

## MRLG Knowledge Sharing and Dialogue Platform Feedback and Mobilization Workshop Report 21-22 January 2016



## 1. Introduction

As part of the Mekong Region Land Governance project (MRLG), the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) has been assessing the feasibility to design a regional land governance information platform to complement ongoing MRLG activities. Feedback emerging from the Exploratory Workshop in February 2015 galvanized a design mission to carry out an assessment of key actors and audiences, analyse existing information systems, engagement processes and institutional arrangements related to developing the land platform.

The design team found that although there were a number of information and data platforms in the region, few provided space for dialogue or linking national and regional experiences. The assessment showed that there was a need for cross-cutting analysis, and for targeted 're-packaged' information and solutions. Based on results of the diagnostic, the team designed and presented a draft platform concept to key stakeholders at the **Feedback and Mobilization Workshop** held in Vientiane on 21-22 January 2016.

The Mekong - Land Information, Knowledge and Engagement platform (M-LIKE) is designed to support an emerging community of practice by strengthening information sharing mechanisms, engaging with a wider and more diverse group of stakeholders, and facilitating regional dialogue amongst key reform actors in land governance.

The main objectives of the were to 1) get participants' feedback on the platform concept, 2) gather input into activities and implementation modes, 3) identify priority activities and, 4) gain commitments for collaboration in the platform.

This workshop report provides an analytical summary of participants' feedback, ideas, expectations and commitments to contribute to the platform. The report is structured by **key themes** harvested from workshop participants' feedback:

1. **Selling Point:** What is the added value of the platform?
2. **Mobilization:** How will the platform's target groups be engaged?
3. **Operationalization:** What are the priority implementation activities?
4. **Drive:** Who will contribute to the platform, and how?

The discussion notes from the Feedback and Mobilization Workshop, as well as the 2015 Exploratory Workshop report, are available on the [Wikispace](#).



## 2. Selling Point: What is the added value of the platform?

The workshop reiterated that a challenge for the platform is to avoid duplication of existing platforms within the current information ecosystem. The platform should be a 'meta platform', focusing on enhancing, linking with and adding value to the 50+ land governance web portals and websites. Participants emphasized that the platform should not simply aggregate and harvest information, but make use of available information to provide useful knowledge products for specific audiences.

Over the past 12 months, the **land information 'ecosystem'** has undergone a series of changes:

- The MRLG project, supported by SDC, the German Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and Luxembourg Development, has expanded significantly, growing to 31 activities across Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam (CLMV). MRLG supported the formation of new activities and partnerships through Learning and Alliance Building (L&A) working groups, Quick Disbursement Fund (QDF) and Innovation Fund (IF) activities.
- Publication of a series of country reports on the political economies of land governance across CLMV and on the Mekong Region as a whole, commissioned by MRLG and produced by a team led by the University of Sydney.
- Mekong Land Research Forum Repository was created as an online site pulling together key themes on land governance across the Mekong region. The site aims to bring research and policy closer together by distilling key messages and debates to inform policy reform. The site was commissioned by MRLG, developed by University of Sydney and is managed by Chiang Mai University.
- Land-related platforms continue to evolve, including Mekong Citizen, Open Development Mekong, One-Map Myanmar, SERVIR, Land Matrix Asia and Lao Decide.

A key point raised during the workshop is that the platform must be embedded in existing MRLG activities. **MRLG partners**, working on the 31 activities and projects currently supported by MRLG, were identified as the platform's first target group. This group of partners will be the first to generate solutions and knowledge products for M-LIKE. They also have existing partnerships with decision-makers, private sector and other actors which



should be built upon. The platform should build upon what partners are already doing, strengthen knowledge sharing between and amongst them and leverage and enhance their existing network linkages.

