share similar culture and are neighbors. They, thus, should strengthen and increase cooperation in all areas, and should peacefully solve border conflict based on mutual respect.
- Both countries share Buddhism as their religions, worship the king, and share tradition and culture.
- Vietnam and Thailand have identified and implemented their mutual interests, agriculture, public health, education and human resource development and so on. Contacts between Vietnam and Thailand in terms of trade, cooperation and people to people contact are increasing every year. Particularly, in HRD sector, the cooperation between two countries are in the form of exchange of study programme, exchange of information and training courses, etc.

3.4 To which extent does Thailand learn from working hand-in-hand with the CLMV countries?

- Thailand has been aware of the limitations of the human resource capacity.
- ACMECS and other cooperation frameworks in GMS sub-region have overlapped frameworks which lead to redundancy of activities and become the major obstacle for active participation.
- Thailand has learned the national plan and directions and needs of member countries and Thailand can bring such knowledge to develop more effective activities under ACMECS framework.

3.5 How do the solutions of capacity development differ from those of North-South cooperation?

- South-South cooperation reflects a two-way solution through joint problem-tackling and

problem-solving.

3.6 What can conventional donors (i.e. Japan, Germany) learn from ACMECS programme on addressing global development challenges?

- Conventional donors learn from the joint cooperation among ACMECS member countries in economics and social development and the bottom-up approach in specifying agenda which responds to needs of member countries.
- The design of capacity development which responds to the development of the real sectors and narrows the gaps of the development because ACMECS countries face similar problems and can jointly work to solve the problems. However, donors only see the problems and employ the knowledge and technology to solve the problems.

3.7 Do you have any suggestions for better International Development Cooperation or coordination between Thailand and your country? What and How?

- The government should provide opportunity to public officials and to Cambodian students to enroll in short technical training courses and increase cooperation on human resource development.
- Strengthen cooperation (through training course or field visit).
- Both sides should further improve the way of cooperation in the future, especially, two sides should set out the roadmap for the new cooperation modality. TICA will be the executing agency for Thai side and MPI will be the executing agency for the Vietnam side, while the line ministries of each area of cooperation will be the implementation organizations, undertaking and monitoring the projects in order to improve accountability, consistency and effectiveness in managing the projects.

Key challenge 4. Champions (best practices) and incentives in ACMECS technical cooperation and knowledge exchange

4.1 To what extent are ACMECS activities efficient in achieving inputs and outcomes/impacts, including cost reduction and sustainability?


- Best practice in Thailand to member countries is bio-diesel production training provided by Thailand which leads to the reduction of fossil fuel dependence (cost reduction) and reduces gas emission from fossil fuels as a major source of climate change (sustainable management of natural resources).
- Best practice in Thailand to member countries is the surveillance of bird flu (Avian Influenza). Thailand has effective surveillance systems leading to the reduction of epidemic diseases. The training of such best practice can help increase the quality of life in ACMECS member countries.

4.2 How do best practices influence capacity development, especially institutional and policy improvement?

- The best practice helps develop member countries capacity and they can apply the knowledge gained to their local context. For example, there is the reduction of the Avian Influenza epidemics among member countries.
- The technical vocational school in Suwannaket with Thailand and in Udomsai with Vietnam helps improve the curriculum in the country to respond to the needs of the people and industry. However, there should be more bilateral cooperation and strong commitment in the long term and we should assess the impact of this cooperation.

4.3 How does the human resource development of Thailand adapt to the national and local institutional and cultural context of CLMV countries?

- Thailand has considered the member countries' cultural context in designing the activities. For example, in terms of tourism, Thailand has considered the existing tourism areas and has not changed the people's way of lives.

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- Thailand has considered the way of life, the local products/ crops, or cultural norms in designing the project. For example, in HIV/AIDS or Malaria projects, Thailand has adapted the know-how techniques to suit the people's way of lives.

4.4 How does mutual learning and knowledge exchange boost motivation, inspiration and capacities of the ACMECS beneficiaries to plan and implement policy and institutional change in difficult environments?

- Knowledge and experiences which ACMECS member countries have gained through participatory learning and problem-solving lead to the sense of ownership and inspiration which build their confidence and self-reliance to plan and cope with challenging problems at hands.

4.5 What are the incentives in ACMECS technical cooperation and knowledge exchange?

- We gain knowledge and experiences from the participant countries. The question is how to organize policy forum and framework, and how to link this framework to the national needs and regional needs.

Key challenge 5. Triangular cooperation based on comparative advantages

5.1 Does Thailand lead any triangular cooperation activities with CLMV countries?

- Yes. For example, Thailand and Vietnam vocational training development programme to offer training to the rest of ACMECS member countries.
- There is a triangular cooperation activity on vocational training among GTZ, Thailand, and Lao PDR. Another triangular cooperation activity is engineering in higher-education among Thailand, Japan, and Lao PDR on engineering and IT (King Mongkut's University of Technology Ladkrabang).

5.2 What are the incentives to start the activity?

- Triangular cooperation leads to cost sharing by co-sponsoring, technical know-how from partners, complement technology transfer, and wider networking.
- This kind of cooperation responds more to the needs of the local people since the frontier is open. The North has fund and technology and Thailand acts as a cooperation agency and contact Lao PDR. It is also more cost-effective to send the students to Thailand rather than Japan.

5.3 How is the work of the triangular partners divided? Have the comparative advantages been identified for all involved?

- Cost sharing among triangular partners. For example, if the activities occur in Thailand, Thailand will be responsible for all local costs (domestics expenses i.e. accommodations, food and beverages, training expenses, expert fees, etc.).
- The comparative advantages are the exchange of experts and technology transfer among partners.
- The horizontal partnership in the win-win-win situations.

5.4 What transaction costs have emerged in the design and implementation of the activity?

- Communication costs, accommodations, food and beverages, training expenses, expert fees
- Time consuming and delays in management, coordination, and implementation.

5.5 Are these transaction costs higher in ACMECS than in North-South cooperation?

- No. These transaction costs in ACMECS cooperation are much lower than North-South cooperation in every aspect, especially the travel expenses and expert fees.



5.6 How could these transaction costs be recovered in the future?

- The long term gains in horizontal partnership and lessons can be scaled up.

5.7 How does horizontal partnership evolve around triangular cooperation for mutual benefit?

- Triangular cooperation can narrow the development gap because there are closer discussions to set the development focus and directions.

5.8 Do all partners learn from each other? How?

- Yes. Each partner has an opportunity to learn best practices from one another through group discussions and case studies of each country's report.

5.9 What can North-South cooperation learn from strengths and weaknesses of triangular cooperation activities?

Strengths

- Triangular cooperation activities represent the synergy of comparative advantages of each member country.
- Triangular cooperation activities strengthen the ownership and self-reliance among member countries.
- North-South cooperation can learn how they can align to the local context instead of developing a framework and applying what they think to the local context.
- The lessons learned can be scaled up to produce broader impact among stakeholders.

Weaknesses

- There are limited initiatives among member countries due to limited financial resources.

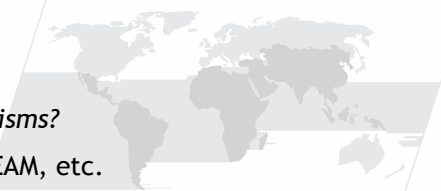
Key challenge 6. Regional and global mechanisms (i.e. ASEAN, GMS frameworks) for boosting mutual learning and knowledge exchange

6.1 How does your country benefit from other regional and global mechanisms? How are services accessed?

- Thailand has the opportunity to exchange development strategy and develop regional and global networks with wider partners in other regional and global frameworks by participating in the regional forum activities.
- Lao PDR benefits from dialogue discussions (policy sharing) on strategic development. The discussions help open my mind and perspectives and learn what and how to make vocational training attractive together with broadening my vision. Yearly HRD Global forum in Seoul helps me understand how Koreans do the educational reform and we can judge if we are on the right track when doing such reform in our country. Also, in ASEM forum (Europe-Asean dialogue), we start to think how to make progress in Asean community like that in EU community, how to bridge the gaps of different groups of levels of developing countries, and how to help these countries benefit from technology, cooperative training, and funding.
- Financial support and engagement in regional workshops and meetings to provide lessons learned.
- Knowledge sharing and knowledge management

6.2 How do other regional and global mechanisms relate to bilateral ACMECS activities?

- Other regional and global mechanisms have supplemented the bilateral ACMECS activities by complementing some areas not included in ACMECS. For example, water management project in GMS is not the area of focus in ACMECS.
- ACMECS should have common framework (one framework) and tools, be clear on developing framework with different partners.



6.3 What are the main drivers behind other regional and global mechanisms?

- There are external donors such as ADB (Donor in GMS framework), J-SEAM, etc.
- Regional cooperation and increased linkages between ASEAN countries. Regional and global mechanisms are complementary to the demand and supply of ACMECS knowledge due to useful linkages.

6.4 How do other regional and global mechanisms match demand and supply of ACMECS knowledge?

- Other regional and global mechanisms can be the lessons learned in ACMECS.
- Other regional and global mechanisms have more accumulated experience and knowledge to share with ACMECS.

6.5 To what extent do other regional and global mechanisms match the priorities and demands of your country?

- Other regional and global mechanisms help accelerate the integration of Mekong sub-regions to reach ASEAN Economics Community (AEC) in 2015.

6.6 How are other regional and global mechanisms related to national development programmes?

- Other regional and global mechanisms related to national development programmes by enhancing the human resource capacity.

6.7 Do other regional and global mechanisms provide lessons on effectiveness and good practice for ACMECS? How?

- Yes. By providing the in-depth case study documents and experts and giving the opportunity for participating in the workshops.

6.8 How can innovation be generated for other regional and global mechanisms? And how are results accounted for?

- ACMECS focuses on the areas neglected by other regional and global mechanisms.
- ACMECS introduces best practice to member countries and develop community of practice (CoPS) among member countries and extend the knowledge to wider development networks in Asia and beyond.
- The innovation gained from ACMECS cooperation programme or activities is the application of ICT on education. We are still lacking knowledge and skills in this area. Thailand has already had the distance learning.

6.9 How can regional and global mechanisms be coordinated with other development activities and become part of overall aid structure?

- There should be joint programmes/ projects or joint discussions/ general platforms to transfer knowledge from regional and global mechanisms to other development activities which extend more horizontal cooperation.

Further Suggestions

Sustainability depends on the following components:

- Have a clear vision of a framework (open, accountable and fair). Lao PDR should not depend on Thailand only as a receiver, but should try to take ownership of the activity.
- The government should be committed to take ownership and mutual accountability. The government should also share the strategic plan with the partnering countries. The five year national strategic plan states that in 2020 the country will be upgraded from least developing countries.



- The leadership role of each country member.
- Private and civil society should join and contribute.

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