



MEKONG YOUTH WATER QUALITY WORKSHOP

30 MARCH - 4 APRIL 2026
LUANG PRABANG & VIENTIANE, LAO PDR



BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

Across the Mekong River Basin, water quality is becoming a more urgent and public-facing concern because pressures on rivers are increasing at the same time. Rapid urban growth, water infrastructure development, expanding tourism hubs, and intensifying agriculture all raise the risk of wastewater, nutrients, and solid waste entering waterways. The MRC already runs routine water quality monitoring through Member Countries' designated laboratories and reports on results annually, which shows the system is in place and generates credible data for learning and action.

Another clear trend is that pollution is not just chemical or wastewater related. Plastic is now treated as a serious water quality issue in the Lower Mekong. At the same time, water quality risks are closely connected with wider river changes. The MRC's annual reporting has flagged major basin trends such as changing flow patterns, including higher dry-season flows and lower wet-season flows compared with past conditions. While flow is not the same as water quality, it strongly affects it. Changes in flow can influence dilution, sediment transport, and how pollution moves and concentrates in certain stretches of the river. This is one reason why water quality learning needs to be practical and linked to real locations, not only classroom theory.

Globally, water governance is shifting toward citizen science and youth participation, with UN and UNESCO reporting that well-managed community sampling and observation can strengthen water knowledge and SDG 6 reporting. Therefore, the MRC Youth Water Quality Workshop will connect observation, sampling, lab results, and practical discussion that helps translate monitoring into public understanding. It will then build a new generation that can communicate water quality issues in a factual and responsible way.

OBJECTIVES

- Build practical understanding of Mekong water quality among youth in four Mekong countries
- Demonstrate how MRC water data connects to real community situations
- Encourage data-driven and realistic thinking about water quality solutions
- Showcase youth learning and field work experience during Mekong Day (4 April)

PARTICIPANTS

- 20 students (5 each) from the four Mekong universities.

LEARNING JOURNEY FLOW

- Understand Mekong water quality issues
- Conduct real sampling at the confluence between Nam Khan river and the Mekong mainstream in Luang Prabang
- Lab experience and interpret results in Vientiane with MRC experts
- Discuss observations and develop practical ideas based on findings
- Learn sampling ethics and methods and report them on iReport in the MRC's One Mekong App
- Share reflections and innovative solutions during Mekong Day

30
MARCH

ARRIVAL OF ALL PARTICIPANTS

WELCOME DINNER

31
MARCH

8:45 - 9:00
WELCOME & REGISTRATION

9:00 - 9:10
SETTING THE SCENE
Overview & objectives of the workshop

9:10 - 9:20
OPENING REMARK
by Busadee Santipitaks, CEO of the MRC Secretariat

9:20 - 9:35
MEET, CONNECT & CO-CREATE
Self-introduction, team formation, and house rules

9:35 - 9:50
THE MEKONG TODAY: PEOPLE, ENVIRONMENT & MONITORING
Exploring the social and environmental dimensions of the Mekong River Basin and understanding the MRC's five core monitoring areas

9:50 - 10:10
TEA BREAK & NETWORKING

10:10 - 12:00
INSIDE THE SCIENCE: FOUNDATIONS OF WATER QUALITY MONITORING
An introduction to key concepts that shape our understanding of water quality in the basin

12:00 - 13:00
LUNCH BREAK

13:00 - 14:40
DECODING THE RIVER: TRACKING, TESTING, & INTERPRETING
Demonstration of water sampling and testing

14:40 - 15:10
STEPPING INTO THE LAB: WHAT TO EXPECT
An overview of laboratory work and practical guidance

15:10 - 15:25
TEA BREAK

15:25 - 15:40
TURNING DATA INTO IMPACT: SHARING THROUGH THE ONE MEKONG APP

15:40 - 16:00
FIELDWORK READY: BRIEFING & PRACTICAL GUIDANCE
Key instructions and preparations for the field session

16:00 - 16:30
CLOSING REFLECTIONS & HOUSEKEEPING NOTES
A short wrap-up, evaluation, and next steps

01

APRIL

8:30 - 11:00

WATER SAMPLING AND ON-SITE MONITORING

Participants step into the role of water quality analysts, applying sampling techniques, conducting in-situ measurements, and observing the surrounding environment.

11:00 - 11:30

FIELD DEBRIEF

Teams gather for a short reflection

11:30 - 13:00

LUNCH BREAK

13:00

ON THE TRAIN

Travel to Vientiane

02

APRIL

8:30 - 11:30

VISIT THE BIOTECHNOLOGY AND ECOLOGY INSTITUTE (BEI)

Participants step into a professional laboratory setting to analyse the samples collected during fieldwork.

11:30 - 12:00

EXPERT DIALOGUE

Participants engage in a technical discussion with laboratory specialists and water quality experts.

12:00 - 13:30

LUNCH BREAK

13:30 - 17:00

FROM SAMPLE TO SOLUTIONS

Participants work in group:

- Review and consolidate their findings
- Compare field and lab results
- Identify key messages and implications
- Develop observations and proposed solutions

03

APRIL

8:30 - 11:30

FOCUSED GROUP DISCUSSION

Participants gather in teams to consolidate their findings and transform technical results into a clear and compelling story.

12:00

SUBMISSION

Presentation slides must be submitted by 12:00 PM.

12:00 - 13:00

LUNCH BREAK

13:0 - 14:30

DRY RUN

Each group participates in a rehearsal session

15:00 - 17:30

MEKONG DAY AND THE SIGNING CEREMONY

04 MEKONG APRIL DAY

14:30 - 16:30

YOUTH REFLECTIONS & PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

On Mekong Day, participants take the stage to present the journey of their learning from field observations to laboratory analysis, and finally to practical solutions.



WHAT IS COVERED BY THE MRC

- Return air tickets
- Accommodation throughout the official workshop period
- Local transportation, including field visits and travel from Luang Prabang to Vientiane
- Meals during official programme days
- Access to laboratory facilities and testing materials
- Field sampling equipment and necessary safety gear
- Workshop materials and learning resources
- Technical guidance from MRC and LNMC experts
- Participation in Mekong Day activities
- Certificate of participation upon completion

Any questions, please contact:

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