Key feedback on the added value of M-LIKE to the existing information ecosystem:

- **Connecting online and offline:** The web portal is just one component of the overall platform and should not stand-alone; it is part of an interconnected 'ecosystem' of different online and offline platforms and how they interface. Working groups highlighted that not everybody connects online, some target groups (i.e.- high level decision makers, farmer's groups, private sector) may prefer to communicate face-to-face. It is important to understand these preferences to ensure ownership of information and sustained use of the platform. There is a need to link online and offline activities by bringing reform actors together to share information through regional workshops and the web portal.
- **Learning and sharing experiences:** Participants agreed that M-LIKE should build upon the current set of MRLG partners. There are already 31 activities involving more than 100 partners. Providing both online and face-to-face opportunities to learn and share could be an initial entry point for the platform.
- **Open standards/open data:** The web portal should link to other data-driven platforms such as: Open Development Initiative, SERVIR, Land Observatory, Land Matrix, One Map, Lao Decide, Mekong River Commission, Mekong Citizen etc. M-LIKE should ensure that systems it develops adhere to open data and open source standards. In addition, participants were mindful that crowdsourcing information does not always work well; MRLG partners will be the first contributors to the platform.
- **Knowledge Products:** Priority knowledge products disseminated through the platform should be 're-packaged' outputs using spatial relationship information sourced from existing platforms (for example: interactive maps showing location and landscapes of smallholder farmers, land investments, poverty assessments, census data).
  - The State of Mekong Land (SOL) series was agreed to be the platform's flagship product, with intermittent 'supporting products' coming out every six months.
  - The SOL series would be released every two years; participants agreed that 'supporting products' could focus on a salient land topic to generate discussion and mobilize a community of land practitioners. See 3.1 'State of Land Report' for further details.
- **Making research results more usable:** The platform would enable academia to contribute outside their own sphere. The platform would be a trusted re-user of available information, presenting and packaging existing research results through its knowledge products - particularly research conducted or curated by MRLG partners (i.e.- Mekong Land Research Forum).
- **Changing Discourse and Behaviours:** M-LIKE will create a culture of wanting to share and connect better with others: there's a need for better use of data, and allowing others to re-use organizations' existing data. The platform moderator/ facilitator would play a role in developing certain land governance narratives, aimed at changing the discourse, reaching those who are not usually dialoguing, and ultimately influencing policy and practice.
- **Knowledge Brokering:** Adding value to existing information would be useful in the form of knowledge brokering; the platform team would link actors across different countries working on similar land issues, and respond to requests for land information.



## 2.1 Mobilization: How will the platform's target groups be engaged?

Key Feedback on engaging platform target groups:

### **Farmer Associations:**

The workshop generated several ideas for engaging and implementing activities with farmer associations. See section 3.3 'Engagement with Farmer Groups' for more detail on priority activities.

Questions on how to involve **farmer associations** in the platform sparked debate on how best to engage local groups - a key question was whether this group should be an MRLG 'strategic partner' or a target group. Continuing on the topic of self-determination emerging from the Exploratory Workshop, participants discussed how to better incorporate farmers' voices into the platform, and how to reach those farmers who are not in an organized group.

### **MRLG Partners:**

MRLG partners were identified as the initial target group for M-LIKE. MRLG has partners (reform actors) working for change in four countries, ranging from country-specific land coalition groups, local civil society organizations, international non-governmental organizations, research institutes, universities, land departments and line ministries. Workshop participants emphasized that MRLG partners should be the initial target group, but engaging in cross-sectoral dialogue should be a priority once the platform is more fully established. Participants acknowledged that it is often difficult to engage with the **private sector** and access to high-level **decision makers** can be limited.

As the main target group for the platform, this group is interested in sharing experiences - challenges and successes - and learning from other reform actors. The group expressed an interest in information exchange both through the web portal and offline through regional dialogue forums. MRLG partners would play a key role in developing knowledge products for the platform.

MRLG partners expressed a strong interest in receiving **training and support** to produce quality knowledge products to contribute to the platform. Examples: write-shops, guidance on producing policy briefs, training materials, how to create infographics, case study templates, good practice 'two-pagers', manuals and communication tools.

