



SUMERNET

MEMBERSHIP HANDBOOK



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Introduction

The Sustainable Mekong Research Network (SUMERNET) is a network for research and policy engagement that brings together researchers, policy makers, policy influencers and practitioners. SUMERNET aims to support the sustainable development of the Mekong Region through scientifically robust, policy-relevant research and outreach.

SUMERNET engages with researchers and policy stakeholders from many organizations since its inception in 2005, from the initial 14 to 70 organizations comprising academics, government line agencies, independent research institutions and international organizations.

SUMERNET supports policy-relevant research and outreach activities to inform and engage decision-makers, planners and stakeholders, bringing together research partners engaged in sustainable development in the six countries of the Mekong Region: Cambodia, China (specifically Yunnan Province and Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region), Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam. Within this context, it pursues an evolving agenda in response to questions and policy issues that arise in the region.

Therefore, SUMERNET members are indispensable resource for achieving credible policy-relevant research and effective policy engagement that creates influence towards sustainable development policies in the Mekong Region.

Network Governance

SUMERNET is a network consisting of members contributing to the progress of the network. The network intends to enhance the participation and influence of network members in the decision-making process within SUMERNET. With increasing participation, members will have more sense of ownership towards SUMERNET. Since July 2020, upon consultation with the network members and endorsement from the SUMERNET Steering Committee, this objective is reflected within SUMERNET management and its governance structure.

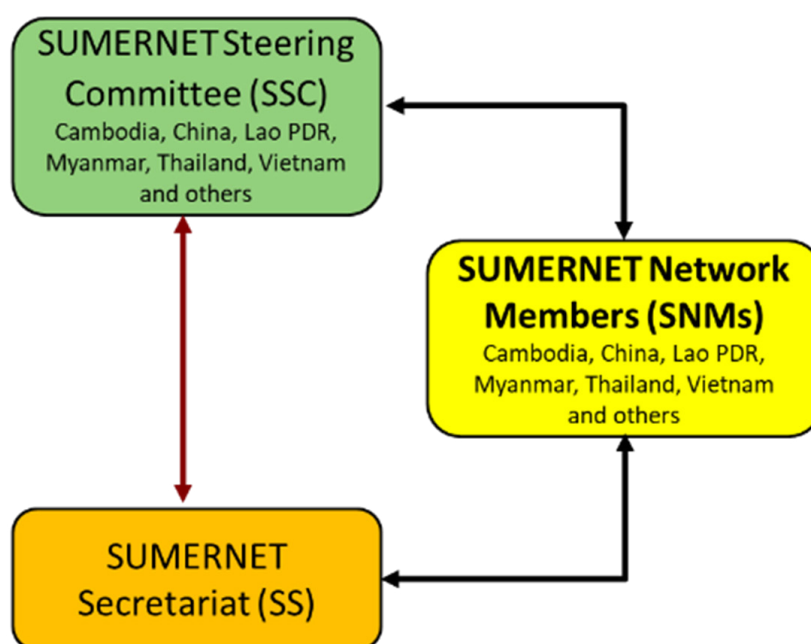


Figure 1. SUMERNET Governance Structure

SUMERNET network is guided by its network members, who collectively deliberate on strategic issues that have implications for the whole network. SUMERNET network members (SNM) delegate their authority in taking strategic decisions to SUMERNET Steering Committee (SSC). SSC membership is drawn from network members and all Mekong riparian countries will be represented within the SSC. SNMs elect members of the SSC through an open election. In case which there is no candidate for specific country representation, Secretariat and the SSC may nominate a prominent person to be appointed as SSC member.

SSC delegates day-to-day management of the network and programme activities to the SUMERNET Secretariat (SS), where contractual, legal and fiduciary responsibility lies. The SUMERNET Secretariat is led by the Programme Director, who makes contact with the SSC Chairperson through regular briefings.

The SSC, SNM and Secretariat communicate regularly through various channels, such as emails (individual or mailing list), website, newsletters, online surveys and through participation in the SUMERNET Annual Meeting. These relationships are reflected in the more detailed governance diagram below.

