

**M-POWER Research Fellowships Program on Water Governance
Concept Note (MK-7):
Fourth Call, 2012-2013**

A. Introduction

The Mekong Program on Water, Environment and Resilience (M-POWER), with the support and collaboration of the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) through the CGIAR Challenge Program on Water and Food (CPWF), announces its fourth call for proposals from professionals, researchers, government officials, and others interested in the water resources of the Mekong Region, their management and future.

The main objective of this fellowship program is to build capacity of people interested in improving the interface between research-based knowledge and policy for the sustainable management of water resources in the region. A complementary objective is to ensure research fellows gain experience from at least one other country in the region, in addition to their home country. This call also highly encourages cross-border/cross-country/transboundary research or the implications of regional driving forces on communities in the region.

This call for concept notes will follow a three-step process. Concept notes will first be evaluated. Short-listed applicants will then be coached to develop a full proposal by attending a required Proposal Development Workshop. A research fellowship grant will only be offered if a short-listed applicant joins the workshop and subsequently submits a high-quality, approved Research Proposal.

B. Award size

Each award will have a ceiling of US\$ 10,000 for a period of 12 months. We expect to support approximately 20-25 researchers in this call.

C. Eligibility

The emphasis of this research fellowship is to support applicants who are nationals from one of the six Mekong countries. Applicants from non-Mekong countries should show their commitment to the region evidenced by being in the region for at least six months and should explain how their research contributes to capacity-building of local partners in the Mekong Region.

Applicants must be hosted by an M-POWER or CPWF partner institution and the funded research should take place within at least one of the six Mekong countries.

D. Guidelines for submission of concept notes

- Concept notes should address the research foci (see Section F below) and be relevant to the programs of M-POWER and CPWF in the Mekong Region (see <http://www.mpowernetwork.org>; www.mekong.waterandfood.org).
- Interested applicants can download the concept note submission template from the M-POWER and/or CPWF websites.
- Concept notes should be no longer than five pages and be typed in the English language at no less than an 11-pitch font.
- Concept notes must be submitted by email to fellow.mekong@gmail.com with including '4th call' in the subject line.
- Concept notes must be submitted before 12.00 Bangkok Time on 9 August 2012. Proposals received after this date will not be accepted unless it can be proven that the delay was due to an Internet problem.
- Only one concept note per applicant will be accepted.
- All concept notes must be accompanied by the applicant's CV (two-pages only) and a signed letter of recommendation from the applicant's home institution.¹

E. Process of assessment and shortlisting of concept notes

A selection committee formed of the M-POWER Steering Committee will evaluate and select concept notes against the set of criteria and the scoring mechanisms described at the end of this document.

The selection committee will consolidate the results of the evaluations and reach consensus on those to be supported. The decision of the selection committee is final, and no negotiations will be entered into unless it can be shown that there have been any deviations from the rules contained in this document.

The Research Fellowship Program will be managed and administered by institutions selected by M-POWER to act on its behalf. Successful applicants will be understood, both during and after the award, to be 'M-POWER Research Fellows'. M-POWER, host organizations, CPWF staff and invited experts will actively mentor fellows.

F. Research focus

Under this call, applicants are invited to address one of the M-POWER themes outlined below and the specific concerns that fall under each.

¹ A proposed host organization is intended to be an existing partner of M-POWER or CPWF. If it is not, the

Dialogue

This theme explores the potential of alternative approaches for engaging in water-related deliberative dialogues, diplomacy, negotiation and decision-making in the Mekong Region. The dialogue theme critically reflects on whether and how multi-stakeholder platforms can bring water policy and policy-making into the public sphere.

Specific concerns:

- Types of dialogues and their outcomes for democratizing water governance
- Dialogue barriers and gridlocks
- Official country discourses on water issues and their potential for entry points for dialogues

Institutions

This theme focuses on understanding the prevailing political, economic and ecological processes in the Mekong Region and beyond – specifically, the incentives, relationships, distribution and contestation of power between different groups and individuals – which, together, greatly impact on development outcomes. Our research is anticipated to support more effective and politically feasible strategies, as well as more realistic expectations of what may be achieved, over what timescales, and with what risks. Its ultimate influence will depend on the extent to which recommended changes in development practice and institutional incentives are adopted. M-POWER is focused on exploring and developing a new generation of operationally relevant tools at the sector and program level, which offers good possibilities for transcending the gap between analysis and action, thereby ensuring meaningful change in government, donor and developer practice.

Specific concerns:

- Water governance institutions and neo-liberal policies on water and energy trade
- Dynamics of decision making in water governance institutions
- Informal-formal interfaces that influence water governance
- The critical role of civil society in water governance

Knowledge & Capacity

This theme addresses how different forms of knowledge inform decision-making and action-taking. It aims to span and integrate understanding from formal assessment processes established by government and inter-governmental agencies, through to the diverse kinds of local and organizational knowledge often embedded in practices. Access to, and the capacity for, analysis are highly differentiated in Mekong societies. This places a high social responsibility on technical experts and their managers operating within bureaucracies that often have strong organizational interests for particular types of rationales and findings. Efforts will be made to include grassroots knowledge in decision-making process. The science-policy interface must therefore be investigated and its inherent interdependencies acknowledged.

