

## 9-10 August Workshop Report:

### Data Visualization and Data-driven Storytelling Skills

On 9-10 August 2019, the Mekong Environment Forum (MEF) in collaboration with Can Tho University (CTU) organized the 2<sup>nd</sup> training workshop themed "**Data visualization and data-driven story-telling skills**". The 2-day event brought together 33 participants who are students in Journalism, Sociology, Geography, and Foreign Languages from Ho Chi Minh City and CTU, and 6 senior experts from London, Thailand, Penn State University, Open Development Vietnam (ODV), and CTU.

The event aimed to provide understanding and updates about Mekong "green politics," and to educate students field research skills and data-driven story telling skills. ODV experts also introduced new data visualization skills and tools to the participants.

This workshop is part of the Mekong Environmental Security Atlas Project that is financially and technically supported by Internews EJN, Takagi Fund, and Open Development Mekong Initiative.

On behalf of CTU, Assoc. Prof. Nguyen Van No, Dean of School of Education, emphasized that the contribution of the Project and the research findings and datasets produced by the Project contributors appears significant to raising environmental justice and improving the understanding of environmental issues in the Mekong Delta.

Mr. Thomas Fawthrop, an experienced independent journalist and founder of Eureka Films, and Mr. Nguyen Minh Quang (CTU expert, Project Director) co-presented the "Green politics" and implications for young professionals in Vietnam. The speakers emphasized the role of young people, especially journalism students, in protecting Vietnam's natural heritages and environmental justice.

Prof. Caitlin Grady (Penn State University, USA), presented field research and writing skills. Her strong experience on field research in 30 countries around the world and publication record interested and inspired the participants to commit to the Project and produce more quality, impactful dataset.

Ms. Paritta Wangkiat, senior journalist from Bangkok Post, led a training session on environmental journalism skills with a focus on frameworks and experience-sharing, followed by a short yet exciting teamwork exercise.

Dr. Thanh Nguyen, ODV data advisor, introduced data visualization skills and tools to help students understand how to contribute and manage dataset to ODV platform and MESA tool. Students were also engaged in an exercise on data clearance and visualization (CKAN, Datawrapper).

In the last session on day 2 (10 August), Dr. Le Van Nhung, Ms. Ho Thi Thu Ho, and Ms. Nguyen Thi Ngoc Phuc, senior experts from CTU, led a field research design training to assist contributors to propose quality data-set generation plans.



After the workshop, 5 field research and dataset proposals were approved to implement in August and September 2019. Each group, consisting of 3-5 members from different disciplines, was received a small grant (\$300-500) to advance their field work. They are expected to submit their research results by the end of September when there will be a seminar to examine the quality of their works before they are uploaded to the MESA tool and ODV platform.

Below are comments from some participants after the workshop.



The workshop was the most energetic and intellectually stimulating conference I have attended. I was really impressed by this well-organized program, and interested in field-work experience skills shared by Tom Fawthrop and Paritta Wangkiat. The trainers inspired us by their real-life experience and stories which enrich and improve my understanding about environmental issues and fieldwork skills. Meeting people so immersed in data journalism, open data, and environmental justice was inspiring and has since motivated myself to start environmental journalism career.

**Le Hoai Chung**  
*Early-career Journalist from Ho Chi Minh City*



This was an exceptional training program and the best organized event I have ever been to. The interactive presentations and discussions as well as the connections I made at the 2-day training educated me about the exciting developments occurring not only in environmental security issues, but environmental data journalism as well. I left informed and inspired to continue on as an environmental justice advocate. This project was a once in a life time opportunity that I will never forget.

**Lam Thi So Ri**  
*Khmer Student in Geography, Can Tho University*



Lack of skills and data building techniques appears to challenge young professionals to cover environmental stories. This workshop shows great efforts from the organizers to fill this gap. I have engaged in the MESA Project for almost 4 months and have been learning useful techniques introduced by the trainers. I am looking forward to the upcoming exciting activities from the MESA.

**Dang Van Phap**  
*Last-year Student in Sociology, Can Tho University*



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