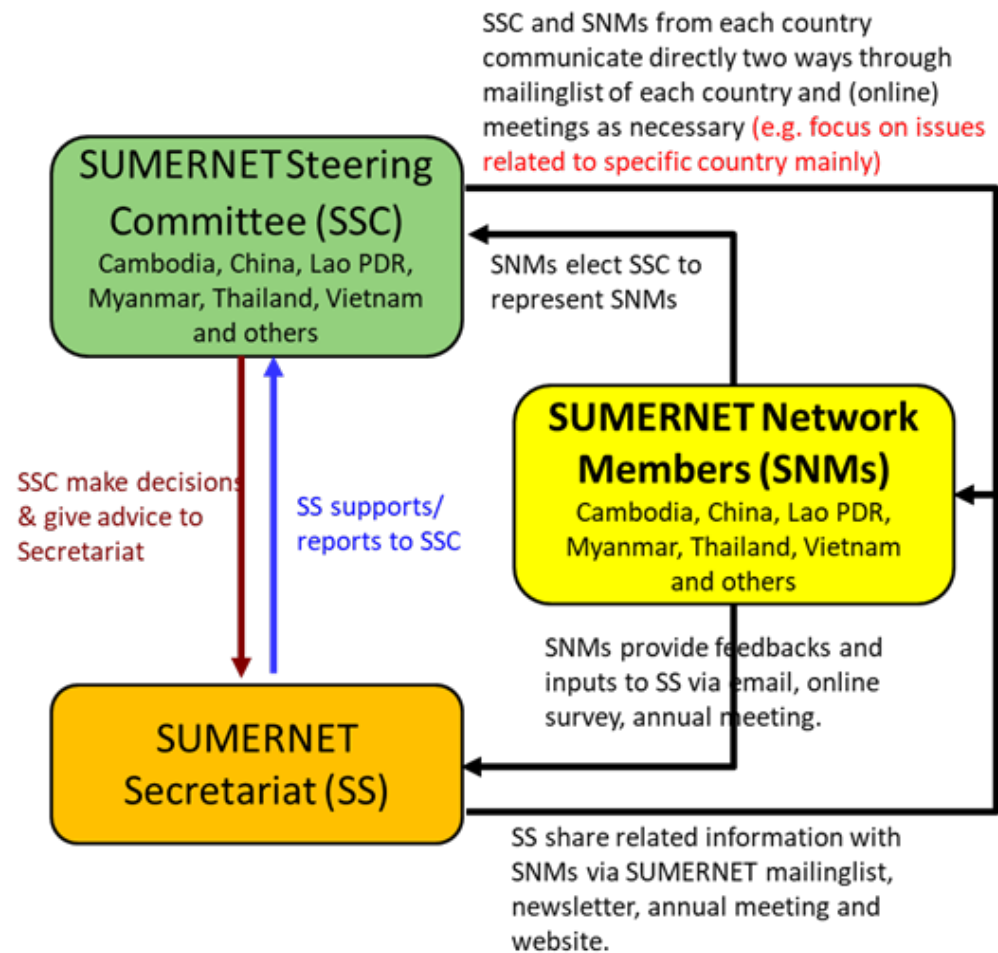


Figure 2. SUMERNET Governance Structure with Relationship Details

The role, responsibilities and benefits of SNM, SSC and SS are further detailed within Terms of Reference (TOR). The following sections embody the TOR of SNM, SSC and SS for reference.

Network Membership

I. Criteria of Network Membership

At a minimum, SUMERNET Network members must:

1. Be based primarily in one of the countries in or have the works conducted in the Mekong Region, namely Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam, and the Yunnan Province and Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region of China.
2. Work in areas related to sustainable development; and
3. Be involved in any of the following sectors: research, policy development, policy implementation activities, communications or influencing policy processes.

II. Benefits of SUMERNET Membership

The benefits of SUMERNET membership include the following:

1. Being part of a growing and vibrant research network in the Mekong Region.
2. Opportunity to participate and contribute to regional and international events (e.g. workshop, meeting, forum, conference) sponsored by SUMERNET.
3. Regular access to information on research funding and the opportunity to apply for SUMERNET and also other grants.
4. Opportunity to provide the inputs and influence relevant strategy or plan of SUMERNET activities.
5. Inclusion in SUMERNET mailing list.
6. Eligibility to explore the opportunities to contribute to the programme in the role as the advisors if appropriate; and,
7. Eligibility to apply, nominate and elect candidates to become members of the SUMERNET Steering Committee.

III. Responsibilities of Network Members

SUMERNET members are committed to SUMERNET's vision for achieving sustainable development in the Mekong Region. Members are strongly encouraged to adhere to SUMERNET's principles including commitment to gender and social equality and respect for equal rights to environmental access and social justice. SUMERNET members are expected to:

1. Contribute to certain decision-making process on SUMERNET strategic issues via direct in person or online survey/ voting.
2. Participate in other SUMERNET events upon the invitations and requests.
3. Regularly share with other SUMERNET members information on water insecurity and environmental issues, projects activities, new achievements of members' organizations.
4. Assist in identifying research opportunities, potential collaborations, and institutional partnerships with other SUMERNET members; and
5. Potentially, assist in co-hosting or facilitating SUMERNET events held in their own country.

Steering Committee

SUMERNET Steering Committee (SSC) is the body with an authority delegated by the network members for taking strategic decisions for the network. With various support by the SUMERNET Secretariat (SS), the SSC provides independent scientific and policy advice and strategic oversight of SUMERNET network and programme. Individual SSC member contributes about 10 days/year, while the SSC Chair and Co-chair spend approximately 20 days/year and 15 days/year for the network.

By sharing the workload among different SSC members, the SSC is responsible for below tasks with the support of the SS:

- (1) Strategic planning, science quality, oversight and monitoring of the Programme
 - Contribute to the design and annual planning of the Programme.
 - Review and approve annual progress report, annual plan and budget of the Programme
 - Advise on how to enhance the effectiveness and impacts of the programme implementation.
 - Review and endorse all recruitments and extension of advisory services provided by external experts outside the SS.
 - Review and approve all grants of SUMERNET recommended by the SS.
 - Provide advisory support to the implementation of granted projects upon request.
 - Review and endorse the call documents for SUMERNET grants
 - Contribute to the review of the applications and products from SUMERNET grants upon request.
- (2) Performance review
 - Assess annual performance and contribution of different parties (i.e. SS, SSC, SNMs) and advise if any improvement would be needed.
 - Advise on the process and implementation of external reviews of the network and programme.
- (3) Network and partnerships Development
 - Lead in enhancing the regional ownership and development of the network for positive impacts and long-term sustainability of the network including but not limited to representing the SNMs as network leaders, regular communications with network members from the country that the SSC is representing.
 - Lead in partnership building with concerned agencies to enhance the impacts on research, policy and practices related to the goals and objectives of the network and programme.
 - Review and endorse any submission to become organizational members or the projects of SUMERNET.
 - Represent SUMERNET in relevant policy dialogues and scientific events at different levels in the Mekong Region.
 - Mediate any unresolved disputes between any parties among SS,

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- SNM or individual SSC member
 - Assist the Secretariat in raising funding for SUMERNET.

(4) Key events and communications

- Lead in communications with the SNMs through SUMERNET Annual Meeting and newsletter to update on the progress of network development and programme implementation.
- Actively participate and contribute to SSC meetings (2-3 times a year), Annual Review Meeting with the funder (once a year) and Annual Meeting (once a year).

Benefits and privileges of SSC Member

1. Formal recognition of SSC's leadership and contribution to the SUMERNET explicitly in meetings, SUMERNET website, and relevant publications as appropriate.
2. Co-authorship: If the contribution of the SSC members in writing research products is significant, it is possible for the SSC to be acknowledged as the co-author of the publications.
3. Honorarium of US\$ 120 per day attending online or physical meetings/ events organized by SUMERNET.
4. Full coverage of direct costs (e.g. travel, accommodation, per diem, visa fee) or those who will travel from the countries in the Mekong Region when participating in SUMERNET events.
5. Upon submission of the receipts and other documents, SUMERNET Secretariat will reimburse the travel insurance for you for the specific periods that you are travelling on SSC business.

Note: The individual SSC member reserve the right to apply for SUMERNET grants, vacant positions, or other opportunities under the SUMERNET. The SSC member who has an interest to apply however needs to declare potential conflict of interest and recuse him/herself from the design of the call and any decision-making process for those opportunities.

Selection of the SSC members, Chair and Co-chairs

SSC consists of a Chair and up to two Co-chair(s) and other SSC members including at least 2 representatives from each of six Mekong countries. SSC membership consists of regionally recognized scientists and practitioners with particular strengths in research, policy and development approaches. The SSC strives for balanced membership in terms of disciplinary mix, gender, age and diversity, and includes at least two seats for representatives from each of the six Mekong countries.

SSC members will have 3 years terms, after which vacant positions will be replaced through open election process. The SNMs can nominate or apply to be considered as the SSC members. The nominees will be asked to confirm their interest for the positions and willingness to participate in open election process if they are shortlisted. Brief profiles of shortlisted candidates will

be put in the open ballot to be voted by all SUMERNET network members. The results of the open election will be announced publicly to the network members. The shortlisted candidates from each country with the highest votes according to the selection criteria will be invited to join the SSC as the new members.

Members of the SSC including the Chair may be renewed if no appropriate candidates are nominated or apply for the position and once based on a recommendation from at least half the existing SSC members. The contribution of each member of the SSC will be reviewed annually by the Chair and Co-chair(s). If any SSC member is obligated with other commitments and thus cannot contribute to the network as earlier planned, his/her term can be completed before 3 years.

Terms of Reference of the Chair and Co-chair(s)

The SSC member can nominate him/herself or other SSC member(s) to be considered as the Chair. The Chair will be selected among the nominees through a voting process by existing SSC members.

In addition to contributing as an active member of the SSC, the Chair shall be responsible for the following tasks:

- Convening and chairing meetings of the SSC and other SUMERNET key events
- Reporting back on the results of the meetings of the SSC to the network and communicating the need for specific actions by the Secretariat.
- Issuing an appointment letter for SSC members
- Representing the Programme as required at selected meetings and events.
- Review the contributions of the SSC members annually.
- Selection of up to two Co-chair(s) who will support the tasks as assigned by the Chair

The Secretariat

SSC delegates the role as a host of SUMERNET Secretariat to within Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI) Asia, overseeing the coordination of the network, providing the legal and fiduciary oversight, day-to-day management, coordination and technical support to the network. SEI Asia Centre Director, SUMERNET Programme Director and SUMERNET Programme Manager serve as ex officio members of the SSC and act as representatives of SEI and the SUMERNET Secretariat respectively.

The SS team is responsible for the implementation of the Programme under the direction guided by the SSC. They will not influence SSC decisions but inform SSC when required. The SS is also responsible for promoting the Programme through internal and external communications. The SUMERNET Secretariat is led by the Programme Director and other Secretariat members who work part-time for SUMERNET (see Figure 3).

