



Mekong-ROK Cooperation Fund (MKCF)

Project Proposal

Project Information	
1.1. Project Title	Enhancing People-to-People Connectivity to Address Non-traditional Security Challenges in the Mekong Region
1.2. Country	Thailand
1.3. Project Area	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Non-traditional Security Challenges
Project Milestone	
Project duration	2 years
Description of Financial Elements	
Total Project Cost (USD)	425,574 USD
Brief Description of the Project	
<p>The “Enhancing People-to-People Connectivity to Address Non-traditional Security Challenges in the Mekong Region” Project is a two-year project which aims to comprehensively tackle transnational crimes across the areas of the Thai-Lao and the Thai-Cambodia borders, particularly human trafficking, drug trafficking, people smuggling and illegal migration through a non-traditional approach, the building of “people-to-people connectivity” and the launch of “Public Vigilance for Cross-border Security” (PVCS) Initiative between Thai people and local government officers living in the border areas and their counterparts in Lao PDR and Cambodia.</p>	
Project background and justification	
<p>Except Myanmar that is currently encountering a complicated situation which renders it unfavorable for the implementation of the project, Thailand borders two countries in the Mekong Region: Lao PDR and Cambodia. The people living in the border areas of these countries have a deep bond as they have traveled across borders for a long period of time. Although this kind of connectivity has mutually benefited the countries and its people, it has also led to a number of challenges in these deeply interconnected borders, especially the non-traditional security ones. Those challenges include human trafficking, trafficking of drug and other illegal goods, transnational crime, illegal immigration and illegal logging.</p> <p>To comprehensively address these challenges, a non-traditional approach is, thus, required, especially the enhancement of “people-to-people connectivity” in the border areas. As a result, these circumstances led to the proposal of the “Enhancing People-to-People Connectivity to Address Non-traditional Security Challenges in the Mekong Region” Project.</p> <p>Undoubtedly, as the project aims to address the non-traditional security challenges in the Mekong region, specifically the Thai-Lao and the Thai-Cambodia borders, its rationale obviously resonates with one of the MKCF’s Seven Priority Sector: Non-traditional Security Challenges. Moreover, the project will also deepen the regional cooperation between Thailand and its two neighbors, namely Lao PDR and Cambodia, as these countries will become both stakeholders and beneficiaries of the project.</p>	

Problems (to be addressed)

Non-traditional security challenges have been emerging trends in the Mekong region. To be specific, the issues of human trafficking and drug trafficking are particularly acute.

According to “the 2022 Trafficking in Persons Report,” the issue of human trafficking in the Mekong region is still worrisome as Thailand and Lao PDR are classified into “Tier 2” which are “countries whose governments do not fully meet the Trafficking Victims Protection Act’s (TVPA) minimum standards” while Cambodia is ranked as “Tier 3,” or “countries whose governments do not fully meet the TVPA’s minimum standards and are not making significant efforts to do so.” Similarly, the “2020 UNODC Global Report on Trafficking in Persons” also reveals that “Thailand is a destination for victims trafficked from countries of the Greater Mekong area,” emphasizing the seriousness of this challenge in the region.

Furthermore, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime’s report entitled “Synthetic Drugs in East and Southeast Asia: Latest Developments and Challenges 2022” also suggests that the methamphetamine situation in the so-called “lower Mekong subregion,” including Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, and Viet Nam, is highly concerning. In 2021, 127.6 tons of methamphetamine were seized in the lower Mekong subregion alone, accounting for 74.4 per cent of the total amount of methamphetamine seized.

Despite the regional governments’ utmost efforts, the current circumstances regarding these cross-border crimes indicate that the current method might still be insufficient. As a result, this project aims to tackle these challenges by resorting to a different approach. Because of its non-traditional nature, a non-traditional approach will be undeniably required. And that is the enhancement of “People-to-People Connectivity,” thereby enabling local people living in the area to be part of the collective efforts.

Project Objective

The overall objective of the “Enhancing People-to-People Connectivity to Address Non-traditional Security Challenges in the Mekong Region” Project is to supplement the ongoing efforts and the capacities of the governments in the Mekong region, namely Thailand, Lao PDR and Cambodia, to comprehensively and effectively address cross-border crimes, primarily human trafficking, drug trafficking, people smuggling and illegal migration in its border areas.

Specifically, the project aims to enhance the capabilities of each Mekong country to deal with the identified challenges by initiating a participatory vigilance mechanism under the supervision of local government officers in their respective countries that will utilize the “people-to-people connectivity,” the networking among people living around the border areas of the neighboring countries.

Moreover, the project also intends to systematically integrate the Mekong countries’ efforts to address common challenges through the establishment of a direct and timely contact, including an emergency hotline and intermittent information sharing, between local officials in charge of border areas and regular interactions between people living in such areas.

All in all, these objectives are explicitly consistent with the MKCF Priorities as it aims to address the so-called “non-traditional security challenges” in the Mekong region, particularly the problems of human trafficking, drug trafficking, people smuggling and illegal migration that are still prevalent in the region.

Project Description

As the project duration is two years, its main activities will be divided into two phases.

