



## Sustainable Mekong Research Network

Secretariat: Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI) Asia Centre, 15th Floor, Witthayakit Building, 254 Chulalongkorn Soi 64, Chulalongkorn University, Phayathai Road, Pathumwan, Bangkok 10330, Thailand · Tel. +66(0)2 251 4415 · Fax: +66(0)2 251 4419 · Email: secretariat@sumernet.org · Website: <http://www.sumernet.org>



# Communicating for Influence: Policy and Media Writeshop

Organised by SUMERNET and LMPPPI  
24-25 August 2016, Bangkok, Thailand

## 1. Aims

In end January 2016, at the SUMERNET 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Meeting, we did a “writeshop” for researchers and partners to produce written products viz. journal articles and book chapters intended for the academic and specific-interest audiences.

This **1.5-day Policy and Media Writeshop** aims to help researchers improve their writing and outreach skills to have **influence and impact outside the academic world**.

The workshop aims to:

1. Help researchers to develop understanding and skills on how to analyse and understand policy audiences and the media.
2. Take key messages from your research projects to inform and influence policy makers and the media.
3. Produce two written products: policy briefings and media/press releases (or news stories) for policy and media engagement.

## 2. Outputs

As mentioned above, the workshop will help participants deliver two outputs that are in line with the mandated products as part of the SUMERNET research project or assessment case study.

1. Policy briefing: A 2-3 page briefing of key findings, recommendations and policy actions that are relevant to your research and policy-making audience (at local, regional or national level) from each project.
2. Press release or news story: A one-page press release or news story (or outline) to inform journalists/media about a significant finding from your project that you think can be a news piece in the media. This can also take the form of opinion pieces or editorial comment written by the researcher about their project. These may be in a format that is useful for printing in a newspaper or as a blog in an online news source.

The writeshop will assist in the development of products 1 and 2 and develop skills for communications and policy engagement within and beyond the SUMERNET project.



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### 3. Participation

- SUMERNET research projects and assessment case study teams: Two researchers from each project including one team leader and one team member who are key persons in ensuring that the required outputs are completed.
- Boundary partner: One boundary partner from each SUMERNET project most relevant to the project's policy audience.
- SUMERNET Steering Committee (SC).
- SUMERNET Secretariat.
- SUMERNET resource persons including SUMERNET advisors, Lower Mekong Public Policy Initiative (LMPPI) advisors to help on policy analysis, understanding policy-making in the Mekong Region, etc. Other SEI staff will support as needed.
- Mekong Partnership for the Environment (MPE): 5 invited participants.
- LMPPI researchers
- The Secretariat may also directly invite additional research partners to participate as appropriate (if funds allow).
- Skype will be available so that team members at the writeshop can contact with other team members not on site.

### 4. Written inputs (to prepare in advance)

We would like you to prepare in advance and bring to the workshop:

1. A one page outline (in English) of your intended policy briefing that should be written keeping in mind your particular policy audience in your country. e.g. if you are working for the Royal University of Phnom Penh on the PFES project this will be aimed at a policy maker in Cambodia.
2. A one page plan or outline for a press release for the media.

**NOTE:** You are expected to write in English language during this workshop. However, do not worry about correct language or grammar usage. The writeshop objective is to obtain your inputs in the form of prepared ideas, policy recommendations or outline of stories that we can further discuss and develop in the writeshop. We also understand that you will translate the writeshop products into your local languages after the workshop.

### 5. Other things to bring with you to the meeting

We are aware that some of you have already been active either with policy audiences or reaching out to media (or both).

We therefore encourage you to bring your latest drafts of your policy briefing or any published media stories for sharing with, and inspiring, your colleagues. Please also bring any notes, flyers, press releases etc. that you have previously done in working with policy makers and media as this can help to share your valuable experiences with colleagues.



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### 6. Writeshop outputs

#### MINIMUM:

- A draft policy briefing.
- A draft press release (or an outline for a news story or blog piece).

#### IDEAL:

- Near complete draft of policy brief in English (with idea of how to frame key concepts and terms in the final local language product).
- Near complete draft of press release or news story.
- Detailed plan for completion of these products.

