

SUMERNET 4 ALL Training on Research Proposal Writing

Vientiane (Lao PDR), 10 – 12 October 2023

A. Background

Since its inception in 2005, the **Sustainable Mekong Research Network (SUMERNET, www.sumernet.org)** has supported policy-relevant research and outreach activities to inform and engage decision-makers, planners, and stakeholders in the Mekong Region's six countries: 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 regional questions and policy issues. The Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI) has hosted the SUMERNET Secretariat.

In its current phase, SUMERNET 4 All (2018-2023) focuses on reducing water insecurity for all, particularly the poor, marginalized, and socially vulnerable groups of women and men in the Mekong Region. Under this new phase, SUMERNET continues to work toward the Mekong Region's sustainable development by putting knowledge-based policy engagement at the centre of its activities.

Over the course of the program's implementation, the SUMERNET program has realized a gap in Lao PDR researchers' abilities to design and submit high-quality research proposals. This was evident in the minimal number of proposals submitted by researchers in Lao PDR in response to the program's various calls, and the quality of those proposals was not at par with proposals submitted by researchers from other countries in the region.

To address this knowledge deficit and bolster the capabilities of researchers in the region and especially Lao PDR, the SUMERNET program, under the leadership of SUMERNET Steering Committee Co-Chair from Lao PDR, aims to enhance capacities through the organization of a two to three-day practical training workshop on research proposal writing in Vientiane, Lao PDR.

B. Objectives

The primary aim of the training program is to equip local researchers with the necessary knowledge and abilities to improve the quality of their grant proposals for competitive funding opportunities and specific donors within the region.

- 1) Participants **will acquire the necessary skills to develop research proposals** that adhere to the specific criteria set by prominent donors in the region.
- 2) The participants **are presented with a set of recommended strategies for creating proposals** that are highly effective.
- 3) The participants **engage in the process of developing a research proposal** tailored to a specific donor who has expressed interest.
- 4) The participants **receive constructive feedback** aimed at enhancing the quality and effectiveness of their research proposal.

C. Approach

This training will expose the participants to theory and practical information on how to develop effective research proposals that address a wide range of criteria that are often found in the funding opportunities in the Mekong region, as well as specific criteria in SUMERNET opportunities and other prominent donors in the region. However, the emphasis of this training is leaning toward practical exposure. The content of the training will reflect this practical emphasis; therefore, the following topics will be covered:

- Landscape of research opportunities and donors in Lao PDR and the Mekong Region
- Experiential sharing of key elements of successful proposals and lessons from less successful proposals
- Commonly used selection criteria in the proposal
- SUMERNET/Donor specific selection criteria
- Planning and Budgeting for a competitive proposal
- Proposal development process (including practice)
- Engaging with stakeholders to add value and competitiveness
- Tools for proposal development and partner collaboration

D. Duration

The training workshop will have a duration of 2.5 days and will be organised from 10 to 12 October 2023.

E. Venue

This training workshop will be organised at:

Le Thatluang D'OR a Boutique Hotel

Hom 11 Thatluang Neua,
Saysettha, Vientiane,
Lao PDR

F. Participation and delivery format

SUMERNET aims to select 12-15 participants from Lao PDR preferably local to Vientiane for in-person participation (no hybrid/online delivery option is available). The participants are expected to consist of:

- At least 4-5 of these are SYP members from Lao PDR who are actively engaged in research activities within Lao PDR
- 3-5 Early career researchers identified by SUMERNET Steering Committee Co-Chair, Lao PDR
- Another 5-7 experienced researchers to be selected or nominated by SUMERNET Steering Committee Co-Chair from Lao PDR

G. Resource persons

- Dr Phoummixay Siharath, Lead Trainer, SUMERNET Steering Committee Co-Chair, Lao PDR
- Dr. Keoduangchai Keokhamphui, Vice Dean, Faculty of water resources, National University of Laos
- Mr. Bounmy Phommakone, National Coordinator, GEF, SGP, Lao PDR Programme, UNDP
- Mr. Virasack Chundara, General Director, Natural Resources and Environmental Statistic and Research Institute (NRESRI), Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, Lao PDR, SPG Member, APN2 – tbc.
- Mr. Virasith Phomsouvanh, Deputy Director, Remote Sensing and Mapping, NRESRI, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, Lao PDR (APN Focal Point, Lao PDR) – tbc.
- Dr. Ninpaseuth Xayaphonesy, Director General of Women in Development Department, Lao Women's Union (LWU), Vientiane, Laos PDR – tbc.
- Dr. Ridhi Saluja, SUMERNET Multistakeholder Engagement Coordinator, SEI Asia, Bangkok, Thailand
- Mr. Agus Nugroho, SUMERNET Programme Manager, SEI Asia, Bangkok, Thailand

H. Agenda

Day 1: Tuesday, 10 October 2023		
Time	Session	Resource Person
8:30 am -9:00 am	Registration	SUMERNET Secretariat
9:00 am -9:30 am	Introduction and Overview	Dr Ridhi Saluja
9:30 am -9:40 am	Pre-training survey	Dr Ridhi Saluja
9:40 am – 10:10 am	Design and elements of the Research proposal. What does it need to succeed?	Dr. Phoummixay Siharath
10:10 – 10:30 am	Follow up Q&A	Dr. Phoummixay Siharath
10:30-10:45 am	Coffee break	
10:45-11:15 am	Key research sectors and Donors in Lao PDR and the Mekong region	Dr. Phoummixay Siharath
11:15-11:30 am	Group activity: Participants group known donors and sectors	Participants
11:30 -12:00 am	Regional Donor Landscape and Funding Types of donors Types of grants More frequent calls	Dr. Ridhi Saluja
11:50-12:00 pm	Q&A	Dr. Ridhi Saluja
12:00 – 1:00 pm	Lunch	
1:00-1:20 pm	Research tools available to support problem definition and analysis	Dr. Phoummixay Siharath
1:20-2:10 pm	Example of Call of Proposals from APN – Key ingredients for success Q&A	Mr. Virasack Chundara and Mr. Virasith Phomsouvanh (tbc.)
2:10 -3:00 pm	Example of Call of Proposals from GEF – Key ingredients for success Q&A	Mr. Bounmy Phommakone

3:30-4:00 pm	Sharing a case study (state-of-the-art technique/tool for designing research problem) Problem statement Background Objective/Research questions	Dr. Keoduangchai Keokhamphui and Dr Ridhi Saluja
4:00 – 5:00 pm	Group activity: Participants to design key Problem statement Background Objective/Research questions	Group exercise
6:00 pm onwards	Networking Dinner	Participants and SUMERNET Partners from Lao PDR

Day 2: Wednesday, 11 October 2023		
Time	Session	Resource Person
9:00-9:30 am	Reflections and report back	Dr. Ridhi Saluja
9:30-10:30 am	Addressing GEDSI and HRBA components in research proposals – Key points to consider	Dr. Ninpaseuth Xayaphonesy (tbc.)
10:30-10:45	Coffee Break	
10:45 am -11:30 am	Example of Call of Proposals from SUMERNET – what do reviewers look for	Dr. Ridhi Saluja
11:30-12:00 pm	Proposal Methodology and Approach Development: Ultimate Resources and Guidelines	Dr. Keoduangchai Keokhamphui
12:00-1:00 pm	Lunch	
1:00 -2:00 pm	Group Activity- Design approach and methodology for selected research topic	All participants
2:00-3:00 pm	Planning Outcomes, Outputs, Activities, Budgeting for a research proposal	Mr. Agus Nugroho
3:30 -3:45 pm	Coffee Break	
3:45 -5:00 pm	Group Activity – Design outcomes, outputs, activities and budget	All participants

Day 3: Thursday, 12 October 2023		
Time	Session	Resource Person
9:00 -9:30 am	Reflections	Dr. Ridhi Saluja
9:30-10:30 am	Prepare your pitch while having coffee	All participants
10:30-12:00 am	Group Activity: Research Proposal Presentation and Feedback	Dr. Keoduangchai, Dr. Phoummixay, Dr. Ridhi, Mr. Agus Nugroho
12:00-12:30 pm	Best Proposal Award and Certificate Distribution	Dr. Phoummixay Siharath
12:15-12:30 pm	Closing Remarks and Vote of Thanks	Dr. Phoummixay Siharath
12:30 – 1:30 pm	Networking lunch	