The activities in the first phase include the activities as follows:

1. Holding an instructional online meeting to inform the representatives from the 44 District Offices of the project and the upcoming events as well as classify such districts into three groups: 18 districts bordering Northern and Central Laos, 15 districts bordering Southern Laos and 11 districts bordering Cambodia respectively.
2. Upon the launch of the project, there will be the development of an online reporting mechanism and the creation of the project website to install such mechanism for local people to anonymously report.
3. Making three different group visits by the project team members, Chief Districts Officers and community leaders such as Subdistrict Headmen and Village Headmen to strengthen “people-to-people connectivity” among relevant stakeholders, discuss cooperation on non-traditional security challenges with their counterparts from the neighboring districts in Lao PDR and Cambodia and introduce the “Public Vigilance for Cross-border Security” (PVCS) Initiative.
4. Instructing and funding Chief Districts Officers and community leaders in the 44 border districts to hold knowledge sharing sessions at town hall meetings to expand the people-to-people network as well as institutionalize the “Public Vigilance for Cross-border Security” (PVCS) Initiative in the areas.

The activities in second phase include the activities as follows:

1. Instructing and funding the 44 Chief District Officers to invite their counterparts, community leaders and people from the neighboring districts to make reciprocal visits to their respective areas to review the mid-term progress and reflect on their operation in the first phase before carrying on with the project in the latter half of the period.
2. After hosting the reciprocal visits, the Thai stakeholders in 44 districts will be instructed to carry on implementing the PBV Mechanism and improve it using the feedbacks from the relevant stakeholders.
3. Holding the project concluding seminar to summarize the implementation of the project, reflect on the results and discuss its continuation.

Apparently, these activities will lead to the accomplishment of the desired objectives. While the launch of the “Public Vigilance for Cross-border Security” (PVCS) Initiative will lead to a boost in each country’s capabilities, the reciprocal visits will facilitate the integration of each government’s efforts into a regional one. Consequently, these will eventually contribute to effective supplementation of the ongoing efforts to tackle those non-traditional challenges.

Outcomes, Outputs, Activities and Inputs at Project level

Expected Result	Indicator	Target
Project outcomes		
1. Enhanced People-to-People Connectivity and Cross-border Security	Exchanges of direct contacts between officers and community leaders of the two sides are made and systematized	Exchanges of direct contacts between the Thai stakeholders from the 44 border districts and its counterparts from 30 districts in Lao PDR and Cambodia are made and systematized within the second quarter of the first year of the project implementation

2. Increased Community Participation in Public Vigilance	Reports are made through the “Public Vigilance for Cross-border Security” (PVCS) Initiative and the information acquired is practically utilized	The information acquired through the “Public Vigilance for Cross-border Security” (PVCS) Initiative in the 44 districts is stored and utilized within the first quarter of the second year of the project implementation
3. Regional Integration on the Collective Efforts to Address Cross-border Crimes	A data collection of reports on information sharing and other forms of bilateral interaction regarding the cooperation on tackling non-traditional security challenges is produced	A data collection of reports on information sharing and other forms of bilateral interaction between the 44 border districts in Thailand and its 30 counterparts in Lao PDR and Cambodia is produced within the final quarter of the second year of the project implementation
4. A Sustainable Regional Cooperation on Cross-border Crimes in the Mekong Region	A long-term and detailed plan for the continuation of the project after its completion is formulated	A long-term and detailed plan for the continuation of the project is formulated after project completion
Project outputs (that contribute to outcomes)		
1. Group Visits to Enhance People-to-People Connectivity in the Neighboring Districts	3 different group visits by Thai stakeholders to neighboring districts in Lao PDR and Cambodia are made	Three group visits are made within the second quarter of the first year of the project implementation
2. The Implementation of the “Public Vigilance for Cross-border Security” (PVCS) Initiative	The initiative is launched both in the 44 districts of Thailand that are the areas of border checkpoints and checkpoints for border trade bordering Lao PDR and Cambodia and online through the project website	The “Public Vigilance for Cross-border Security” (PVCS) Initiative is initiated and prompt within the fourth quarter of the first year of the project implementation
3. Reciprocal Visits to Thailand by Neighboring Counterparts to Integrate Regional Cooperation	44 reciprocal visits to border districts in Thailand are made by neighboring districts in Lao PDR and Cambodia	Hosting reciprocal visits within the third quarter of the second year of the project implementation
4. The Project Concluding Seminar	A concluding seminar is held after the project completion	A concluding seminar is held after the project completion