### **High Level Decision Makers:**

The platform could support development of a wider set of products on-demand, such as short policy briefs aimed at certain levels or 'champions' within governments. Participants noted that **informal channels** are often most effective for engaging high-level decision makers, and that anecdotal evidence and field visits would be useful in bringing real-life evidence to decision-makers' own eyes.

Participants also suggested identifying Policy-Implementation Gaps (P.I.Gs), to understand where policy makers have gaps in their knowledge, then tailoring products to address these gaps. Re-packaging and bringing government research back to government could be a useful strategy for engaging this group.

### **Media Influencers:**

This group extends beyond traditional journalism, encompassing freelance journalists, bloggers and social media 'personalities'. Strategies have to be country-specific: social

media is a big opportunity to influence the debate, reaching beyond current actors and shaping the prevailing discourse. Priority for next six months is to identify key media influencers, and refine a strategy for engaging with them.

Part of media strategy should be development of narratives, not just distributing data, but delivering **stories** that are aimed at influencing. Delivering a crafted message or story to policy makers via social media, for example, can be an effective method. Working on those “stories” should be part of the platform’s media engagement strategy.

**Private Sector:**

Participants recognised the difficulty of engaging private companies with land-based investments - besides companies who already have social responsibility embedded as part of business operations. Working groups suggested the platform could support reaching out to private sector groups rather than expecting them to participate in NGO activities. Group discussions recommended aligning the platform’s engagement with emerging MRLG private sector activities and plans, including source country analysis and L&A working groups.

### 3. Operationalization: What are the priority implementation activities?

The workshop identified four **priority areas** for activities over the next 12 months:

1. Designing and developing a web portal initially targeted to support learning and sharing amongst MRLG partners.
2. Developing a State of Land Report and accompanying knowledge products.
3. Engaging with farmer groups/associations.
4. Engaging with media influencers.

Engaging with high-level policy makers and the private sector should evolve as MRLG’s strategies for these target groups become more clear.

#### 3.1 State of Land Report

The State of Land Report (SOL) is seen as a key flagship product of M-LIKE and MRLG. The SOL would collate and synthesize data and analysis that is being carried out by a range of organizations in order to create a more comprehensive overview of land governance issues in the Mekong. This was seen as a complementary product in relation to what other platforms and organizations are currently producing.

**Target Audiences:** The main targets for the SOL would be reform actors in general. It is envisaged that a number of products can contribute to and be derived from the State of Land to inform and engage different audiences.

The **added value** of the SOL report is to:

- Provide visibility for partner information and data around core land areas and themes;
- Support partners to collect/analyze information around core questions and issues;
- Use as a flagship product to generate dialogue, engage and inform core audiences and target groups, including repackaged research briefs, infographics, stories and awards, engaging press and media, and stimulate online dialogue; and

- Provide opportunities for other parts of MRLG and the platform to engage. This could be through developing a space on the M-LIKE Web Portal, using products from the SOL in engagement activities, or allowing stories and data generated from MRLG partners to be used in the collection.

**Content areas:** The SOL would include both quantitative and qualitative information. It will include some indicators (statistical) and identify some trends, and future projections on what is likely to happen. It will also include stories of good practice, farmers' experiences and other narratives to bring life to the issues around land. The need to have a thematic focus on core land topics was also raised, to focus the report as well as create interest in topical areas.

**Concerns and issues:** The time it takes to produce a high quality and accurate SOL will be about 18-24 months. There is a need to release supplementary knowledge products at regular intervals to sustain momentum. In addition, there were concerns that data and information would be out of date after 18 - 24 months. Another concern was whether or not to get government buy-in or seek approval for such a product, and would the type of content included in the SOL be acceptable. For example, the FAO publishes State of Forests, stimulating a lot of discussion in Laos. For this reason we need an institution that is strong enough to sustain this kind of discussion.

