

Summer School on Land Relations and Land Governance in the Mekong Region

**Regional Center for Social Science and Sustainable Development, Chiang Mai University
7-18 June 2021**

Background and introduction to the summer school

The Regional Center for Social Science and Sustainable Development (RCSD) at Chiang Mai University hosts the Mekong Land Research Forum (MLRF). Since 2016, RCSD and MLRF have run annual summer schools on land relations and land governance. The summer schools have involved participants from all six Mekong countries and have been held in Chiang Mai, Thailand. In 2020, the summer school had to be cancelled because of travel restrictions resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2021, the mid-year summer school will go ahead in an online format due to travel restrictions that are likely to continue into the second half of the year. The summer school will be run online over a period of two weeks 7 – 18 June 2021. The purpose of the summer school is to equip participants with a research orientation targeted at a deeper understanding of land relations and land governance in the Mekong Region, including the sharing of experience and perspectives among participants from different countries and different sectors around the region.

The summer school will cover key concepts, themes and governance interventions. It will provide access to existing research outputs and bring together knowledge of current land issues at local, country and regional levels. It seeks to strengthen individual and networked research that is geared towards secure access to land amongst the rural and urban poor.

The summer school will involve a mix of early-career academics, government staff and those working with civil society organizations (including media) in the six Mekong countries: Cambodia, China, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam.

Content

The summer school program will be organised and run by specialists in regional land issues. It will include a number of guest lectures and online resources. The format will be “hands on”, with interactive group work as well as individual exercises and presentations on the part of the participants.

Activities

- Pre-workshop assignments for participants, including a one-page summary of their own research topics, familiarisation with others’ topics, and guided preparation of data, issues and policies relevant to land governance in participants’ own countries.
- Mini-lectures and practical exercises through the program
- Lectures by invited speakers on key issues relevant to research on land
- Facilitator-led seminars on key land-related questions and literature in the Mekong Region
- Practical exercises on:

- searching and selecting key land-relevant literature from online resource
- individual reading-based assignments: annotating key articles
- group literature review exercises
- A virtual field program for participants to experience some of the complex land issues at a particular site, to serve as a basis for empirical reference during the summer school program
- Topic sharing and development by participants

Key concepts, themes and interventions

Concepts

- Resource tenure
- Access and exclusion
- Dispossession and justice

Themes

- Trans-border issues and regionalization
- Migration and labour
- Agrarian changes and peri-urban development
- Green agendas
- Marginalised groups e.g. ethnicity, gender

Interventions

- Customary tenure
- Responsible agricultural investment

Selection, requirements and entitlements of participants

Selection

The preliminary round of participant selection will be from the reserve list of applicants to the 2019 summer school on land. More than 320 people applied for the 24 allocated places in 2019, and the organizers have further prioritized among those who missed out on selection at that time. Therefore, the 2021 selection is by invitation from this revised priority list.

Requirements

The two-week program is run in intensive format and requires a good working knowledge of English language and professional interest in issues related to land governance. Participants are required:

- To have access to a computer with stable broadband internet connectivity.
- To prepare materials ahead of the summer school as set out by the summer school instructors (approximately three days' work). Details will be provided in mid-May.
- To commit to at least five hours per day during the ten days of the summer school 7-11 and 14-18 June 2021 (three hours online, two hours individual work).
- To join the field school with an open mind and and preparedness to work collaboratively with participants from other countries in the Mekong Region and with diverse perspectives on land issues.

Entitlements

Selected participants are entitled to join the program at no cost. All program materials will be made available in electronic format. A certificate of attendance will be issued to all participants who have fulfilled the requirements above.

Online approach

The online approach to the field school is pioneering and experimental, since all previous programs have been run face to face in Chiang Mai. While there are some limitations of online learning, there are also some advantages and opportunities through interactive use of online materials and creative use of online platforms.

A significant difference between the online and face-to-face approaches is that we will spend less time each day in lecture and discussion mode. Lectures will be shorter and more “modular” (i.e. broken up into more specific segments) in order to maintain concentration and interactivity both among participants and between participants and instructors. More time will be allowed for reading, participant-generated online searches and written exercises than is normally manageable within the short one-week format. Typically we will work together online during early to mid-morning and during the late afternoon, although hours will vary day to day. The field trip that is normally part of the program will be virtual, but we hope that it will be interesting nonetheless.