Activities	Description
Phase 1	
<p>1.1 Holding the Launching Event of the Project</p>	<p>Upon the first disbursement of fund, DOPA will hold the launching event of the project. There will also be an instructional session to inform the officers from the 44 District Offices of the details of the project and the upcoming activities.</p> <p>The 44 districts will be the classified into three groups to designate the participants for the group visit activities as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 18 districts bordering Northern and Central Laos 2. 15 districts bordering Southern Laos 3. 11 districts bordering Cambodia <p>Each group will consist of Chief District Officers, Assistant Chief District Officers and community leaders such as Subdistrict Headmen and Village Headmen from the 44 districts, the Project Manager, the Project Coordinator, the officers from the Foreign Affairs Division as well as other relevant stakeholders such as representatives from the Royal Thai Embassies and Royal Thai Consulate-General in Lao PDR and Cambodia, local university scholars and the press.</p> <p>The group visit activities aim to provide an opportunity for government officers and community leaders of the two sides to exchange contacts and systematically establish direct means of communication, discuss cooperation on strengthening “people-to-people connectivity” and introduce the Initiative developed under this program.</p> <p>Moreover, in this online meeting, the participants will be informed of the “Public Vigilance for Cross-border Security” (PVCS) Initiative which will play a key role in the implementation of this project in the communities. The Initiative aims to comprehensively tackle non-traditional security challenges that are particularly prevalent in the border areas such as human trafficking, drug trafficking, people smuggling and illegal migration by systematically establishing a participatory reporting mechanism for local people to report on suspicious circumstances and activities in their communities that might be linked to those cross-border crimes.</p> <p>With this mechanism, people can either make a report directly to subdistrict headmen or village headmen in charge of their communities or report online anonymously through the project website. Either way, the information will be accumulated by the district officers and reported to Chief District Officers in order to investigate and take relevant measures. And the entire process will be monthly reported to the project staffs and the Foreign Affairs Division.</p>
<p>1.2 Developing Online Reporting Channels for the Initiative</p>	<p>Upon the launch of the project, there will be the development of an online reporting mechanism and the creation of the project website to install such mechanism for local people to anonymously report. The website will also be used for public relations as well.</p>

<p>1.3 First-year Public Relations</p>	<p>Producing PR contents to publicize the implementation of the project in the first year and raise public awareness of non-traditional security challenges and the MKCF. Such contents publicized through various channels such as the project website, social media and the Department’s media including Facebook, YouTube and TV channel.</p>
<p>1.4 1st Group Visit to Central and Northern Laos</p>	<p>The 1st group which consists of participants from the 18 districts bordering Northern and Central Laos from Nong Khai, Chiang Rai, Nan, Loei, Uttaradit and Phayao, project staffs and other relevant stakeholders will make a group visit from Nong Khai to Vientiane and Luang Prabang. And before departing, there will be a 1-day preliminary session in Nong Khai to prepare for the visit.</p>
<p>1.5 2nd Group Visit to Southern Laos</p>	<p>The 2nd group which consists of participants from the 15 districts bordering Southern Laos from Mukdahan, Bueng Kan, Nakhon Phanom, Nong Khai, Amnat Charoen and Ubon Ratchathani, project staffs and other relevant stakeholders will make a group visit from Mukdahan to Savannakhet and Champasak. And before departing, there will be a 1-day preliminary session in Mukdahan to prepare for the visit.</p>
<p>1.6 3rd Group Visit to Cambodia</p>	<p>The 3rd group which consists of participants from the 11 districts bordering Cambodia from Sa Kaeo, Sisaket, Surin, Buriram, Chanthaburi, Trat, Ubon Ratchathani, project staffs and other relevant stakeholders will make a group visit from Sa Kaeo to Banteay Meanchey and Siem Reap. And before departing, there will be a 1-day preliminary session in Sa Kaeo to prepare for the visit.</p>
<p>1.7 Launching the “Public Vigilance for Cross-border Security” (PVCS) Initiative</p>	<p>After the group visits, the 44 District Offices will be instructed to launch the “Public Vigilance for Cross-border Security” (PVCS) Initiative in their respective areas.</p> <p>The districts will be funded to hold individual launching events for the Initiative and start implementing it immediately. While Chief District Officers will oversee the overall operation in each district, the community leaders including Subdistrict Headmen and Village Headmen will be tasked with expanding and institutionalizing the Initiative in subdistricts and villages during monthly town hall meetings. And after the launch, the Initiative will be continuously implemented throughout the project.</p>
<p>Phase 2</p>	
<p>2.1 Hosting Reciprocal Visits</p>	<p>The 44 District Offices will be funded to invite their counterparts to make 2-day visits to their respective areas to review and reflect on the coordination on tackling non-traditional security, discuss further bilateral cooperation, especially intelligence sharing relevant to the Initiative, and participate in activities to enhance “people-to-people connectivity” including cultural, sport and tourism activities.</p>
<p>2.2 Second-year Public Relations</p>	<p>Producing PR contents to publicize the implementation of the project in the second year and raise public awareness of non-traditional security challenges and the MKCF. Such contents publicized through various channels such as the project website, social media and the Department’s media including Facebook, YouTube and TV channel.</p>

<p>2.3 Holding Reflective Sessions</p>	<p>The 44 District Offices will be instructed to hold reflective sessions with community leaders and local people within each district in the first monthly meeting after the reciprocal visits to improve the implementation of the Initiative using feedbacks from the relevant stakeholders.</p>
<p>2.4 Holding the Project Concluding Seminar</p>	<p>After the project completion, the project concluding seminar will be held among the representatives from the 44 District Offices, 17 Provincial Administration Offices and project staffs in Bangkok to summarize the implementation of the project, reflect on the results and discuss and formulate a plan for its long-term continuation.</p>