**Partners and resources:** It was agreed that putting together the SOL will take considerable resources and there is a need for clear roles and responsibilities:

- MRLG will take the lead in process facilitation and organization.
- CDE/University of Berne expressed interested in providing overall scientific quality and back stopping.
- Need to identify and hire a dedicated scientific editor (part-time).
- Other partners who are committed from the workshop include: FAO, ODM, RCSD Research Forum, Servir, Landportal.

**Action Plan for platform content**

Priority Area	Feb - March	April - May	June -Dec
<b>State of Land Report</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SOL profile writing (creating a concept note).</li> <li>• Reaffirm contribution commitments.</li> <li>• Institutional discussions (decide who takes the lead)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MRLG Regional Land Forum</li> <li>• SOL Launch Meeting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop agreements with partners</li> <li>• Put up initial announcement about the SOL</li> </ul>

### 3.2 The M-LIKE online platform

The **Web Portal** priority activities<sup>1</sup> are to incorporate feedback from the workshop and ‘Lean Discovery’ process to build a Minimum Viable Product over the next few months. During the workshop, participants prioritized content and functionality of the web portal, and identified key concerns.

**Priority Target group:** agreed that the portal or on-line platform should focus initially on MRLG partners. There was a clear call to improve sharing and learning amongst the number of activities currently going on within MRLG. From there other targets could be engaged.

**Priority Content:** Toolkits, how-to guides, and manuals, and ‘two-page’ summaries of good practice were top priorities for M-LIKE portal content. News digests, policy briefs, resource links and spaces for conversations on land were identified as priorities for later phases of the web portal.

**Priority Functionality:** Ability to link content to original source, dialogue space, and translated pages in CLMV languages were top priorities for functionality. A ‘Question and Answer’ area, analytics for portal user profiles, news digests and social media sharing were identified as priorities for later phases.

**Linkages to other platforms:** There are a number of ways the platform can link to and add value to other platforms. M-LIKE could link existing resources to help people quickly navigate around the various platforms. It can also contribute to other platforms, for example providing stories to Mekong Citizen.

**Key Concerns:** Security and anonymity was the most prevalent concern. Copyright issues, governance, staffing and resources, maintaining high quality standards, institutionalizing the portal and ensuring sustainability were amongst the top concerns.



<sup>1</sup> The web portal design and development will be carried out by the MAQE team.



### Action plan for the web portal

Priority Area	Feb - March	April - May	June - July	Aug - Dec
<b>Web portal design and development</b>	Concept note revised. Lean Discovery. Budget and proposal. Taxonomy & translation (ODI) MRLG budget approval.	Online discussion on the land portal Possible start designing web portal Land Matrix new interface Land Matrix Asia new pages Land pages published (ODI)	Possible web portal launch	M-LIKE Portal Meeting

### 3.3 Engagement with Farmer Groups

**Activities:** It was agreed there is an opportunity to engage more actively with farmer organizations and groups. Farmer associations are emerging as a growing voice in CLMV countries and there are opportunities to work with them, both to learn what is happening on the ground and to provide information and awareness around land issues. A proposal focusing on building capacity for farmer networks to document good practices addressing land issues was suggested as a way forward.

Some of the activities identified included:

- Training and capacity building for farmers to document good practice cases to share new ways of dealing with land issues. MRLG has a role to play in advising farmer groups, drawing on past examples to highlight good cases. In Laos alone, there are at least five or six good cases that could be presented to the government. In Myanmar, an example was communities getting compensation for a railway project.
- Outputs produced through partnerships with farmer networks would be shared at regional meetings; this could be integrated with an Awards Ceremony for farmer groups that have documented good practice cases.
- Person-to-person contact is important for this group: the platform has a role in facilitating study visits / exchanges for farmers in neighbouring countries, providing advice and support to produce documentation which can be shared through the platform - including the M-LIKE web portal. However, offline contact is crucial; the portal may just be used by advocates working with farmer groups.
- Farmer groups need to be involved in MRLG activities such as the regional forum, stakeholder consultations, etc.



- Mapping to see which groups are where, and to strengthen alliance building amongst networks. The platform could harness this group’s emerging political power to bring farmers into discussions with high-level decision makers.

**Concerns and issues:** concerns were raised in three areas. First, the question of how to fund such an initiative or partnership. There is a need to find the right mechanism within MRLG for such activities and partnerships. Options included submitting proposals to the MRLG Innovation Fund or developing a partnership with Asian Farmers Association (AFA) where a direct contract could be made to support activities in CLMV countries as they are active there. Second was the need to identify the right type of farmer groups. Often farmers within large associations do not face land problems; this raises the question of how the network can address the issues of smallholders, indigenous groups and marginalized farmers. Finally, there is a need to develop two-way communication strategies between farmer groups/associations and MRLG partners.

**Partners:** There is clear interest from AFA, ILC and others to form a strategic partnership. AFA has mentioned that through the IFAD supported MTPC there are opportunities for cost-sharing and resource mobilization.

**Action plan for Farmer Associations**

Priority Area	Feb - March	April - May	June - July	Aug - Dec
<b>Farmer Associations activities</b>		Initial farmer proposal workshop (develop a concept) for training and capacity building.	Joint proposal development workshop.	Draft farmer proposal. Finalize and submit proposal to MRLG. Approval of proposal (Activities begin in 2017).

**3.4 Engagement with Media Influencers**

Media influencers can be characterized as motivated independent journalists, social media personalities (on Facebook, Youtube or Twitter in some cases) and ICT innovators who have a keen interest in social justice and environmental issues. MRLG will engage these people, along with targeted traditional media. Media influencers are keen to form new networks and document cases and practices – their incentive is their interest in the issues. They can be useful in influencing debates both within CLMV countries, and to a wider audience.

The priority for the next six months is to identify “media influencers” and to refine a strategy for dealing with media in the various countries (different between Vietnam and Myanmar, for example). There are opportunities for doing this at a regional level, for example working with Mekong Partnership for the Environment (MPE), who has a network of environmental journalists. For work at the regional level to be successful, part of media strategy should be development of narratives, not just distributing data but delivering fully formed stories, i.e. delivering a crafted message/ story that we are trying to ‘sell’. Working on those “stories” should be part of media engagement.

## 4. Drive: Who will contribute to the platform, and how?

Feedback from workshop participants highlighted the need to define the ‘drive’ behind the platform, particularly the web portal, and to clearly delineate roles and responsibilities of key M-LIKE partners.

Key Feedback on platform resourcing:

M-LIKE must be **adequately** resourced from its inception to sustain momentum, ensure content is of high quality, and that the platform continues to be useful and relevant for target groups. Resources should be flexible and responsive to emerging needs of the platform.

Need a **dedicated, full-time moderator or facilitator** within MRLG who is responsible for the overall platform. Responsibilities would include: re-packaging data and information into usable materials targeting specific audiences, providing knowledge brokering services (linking reform actors, responding to requests for land-related information) and ‘pushing’ certain conversations and narratives in dialogue forums.

**Translation into CLMV languages:** Participants agreed that translation into local languages is extremely important, but also resource-intensive and would depend on National Platform Facilitators/ Mobilizers in each country to assist. The first step is to identify which content is priority for translating and focus on this content in phase one, before broadening the scope of the web portal.

Clarity of **expectations and commitments** of partners: content generated by MRLG partners will be the first contributions to the platform. Partners should be assisted by the M-LIKE team to create high quality materials. MRLG partners will participate in regional dialogue, develop knowledge products such as video, manuals, how-to guides, policy briefs, communication tools, case studies, lessons learnt from field experiences.

See table below for detail on key partners’ roles, responsibilities and expectations:

	Advisory Team	Contributing Partners
<b>Purpose</b>	Provide advice for synergy, efficiency, sustainability of the platform.	Contribute to the mission of M-LIKE.
<b>Partners currently on board</b>	CLICK (Laos), AFA (regional), CDE (Laos), ODI (regional), RCSD (regional), Land Portal (global), Land Matrix Asia (regional).	VFI (Laos), RECOFTC (Thailand and regional), LANDA (Vietnam), LMDP within GIZ (Laos), ILC (Asia regional).
<b>Roles and Responsibilities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Ensure coordination and linkages.</li> <li>● Engage in design process.</li> <li>● Facilitate national level activities.</li> <li>● Represent specific constituency.</li> <li>● Provide information and expertise – what technology to be used, making use of existing platforms.</li> <li>● Feedbacks – is it efficient, is it reaching its objective?</li> <li>● Ensure quality of content (and diversity).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● To provide content.</li> <li>● Share experiences.</li> <li>● Provide feedback during development of M-LIKE.</li> <li>● Contribute knowledge, expertise and networks.</li> <li>● Create a profile of organizational strengths and needs.</li> </ul>

<b>Expectations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure platform is relevant.</li> <li>• Linking – regional, national and global systems (State of Land co-production).</li> <li>• Participation in dialogue – try to link with ASEAN level.</li> <li>• Develop shared standards and tools.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capacity development of partners - receive training, write-shops, templates and support to produce quality materials (writing, case studies, infographics etc.).</li> <li>• Participate in offline knowledge exchange at a regional level.</li> <li>• Opportunity to give ongoing input into M-LIKE development.</li> <li>• M-LIKE would act as a knowledge broker to help partner and link with other organizations or donors.</li> <li>• Compensation for time / opportunities to receive sub-contracts from M-LIKE to provide services.</li> </ul>
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## 5. Conclusions and action points

Overall, the Feedback and Mobilization Workshop reinforced the need for a regional land platform, demonstrated that the M-LIKE platform is appreciated by partners and is an important new mechanism of MRLG. Some of the key messages that came from the workshop included:

- **Partners are willing and interested to get involved in the platform** - partners showed sustained interest and commitment. This was evidenced in the partners committing to M-LIKE activities as well as proposing potential areas for cost-sharing.
- **The platform is ambitious** - while a core activities have been identified, there is still concern that even this will take more human and financial resources than exist in the current budget.
- **The right combination of people need to be hired for the platform** - the platform will need a dynamic set of people to facilitate and coordinate the platform. As mentioned in the exploratory workshop - platforms are usually run by champions and are difficult to run through a technocratic approach.
- **Platform content needs to be solutions-based** - the most useful materials for partners are knowledge products presenting solutions for addressing land issues. Partners expressed strong interest in receiving support to create materials and tools generated from their activities to share via the platform.
- **The platform should be a space for learning and sharing amongst platform partners/operators** - participants once again expressed appreciation for the opportunity to share and exchange experiences around facilitating and organizing platforms. This should be better emphasized in future meetings.

**Priority next steps for M-LIKE** over the next 6 months.

<b>What</b>	<b>When</b>	<b>Who</b>
Workshop report, update wikispace and thank you to all participants	February 4	Michael/Kate/Justine
Finalize concept note and TORs for the National Facilitators	February 9	Michael
Send concept note out to Advisory Group	February 9-16	Michael
State of Land Report concept note	February 15	Christian/Michael
Lean Discovery note for web portal finalized	February 15	MAQE
Regional forum meeting; - further discussion with networks groups on LIWG	February 20-22	Kate/Michael
MRLG budget approval	March	MRLG Board
World Bank Land Group Meeting – potential to present on linkages between Landportal, MRLG and Opendev	March	Terry/Michael/Laura
Begin design of the web portal	April	MAQE
Initial Farmer proposal Workshop	May	AFA, Phout, Christian
MRLG Regional Land Forum	May	MRLG
SOL Launch Meeting	May	Christian/Michael?
Land pages published (ODI)	May	ODM
Linked Open Data Meeting - Land Portal, MRLG, ODM	May	Laura, Stephen, Terry, Michael/MRLG
Draft farmer proposal/submission	June/July	Phout, AFA, Michael
M-LIKE portal launched	July	