

CEPF Final Project Completion Report

Organization Legal Name:	Trans-boundary Journalists and Communicators Association
Project Title:	Empowering Thai Journalists for Accountable Transboundary Investment (Phase 2)
Grant Number:	CEPF-104316
CEPF Region:	Indo-Burma II
Strategic Direction:	6 Engage key actors in mainstreaming biodiversity, communities and livelihoods into development planning in the priority corridors
Grant Amount:	\$36,282.00
Project Dates:	January 01, 2018 - June 30, 2018
Date of Report:	August 30, 2018

Implementation Partners

List each partner and explain how they were involved in the project

The Network of Thai People in Eight Mekong Provinces, Chiang Khong Conservation Group, and International Rivers - these three key partners helped us on providing information and updates on the Mekong River development (Mekong dams, Mekong rapids blasting/Lancang-Mekong Navigation Channel Improvement Project). They also helped us in co-organizing the media exchange in May in Chiang Rai.

Salween Communities Network in Mae Hong Son, and local communities in Myanmar Karen and Shan states works with us on monitoring development projects on the Salween River, including Hat Gyi, Mong Ton, and other hydropower projects on the Salween. They also hosted our media trip to the Salween in March.

SEM and Dawei Watch also regularly send us updates and information regarding Thailand's investment on Dawei Special Economic Zone and Deep Sea Port.

For media partners, we work closely with journalist colleagues from Matichon, Bangkok Post, Channel 3, Thai PBS, Thai Post, among others. They regularly work with us in producing news reports, investigative reports, media trips and exchange.

Conservation Impacts

Summarize the overall impact of your project, describing how your project has contributed to the implementation of the CEPF ecosystem profile

We've been working to reflect transboundary social and environmental impacts of oversea investment, due to the absence of good governance. As we organized filed trip for investigative reports in remote areas including Thai-Myanmar border along the Salween, and Northern Laos in the Mekong basin, we've been successful in term of revealing untold facts from the filed to the public and policy-makers, through mainstream media. During the recent Lao dam collapse incident, we've seen that more and more people are having better understanding on impacts of large dams on ecosystems, environment, and local communities. It's the same direction as what we've tried to cover, the invisible cost of cross-border investment.

Through activities that helped created linkages among journalists in the Mekong basin (such as our media exchange in Chiang Rai in May where participants are journalists from Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam), it enables us to exchange information and access to news sources.

Planned Long-term Impacts - 3+ years (as stated in the approved proposal)

Impact Description	Impact Summary
--------------------	----------------

Planned Short-term Impacts - 1 to 3 years (as stated in the approved proposal)

Impact Description	Impact Summary
[1] Increasing public awareness on Thailand's oversea investment and environmental footprint,	Throughout the project period, there has been increased public awareness on key environmental issues including Lancang-Mekong Navigation Channel Improvement Project, Pak Beng dams on the Mekong mainstream, Salween Water Diversion Project on Thai-Myanmar border, Dawei Special Economic Zone in Southern Myanmar, etc. Our work to cover these issues in media has contributed to this impact.
[2] More engagement with and better capacity of Thai media and local communities on the issues.	Throughout the project period, there has been increased public awareness on key environmental issues including Lancang-Mekong Navigation Channel Improvement Project, Pak Beng dams on the Mekong mainstream, Salween Water Diversion Project on Thai-Myanmar border, Dawei Special Economic Zone in Southern Myanmar, etc. Our work to cover these issues in media has contributed to this impact.
[3] More news coverage under the project to raise public awareness and influence companies and/or government agencies to take steps to improve environmental performance.	Throughout the project period, there has been increased public awareness on key environmental issues including Lancang-Mekong Navigation Channel Improvement Project, Pak Beng dams on the Mekong mainstream, Salween Water Diversion Project on Thai-Myanmar border, Dawei Special Economic Zone in Southern Myanmar, etc. Our work to cover these issues

in media has contributed to this impact.

Describe the success or challenges of the project toward achieving its short-term and long-term impact objectives

We've implemented successfully all planned key activities during the period.

1 Media trip to the Salween on Thai-Myanmar border. The Salween, one of the World's last free-flowing rivers, has been our target for media trips for many years. This year we organized the trip for six journalists (two women) to Salween National Park in Thailand's Mae Hong Son province, to meet and interview with dam-affected Thai-Karen communities who have worked to protect their rivers for decades. We also visited Ithuta IDP camp (for internally displaced persons) in Myanmar's Karen states, to interview with local civil society groups and dam-affected people. On March 14, Karen Women Organization organized an event for International Day of Actions for Rivers, very well-participated by around 800-1,000 peoples from both sides of the Salween. For IDPs and civil society in Myanmar, plans for dams on the Salween could destroy peace process that they hope to see.

2 Mekong Media exchange in Chiang Khong: In May, we organized an exchange for journalists from the Mekong countries including Thailand, Myanmar (Shan and Kachin states), Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam. One of key goals is to create a space for committed journalists working on social and environmental issues regarding the Mekong River to share their knowledge and experience. The event was organized in the Mekong town of Chiang Khong, Northern Thailand.

The three-day event was well-participated by 15 journalists from websites, TVs, and newspapers including Thai Channel 3, Thairath and Bangkok Post newspapers, Vietnamese Nguoi Do Thi magazine, Shan Herald Agency for News, and BBC Thai, among others.

During the first day, participants shared their experiences working to cover the Mekong and other environmental issues, and learnt about different political situations in each countries that affect the works of journalists who work to publisize this regional problems affecting millions of people in the basin. Main topics discussed are on the Mekong River development, especially for hydropower dams on the mainstream Mekong in China, Laos and Cambodia which create transboundary impacts on ecosystems and thousands of riverine communties. Participants shared that access to informaiton was limited in their countries. Freedom of expression/freedom of media, even on environmental issues, are also depressed in most of Mekong countries.

Participants also discussed the expanding roles on China in the Mekong basin, using 'soft power' through 'development projects', but would create negative impacts on the Mekong's ecosystems, such as the Lancang-Mekong Navigation Improvement Project (also known as 'Mekong rapids blasting'). The project would open a waterway for large cargo ships to travel from Southern China down to Myanmar-Lao-Thai border, to Luang Prabang. The canalization of the Upper Mekong River would drastically threaten natural habitats and spawning grounds of fish and aquatic lives including the IUCN red-listed Mekong Giant Catfish.

We invited resource persons from Mekong Energy and Ecology Network (MeeNet), Chiang Khong Conservation Group, and the Network of Thai People in Eight Mekong Provinces. There was a presentation on the Mekong River Commission Council Study, which was launched in the Mekong Summit in Phnom Penh in April. The 'Council Study' was conducted by MRC during 2012 -2017. It aims at providing scientific assessment of the environmental, social and economic costs and benefits of existing and planned water resource developments in the Lower Mekong Basin, to inform decision



makers. Participants were interested in the key findings of the Council Study, about the trade-off between energy and fisheries and food securities, the taxation for mainstream hydropower developers, and the decline of sediment, which would affect the entire Mekong basin, especially for the Mekong Delta in Southern Vietnam. However, participants found that this important Study needed to be publicized more widely.

After workshops, on the field trip, participants went to Huai Luk Village, close to Thai-Lao border in Wieng Kaen district. It's the village that is located less than a hundred kilometer upstream of the proposed Pak Beng Dam on the Mekong in Laos, planned to export electricity to Thailand. If built, the village will be affected by the reservoir. At the village, participants met with villagers including fishers, women groups, elders, and were able to interview with them on their concerns regarding the dam and impacts. On the way back from the village, journalists took boats along Thai-Lao border where there were scenic rocks and rapids.

It was discussed that the issues surrounding the Mekong needed regional attention, especially from decision-makers. For the next step, there is an urgent need to start a small network of journalists, to exchange information and updates. This would enable journalists to report the same stories from different countries. This would help creating influence of joint news-reporting on this common issues of the region.

3 Media trip to the Nam Ou and the Mekong in Laos: In May, we organized a trip for a small group of Thai journalists to visit Northern Laos, to cover an example of Chinese investment on hydropower /cascade dam on the Nam Ou River. We visited affected communities, and discuss about their concerns over the Nam Ou ecological values, and their efforts to protect the natural resources.

4 Producing news and investigative reports During the project period, we've produced 68 news pieces published on our website www.transbordernews.in.th. We also translated 96 news pieces from neighboring countries.

Were there any unexpected impacts (positive or negative)?

There have been various development projects on the Mekong, including 'rapids blasting', Chinese dams in the Upper Mekong, and dams in downstream in Laos and Cambodia. As we've worked actively to cover the issues, we've seen positive impacts, especially on wider public awareness on the Mekong issues.

An example is the Mekong rapids blasting project by China, that as we've worked closely with partners and media, there has been more and more understanding on the project's crucial impacts on the Mekong ecosystems. This contributes to the recent suspension of the project announced by China in late 2017/early 2018. However, there are more hydro dams on the Mekong mainstream, that we need to continue to monitor and cover in news report to raise public awareness.

In short term, we acknowledge the role of media in amplifying environmental concerns on large-scale infrastructure projects. This role is very crucial in term of raising wider public attention. However, media in Thailand have been in rapid changes and facing obstacles, particularly for the down turn of



mainstream media, including printed and television. But these mainstream media is still important for influencing decision-makers or state actors. As each of news agencies try to cut down budget due to limited income at present, it is less likely that journalists can travel and conduct field work/investigative report independently. As a result, there is less and less news coverage on these transboundary environmental issues.

Solutions to these situations are;

1 Seek funding to continue supporting investigative reports for media in Thailand and neighboring countries,

2 Support local communities and civil society groups to learn how to communicate and work with media effectively.

Project Components and Products/Deliverables

Describe the results from each product/deliverable:

Component		Deliverable		
#	Description	#	Description	Results for Deliverable
1	Thai journalists to cover more on Thailand-related transboundary development projects. News and investigative report for Thai media that raise public awareness on Thailand's environmental footprints in neighbouring countries.	1.1	At least 20 news and reports produced by the team and journalists	During the project period, we've produced 68 news pieces published on our website www.transbordernews.in.th . Issues cover social and environmental aspects of development projects, oversea investments such as hydropower, special economic zones, among others. The website and news reports we produced have been a 'news basket' for mainstream media including TVs, newspapers, etc. We also translated 96 news pieces from neighbouring countries.
1	Thai journalists to cover more on Thailand-related transboundary development projects. News and investigative report for Thai media that raise public awareness on Thailand's environmental footprints in neighbouring countries.	1.2	At least 15 news and reports carried by mainstream media (newspapers, television) in Thailand and its neighboring countries.	During the project period, from January-June 2018, we've worked to contribute to at least 60 news and reports by mainstream media, including newspapers, websites, and televisions) in Thailand and neighbouring countries (Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam)
1	Thai journalists to cover more on Thailand-related transboundary development projects. News and investigative report for Thai media that raise	1.3	If applicable, response from companies or state agencies to the issues covered by media resulted from the project.	Our continuous work for over two years on actively monitoring the Lancang-Mekong Navigation Channel Improvement project by China, known as "Mekong rapids blasting", has contributed to the recent halt of the project. In 2018, there has been no move from the proponent, both state agencies and Chinese companies. For Pak Beng dam project on the mainstream Mekong River, Datang Chinese company has tried to contact and meet with local conservation group on the dam's

	public awareness on Thailand's environmental footprints in neighbouring countries.			transboundary impacts on Thailand.
2	Expanded network of Thai journalists and those in neighboring countries.	2.1	Lists of participants (around 10-20 journalists) and report of exchange and networking event for journalists from Thailand and neighboring countries	List of 19 participants/journalists attended the Mekong media exchange is in the attachment (in Other Information tap). They are journalists from newspapers, TVs, and websites from Thailand, Myanmar, Vietnam, and Cambodia.
2	Expanded network of Thai journalists and those in neighboring countries.	2.2	Improved organizational capacity of Transboundary Journalist and Communicators Association, as evidenced by comparison of civil society tracking tool scores at project start and end.	Submitted
2	Expanded network of Thai journalists and those in neighboring countries.	2.3	Baseline and final Gender Tracking Tools submitted by Transboundary Journalist and Communicators Association	submitted

Please describe and submit any tools, products, or methodologies that resulted from this project or contributed to the results.

n/a

Lessons Learned

Describe any lessons learned during the design and implementation of the project, as well as any related to organizational development and capacity building.

Consider lessons that would inform:

- Project Design Process (*aspects of the project design that contributed to its success/shortcomings*)
- Project Implementation (*aspects of the project execution that contributed to its success/shortcomings*)
- Describe any other lessons learned relevant to the conservation community

When we started this project as ‘phase 2’ of the last project, we designed this project based on the existing one.

From the previous project, we’ve learnt about accountability, particularly on accounting and keeping records of expenses.

As we’ve registered as an association, we’ve developed ourselves organizationally. Our credibility increases when we perform as a registered news organization, especially when contacting state agencies and companies.

Sustainability / Replication

Summarize the success or challenges in ensuring the project will be sustained or replicated, including any unplanned activities that are likely to result in increased sustainability or replicability.

We will still continue to work as news producer for covering social and environmental issues in the Mekong region, with focuses on monitoring cross-border investment and roles of Thai investors. Supports by CEPF on this project has enable us to create learning space, building capacity for journalists and local communities. These are strong ground for our sustainability.

Safeguards

If not listed as a separate Project Component and described above, summarize the implementation of any required action related to social, environmental, or pest management safeguards



Not relevant

Additional Comments/Recommendations

Use this space to provide any further comments or recommendations in relation to your project or CEPF

Additional Funding

Provide details of any additional funding that supported this project and any funding secured for the project, organization, or the region, as a result of CEPF investment

Total additional funding (US\$)

Type of funding

Please provide a breakdown of additional funding (counterpart funding and in-kind) by source, categorizing each contribution into one of the following categories:

- A Project Co-Financing (other donors or your organization contribute to the direct costs of this project)*
- B Grantee and Partner Leveraging (other donors contribute to your organization or a partner organization as a direct result of successes with this CEPF funded project)*
- C Regional/Portfolio Leveraging (other donors make large investments in a region because of CEPF investment or successes related to this project)*

Information Sharing and CEPF Policy

CEPF is committed to transparent operations and to helping civil society groups share experiences, lessons learned, and results. Final project completion reports are made available on our Web site, www.cepf.net, and publicized in our newsletter and other communications.

1. Please include your full contact details (Name, Organization, Mailing address, Telephone number, E-mail address) below

Paskorn Jumlongrach, Transboundary Journalists and Communicators' Association, +66 81 3077733, padsakorn@gmail.com