### 7. External speakers invited

The writeshop will provide an opportunity to hear from and ask questions of:

1. **Policy Engagement Expert** from the Mekong Region  
This person will aim to help participants better understand how policy making is done, how researchers can reach out to policy makers, how we should be looking for timely opportunities, what kind of messages can best communicate the important points of your research, etc.
2. **Journalist(s)** from the Mekong Region  
The media person(s) will discuss how to pick key messages and package information to gain media attention in the region, key ways of attracting press interest about your research or findings, building relationships with journalists, and linking your research to other news events and stories to gain maximum outreach.

### 8. Writeshop Agenda (1.5 days)

The working agenda (below) provides a guide to the sessions. Timings and choice of sessions will be adjusted if needed.



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Day	Time	Session objectives	Speaker/chairperson
<b>Day 1</b> 24 <sup>th</sup> August AM	9.00 – 9.20 (20 mins)	Welcome and opening remarks  Introduction to the Writeshop “Communicating for influence”: Aims and expectations	Dr. Chu Thai Hoanh, Chair of SUMERNET Steering Committee and LMPPI advisor  Mr. Rajesh Daniel, Communications Coordinator, SEI Asia
	9.20 – 09.45 (25 mins)	<b>Public policy engagement expert</b>  Key topics: 1. What kind of messages do policy makers prefer to receive from researchers about project findings? 2. How do you identify the most relevant policy actors to influence your research findings?	Speaker: Dr. Dang Kim Son  Former Director General of Institute of Policy and Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development (IPSARD) under Vietnamese Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, LMPPI Advisor  Chairperson: Dr. Chayanis Krittasudthacheewa, SUMERNET Programme Manager
	09.45 – 10.30 (45 mins)	Q&A and Discussion	
	10.30 – 11.00 (30 mins)	GROUP PHOTO & COFFEE BREAK	
	11.00 – 12.30 (1 hr 15 mins)  15 mins presentation and remaining 1 hour 15 mins for writing practice	<b>Writing exercise 1:</b> Policy briefing  Using the points covered earlier about understanding audiences: How to identify key findings from your research; how to package these as key messages  This session will focus on providing the skills set needed for writing a policy briefing through a presentation and discussion  This will be followed by collaborative writing practice – work in groups to practice writing a policy briefing using your research findings	1. Writing a policy brief: Key things to keep in mind  Presentation by Mr. Rajesh Daniel (using SEI template and guide) with concrete examples  This is followed by discussion and interactive <u>writing session</u> in small groups. Participants will be encouraged to start developing or improving their policy briefings using ideas from the discussions  Each group will be assisted by mentors/resource persons: 1. Dr. Louis Lebel 2. Dr. C.T. Hoanh



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			<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Dr. Chayanis K</li> <li>4. Dr. Albert Salamanca</li> <li>5. Dr. Bernadette R.</li> <li>6. Dr. Chusit A.</li> <li>7. Dr. Thanapon Piman</li> <li>8. Ms Ha Nguyen</li> <li>9. Mr. Jayaram P.</li> <li>10. Mr. Michael Boyland</li> <li>11. Ms Pin P.</li> <li>12. Mr. Rajesh Daniel</li> <li>13. SC members</li> <li>14. LMPPI experts</li> </ol>
	12.30 – 13.30	LUNCH	
Day 1 24 <sup>th</sup> August PM	13.30 – 15.00 (1 hr 30 mins)	<p>Panel discussion with boundary partners (Note: Need time for translations)</p> <p>Key question: As a boundary partner what kind of interactions and information do you like to have with researchers so as to constructively influence planning or policy?</p>	<p>We will pre-select 2-3 boundary partners to share their experiences with policy engagement in this session</p> <p>Chairperson: Dr. C.T. Hoanh</p>
	15.00 – 16.00	<p>OPEN BREAK (Bring your tea/coffee inside and continue with the writing exercise)</p> <p><b>Writing exercise 1 (contd.)</b></p>	<p>Group work continues towards developing and improving the policy briefs. We will aim to incorporate the lessons learnt from the day's presentations and discussions</p>
	16.00 – 16.45 (45 mins)	<p>Short presentations (2-4 mins) by 4-5 groups of the written policy briefings</p> <p>This is followed by questions, comments from the group, and discussions of key issues and challenges</p>	<p>Chairperson: Mr. Rajesh Daniel</p>
	16.45 – 17.15 (30 mins)	<p>Final conclusion/evaluation session</p> <p>What have we learnt? How can we embed our plans for policy makers from the beginning of our research? Having understood our policy audiences, how can we plan for better outreach?</p>	<p>We will invite boundary partners to make contributions about lessons learnt in policy outreach</p> <p>Chairperson: Dr. Albert Salamanca, Research Fellow, SEI Asia</p>
	18.00	RECEPTION DINNER	<p>Mentors and other resource persons will have internal</p>



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			meeting prior to the reception dinner
Day 2 25 <sup>th</sup> August AM	8.30 – 9.00 (30 mins)	Review of Day 1: Questions and clarifications	Chairperson: Mr. Agus Nugroho, SUMERNET Programme Coordinator, SEI Asia
	9.00 – 9.40 (40 mins)  15 min presentation, followed by discussions	<b>Communicating in the media: Advice and insights from a regional journalist</b>  This session gives an overview of how to best communicate your ideas, how to think strategically of audiences and identifying relevant messages	Speaker: Ms. Johanna Son, Editor and manager of the <a href="#">Reporting ASEAN program</a> with IPS Asia-Pacific media organization (supported by the ASEAN Foundation and the Japan-ASEAN Solidarity Fund).  Chairperson: Mr. Rajesh Daniel
	9.40 – 10.20 (40 mins)  15 mins presentation, followed by discussions	<b>Practical guidance in writing press release or news story from a regional journalist</b>  Key topics:  1. Writing for the media: How to write a one-page press release or news story using key messages from your project 2. Guidance and tips on writing a news story or opinion piece (op.ed) that can be sent to media or used for online blogging or news piece 3. Communicating with journalists to tell your findings and make them interested in your story  <u>This will be an interactive session:</u> We will invite 2-4 participants to present their prepared stories (or outlines) to the media person(s) followed by comments and discussions	Speaker: Mr. Wasant Techawongtham, Newspaper columnist and former senior editor of the Bangkok Post  Chairperson: Mr. Michael Boyland  Mr. Wasant and Mr. Boyland will co-facilitate the interactive presentations
	10.20 – 10.40 20 mins	TEA/COFFEE BREAK	
	10.40 – 12.30  (1 hour 50 mins)	<b>Writing exercise 2: Writing a press release (or news story)</b>  The group will be encouraged to continue working on their stories	<u>Writing exercise in small groups.</u> Participants are encouraged to start developing or improving their press releases or news



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		<p>after the writeshop. They can go back home to finish their fully developed press releases or news stories back to the Secretariat for comments and finalising.</p>	<p>stories using the session discussions and examples</p> <p>Structure for the writing session:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Write down the key message(s) 20 min</li> <li>2. Structure and Outline (20min)</li> <li>3. Openings (20 min)</li> <li>4. Endings (20 min)</li> <li>5. A rough full first draft (30 min)</li> </ol> <p>Mentors/resource persons in each table/group as in Day 1 along with Mr. Wasant and other available media representatives</p>
	12.30 – 12.40	<p>Final session and conclusion of writeshop</p> <p>Key questions: What have we learnt? What could do when conducting research to make communicating the results easier? How will we move forward?</p> <p><u>Note:</u> SUMERNET research and assessment teams are encouraged to continue working on their stories. And after returning back home, kindly finish your fully developed policy briefs, press releases or news stories and submit to the Secretariat for comments and support in editing.</p>	Mr. Rajesh Daniel
	12.40 – 13.30	LUNCH	
	13.30 – 17.00	<b>SUMERNET Gender Workshop to be held in the afternoon (Please refer to separate agenda)</b>	

### 9. Evaluation

- Survey will be undertaken to evaluate capacity built in the workshop: what have participants learnt and intend to do with the new skills and knowledge beyond their immediate deliverables; what can be improved for future workshops; comments and suggestions for the organisers.