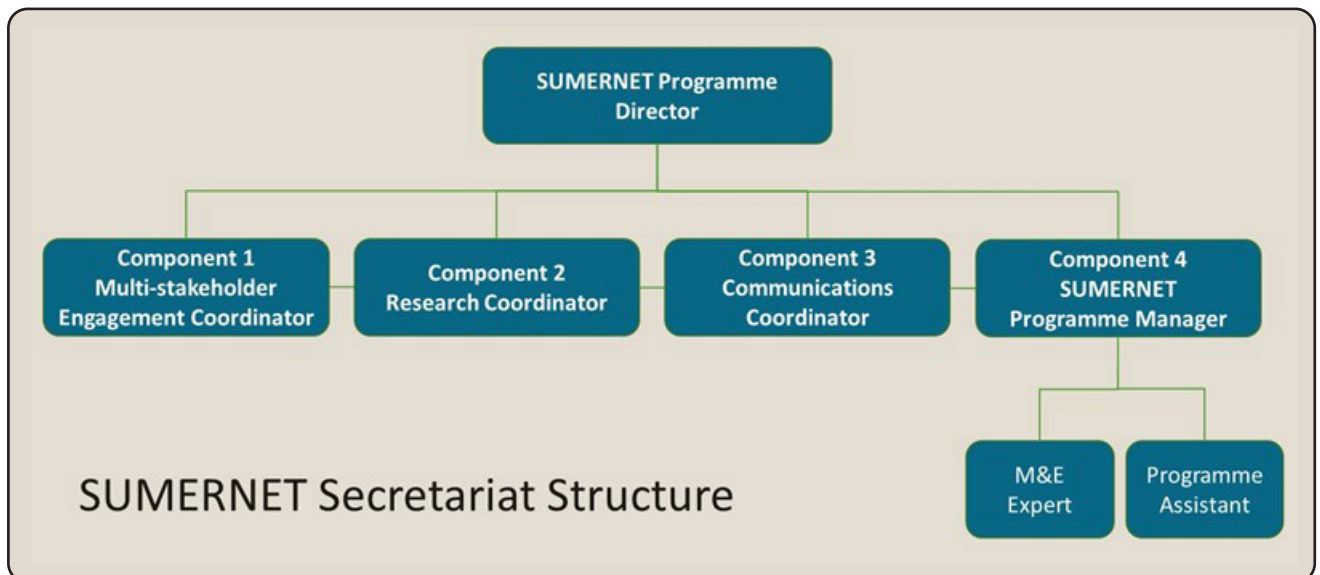


Figure 3: SUMERNET Secretariat structure

The SUMERNET Secretariat reports directly to the SUMERNET Steering Committee (SSC) and has the following functions:

- Following up and implementing key decisions by the SSC and SNMs.
- Interacting with SEI Asia office on services provided and the Steering Committee providing support to these bodies as required.
- Maintaining regular and active contact, coordination and communications with partners and network members.
- Management of the nomination and election of the new members, Chair and Co-chair(s) of the SSC.
- Review and endorse any individual's application to become a member of SUMERNET on behalf of the SSC and report regularly to the SSC on any new members.

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- Seeking specific support from the individual SSC members in motivating the network members from the same countries to actively engage in network activities, when necessary.
 - Managing the Programme level deliverables, including preparing annual Programme of work and budget for submission to the SSC for their approval and annual report on network development to be presented by the SSC to the network.
 - Issuing and managing the range of granting agreements and other contracts that are needed or may arise.
 - Maintaining a database of SUMERNET activities, partners, budgets etc. and integrating these into a knowledge management and monitoring, evaluation and learning system.
 - Administering the Programme budget.
 - Procurement and management of auditors for financial audits required within the Programme.
 - Recruitment and management of mid-term reviewers of the Programme
 - Recruitment and assessment of performance of thematic advisors to support the Programme.
 - Providing administrative and logistical support in the organisation of SUMERNET meetings, workshops, trainings, annual meeting, and other key events.
 - Developing and implementing the SUMERNET Communications and Policy Engagement Strategy, including the SUMERNET website (<https://www.sumernet.org/>).
 - Developing and implementing a Programme Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (ME&L) system for SUMERNET.
 - Preparing all Programme narrative and financial reports for the SSC to approve and for submission to the funders.
 - Working closely with the Gender, Human Rights and Conflict Sensitivity Experts, to support the integration of Gender, Human Rights and conflict sensitivity issues into SUMERNET's research portfolio.
 - Management of ethics review and clearance process for the projects granted by SUMERNET with the inputs from thematic advisors and other supporters.
 - Supporting resource mobilization efforts.
 - Being the focal point of contact for communication with donors.

Contacts

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