Specific concerns:

- Hegemonic discourses on hydropower development and water governance and their influencing effects on policy making
- Negotiating knowledge frames in water governance: expert, indigenous, and practical power/knowledge
- Processes of knowledge generation on water governance and their implications on official water management policies

Social Justice

This theme explores the social justice challenge of reducing differences in opportunities, rights, involuntary risks, sharing of benefits and access through changing the form of engagement in water governance. We focus our attention on issues of social equity that differentiates according to gender, ethnicity and class. In so doing, we place power at the center of our research. We wish to explore the conditions and terms under which different groups of people participate in water governance and the consequences for their well-being, especially health and food security. We also ask similar questions about other potentially socially vulnerable groups in the region, particularly ethnic minorities, migrant, urban slum dwellers and landless farmers. Finally and in a cross-cutting manner, we look at how class, ethnicity and gender issues intersect and have generated hierarchies and inequalities in the use, management and control over water resources. The social justice challenge is not just a question of process, but also one of outcomes and impacts on the livelihoods of marginalized groups. Action-research needs to identify inequalities and then work to improve outcomes for the disadvantaged. Changing discriminatory and unfair practices that result in unequal rights, benefits and work is a difficult but a key goal of M-POWER.

Specific concerns:

- Explaining persistent masculinities in water use and management in general and in hydropower development in particular
- Gender, ethnic and class inclusions and exclusions in the use, management and policy making arenas of water management
- Degrees of vulnerabilities to disruptions in water use and management: migrant, ethnic and gender interfaces
- Justice systems and processes of redressing grievances in water governance

Human Security

This theme presents integrated information and research findings on human security from five key perspectives: environment/ecosystem services, food, energy, disaster, and resilient livelihoods to pursue sustainable economic, ecological and social benefits across the region. We pay special attention to the role of 'water' and 'watershed' management in these discourses, policies and politics. Further, we anticipate making a contribution to ongoing and new dialogue processes that aim to reduce conflict.

Specific concerns:

- Conflict-sensitive issues and arenas in watershed management and downstream-upstream dynamics in hydropower development
- Growing areas of insecurity emerging from different types of mega-water projects
- Community resilience and human security in the face of water scarcity

This call also highly encourages cross-border/cross-country/transboundary research or the implications of regional driving forces on communities in the region.

G. Selection criteria

Initial selection:

- Submission received on time.
- Proposal in the English language with legible font.
- Proposal no longer than five pages long and prepared in the template provided.
- Proponent eligibility to apply for support.

- One proposal only from the proponent (in cases of multiple submissions, the first submitted proposal will enter the process).
- Letter of support from a hosting institution.
- Two-page CV from the proponent.
- Budget requested is not higher than USD\$10,000.²
- The selection committee can, at its discretion, request adjustments to proposals should any of the above not be met.

Technical selection:

The selection committee, (drawn from the M-POWER Steering Committee) will select the concept notes for support based on the following criteria:

- Relevance of subject area to M-POWER and CPWF in the Mekong, with a specific focus on *water governance*.
- Relevance of either basic or proposed action research to one of the six themes contained in this call document.
- Validity of study design and methods to address research questions.
- Clarity of rationale and research questions.
- Plausibility of project being carried out given skills of proponent, contributions and commitments of host, and potential risks.
- Reasonableness of budget request and stated needs.
- Capacity building value of fellowship to region.
- Sensitivity to gender considerations.

H. Guide to scoring

The concept note as a whole will be scored as follows:

0 - poor, 1 - fair, 2 - satisfactory, 3 - good, 4 - very good, 5 – excellent.

The resulting scores will be used by the Selection Committee to guide their decisions on which concept notes to support. The decision of the Selection Committee is final. Scores will not be released to the proponent or to any other parties.

I. Planned Duration and timetable

- Call for concept notes announced: 09 July 2012
- Call closed: 09 August 2012
- Shortlisted concept note applicants announced: 09 September 2012
- Required proposal development workshop: mid-September 2012 (TBC)
- Submission of full proposals: 2 weeks following the proposal development workshop

J. Outputs

A final report, the main body of which should be in the format of a draft paper prepared for submission to a peer-reviewed journal or M-POWER Working Paper.

K. Cross-learning Activities

1. *Proposal development workshop*: Shortlisted applicants will undergo a workshop for proposal development aimed to fine-tune their concept notes into research designs that are reasonably tied to the themes of the water governance fellowship program and that demonstrate sound research methodological approaches that can lead to future policy integration.
2. *Synthesis workshop*: Final workshop for synthesis and sharing of findings and conclusions.

² Funds provided for the proposal development workshop will be provided separately.

L. Reporting

Six months after the award date, fellows will submit a mid-term report to M-POWER. A template for the report will be provided.

Final reports must be submitted in English one year after the commencement of the awards.

Statement of expenditure must be received by M-POWER no more than three months after the final report has been submitted.

M. Payment schedule

Successful fellows will be issued with **50%** of their grant at the time of award; and an additional **30%** when a mid-term report has been received by M-POWER, and approved. The final **20%** will be paid on receipt of the final report and an internally generated financial report from you as fellow, or your institute, stamped and signed by the Chief Financial Officer or equivalent.

N. Contracting

Contracts shall be between the fellow's host institution and an institution selected by M-POWER for this purpose.

O. Contact Details

fellow.mekong@gmail.com

Supported by:

