



Lens on Mekong Regional Workshop

Basic information

Date: 15th – 17th Feb 2019 (3 full days)

Venue: Can Tho and Tra Vinh

Participants: Youths (students and young professionals aged 18 – 25 years old) from ASEAN countries of the Greater Mekong Subregion (Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam)



Background

We are 6 youths from ASEAN (Singapore, Philippines, Myanmar and Vietnam). Following an ASEAN regional workshop, “Protecting the Mekong Delta Environment” at Can Tho city, Vietnam this June 2018, our group realised that in the midst of trying to tackle environmental challenges, there is a lack of understanding of the personal narratives of local farmers at the heart of these challenges and their hope for the future. In the face of adversities, generations of Vietnamese farmers have always responded with resilience. Their courage, strength, and wisdom out of these experiences are valuable stories and inspiration for us especially as youths looking toward a thriving future even with new environmental challenges.

Objectives

The workshop has several aims.

1. To document inspiring stories of Vietnamese farmers and empower younger generation with their courage, strength and wisdom. Our videos will focus on how the farmers overcome adversities and thrive in the midst of this environmental degradation.
2. To provide a platform for city youths to interact with Vietnamese farmers and connect them on a personal level. This personal connection will serve to inspire youths to become more mindful global citizens acting for the common good.
3. To educate youths on the challenges of environmental issues and encourage critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

4. To impart soft skills to youths – the ability to empathize, story-tell and interpersonal skills.
5. To inject hope in climate change issues as we explore several Vietnamese government initiatives and how locals innovate in farming techniques to adapt to environmental degradation.

Workshop Description

The workshop has two main parts. The first part involves lectures and panel discussions to understand the socio-economic and ecological importance of Mekong Delta, its environmental challenges and current solutions. This will be held in FPT university, Can Tho. The second part involves understanding the locals and creating a video that communicates their story and compel action that help them realise their aspirations. We invited a professional video maker team (School of Slow Media) to guide participants on videomaking and also impart soft skills. Participants, in their teams, will create a short video from the perspective of the locals, touching on their personal lives, relationship with Mekong Delta, and their adaptations to environmental issues.

Schedule

Day	Time	Activity	Venue	Remarks	Learning Outcomes
Day 0 14.02	Morning	Arrival of participants	HCM airport		16 participants (8 regional / 8 FPT)
	1300 - 1700	Bus to Can Tho City	On route		
	1700 - 1800	Check in and free time	West Hotel	(Booked)	
	1800 - 2000	Dinner together and informal get to know each other	City Centre	Invite 8 FPT students to join	
	2000 onwards	R&R	West Hotel / Restaurant/Pub setting	All participants together by this time	Check-In Quick Introductions Brief Expectation Setting Orientation with Circle Practice
Day 1 15.02	0730 - 0815	Breakfast	West Hotel		
	0815 - 0900	Transport to FPT University	On route		
	0900 - 0930	Check in + the feed	FPT Uni	Conducted by SSM. FPT students join in.	Checkin: group alignment to the workshop Expectation setting Reminder on Practices: Circle + Digital Detox
	0930 - 1030	Mindfulness Practice			Mobilizer - mindfulness practice using different senses Guided Meditation Sensory Meditation - Chocolate / tin foil?
	1030 - 1150	Story Universe	FPT Uni	Conducted by SSM. FPT students join in.	Narrative mindfulness, becoming aware of the "invisible network of support"
	1150 - 1200	Brief for Sensing Lunch	FPT Uni		Instructions for participants Give notecard with question: "Am I really listening?" OR "Am I telling stories?" Reminder on what time we will start next segment

	1200 - 1300	Sensing Lunch	FPT Uni		Spending a portion of lunch time in observation (mindful awareness of the surroundings, practice suspending judgment)
	1300 - 1330	Lecture 1: Introduction + Impact of climate change on socio-economy	FPT Uni	Dr. Le Anh Tuan (Prof from CTU)	
	1330 - 1400	Lecture 2: Impacts on ecology (fishes), erosion, subsidence, pollution	FPT Uni	Dr. Nguyen Huu Thien (Freelance consultant)	
	1400 - 1500	Panel discussion	FPT Uni	Song Lin	Get participants to prepare questions to ask before the workshop. In circle, including the lecturers. Conversation back and forth and a circle listening. Options: Circle format or Fishbowl format
	1500 - 1530	Tea break	FPT Uni		
	1530 - 1545	Mobilizer	FPT Uni	Conducted by SSM	
	1545 - 1615	Daily Media / Scene Observation	FPT Uni		
	1615 - 1630	Project Brief	FPT Uni		
	1630 - 1700	HCS	FPT Uni		
	1700 - 1730	Pre-production teach	FPT Uni		
	1730 - 1800	Break	FPT Uni		Host yourself
	1800 - 1900	Dinner	FPT Uni		
	1900 - 2030	Pre-production facilitated team time	FPT Uni	Conducted by SSM	Work on/complete Creative Brief Storyboard Fantasy Spirals (individual and for the doc participants) Shot list Presentation of the team's briefs
	2100 onwards	Return to hotel to rest	West Hotel		
Day 2 16.02	0700 - 0800	Breakfast / Hotel Check Out	West Hotel		
	0800 - 1015	Bus to Tra Vinh Check-in + the feed Pre-production II Group spiral	On route	FPT students to meet at West Hotel	Review of the pre-production materials Recommendation: Do activities on last 30 minutes of bus ride

	1015 - 1045	Hotel Check in	Gia Hoa Hotel 2	Not booked yet. Will do so once FPT Uni participants are confirmed.	
	1045 - 1130	Nice walk to TVU	On route		Sensitize to the environment Paying attention to details normally missed
	1130 - 1200	Quick Lunch	TVU		
	1200 - 1210	Arrive at TVU	TVU		
	1210 - 1230	Daily Media: Minka			
	1230 - 1245	Compassionate Gaze			Understand/experience attunement
	1245 - 1330	Compassionate Communication teach + activity			Teach: Activity: Needs note cards
	1330 - 1400	Production teach	TVU	Conducted by SSM	Empathy shadowing Production basics Production tips
	1400 - 1430	Bus to site	On route		Production tips / Q&A
	1430 - 1800	Production time	Mỹ Long Nam, Cầu Ngang District	Interviewing farmers and filming	To anticipate: Might have to pre-arrange (but not forced) participants as the people in the area might not be in a public space and open to engagement Inspirational arrival / send-off (first 5 minutes)
	1830 - 1900	Bus to TVU	On route		
	1900 - 2000	Dinner	Tra Vinh City		Casual review of footages
	2000 onwards	R&R	Gia Hoa Hotel 2		
Day 3 17.02	0700 - 0800	Breakfast	Gia Hoa Hotel 2		
	0800 - 0845	Nice walk to TVU	On route	2km	
	0845 - 0900	Meditation			
	0900 - 0930	Check-in + the Feed	TVU	Conducted by SSM	
	0930 - 1000	Daily Media: River Changes Course			Criteria: Storytelling, editing, choice, decision-making, emotion
	1000 - 1015	Moving Sculptures Dance			One leads by touching the other person's limb, the other flows Switch partners

					Follow your partner with your eyes (no lead)
	1015 - 1100	Triangle Consulting			Verbalizing according to needs Using observations and feelings Assuaging
	1100 - 1130	Post-production teach			Putting stuff together Kuleshov effect Organizing into bins Explain Paper Edit
	1130 - 1700	Post production editing Lunch during edit (as a practice of hosting oneself)	TVU	Conducted by SSM	Organize Files Watch Footage Paper Edit Rough Cut Body Scan Meditation Export
	1700 - 1800	Presentation of films and story telling	TVU		
	1800 - 1900	Dinner	TVU		
	1900 - 2100	Debrief / Open Circle	TVU		
	2100 onwards	R&R	Gia Hoa Hotel 2		
Day 4 18.02	Morning	Departure to Can Tho/ Saigon Airport		Depend on flight/bus timings of participants	
<u>Acronyms</u> TVU – Tra Vinh University SSM – School of Slow Media					

Participants and Manpower

We accepted a total of 15 participants for this workshop – 6 participants from FPT University and 9 from the Greater Mekong Region. They are selected based on their responses to the application form questions. Participants are split into functional groups of 3.

In total, there were 23 people involved in this workshop, including 7 organisers and 1 accompanying Vietnam teacher. Below is the summary of the profile of the team.

Nationalities	No.
Singapore	1
Indonesian	1
Filipino	3
Myanmar	1
Cambodia	2
Japanese	2
Vietnamese	13

Accommodations

Non FPT students will be provided full accommodations for 4 nights (14/02/19 to 18/02/19). FPT participants will not be provided with accommodations for the first two days (14/02/19 -16/02/19) but may join the team at their own cost. Below are the accommodations and their details.

14th -16th Feb (Can Tho)	West Hotel Can Tho 88 Hai Bà Trưng, Tân An, Ninh Kiều Tân An Ninh Kiều Cần Thơ, Vietnam Cost: VND 840k per double room per night Status: Booked
16th -18th Feb (Tra Vinh)	Gia Hoa 2 Hotel 50 Lê Lợi, Phường 3, Trà Vinh, Vietnam Cost: VND 940k per double room per night Status: Booked

Interview site

The site that was selected is Mỹ Long Nam, Cầu Ngang District, Trà Vinh, Vietnam. We would like to work with the farmers in this small town. Reason being, the area is close to the coast and highly affected by saltwater intrusion as a result of sea level rise and land subsidence. Below are two maps displaying the area that we will be working in.

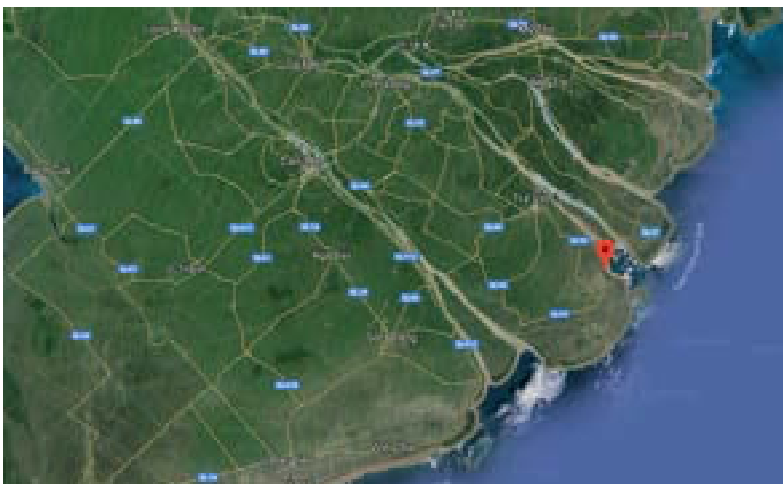


Figure 1. Location of field site (zoomed out).

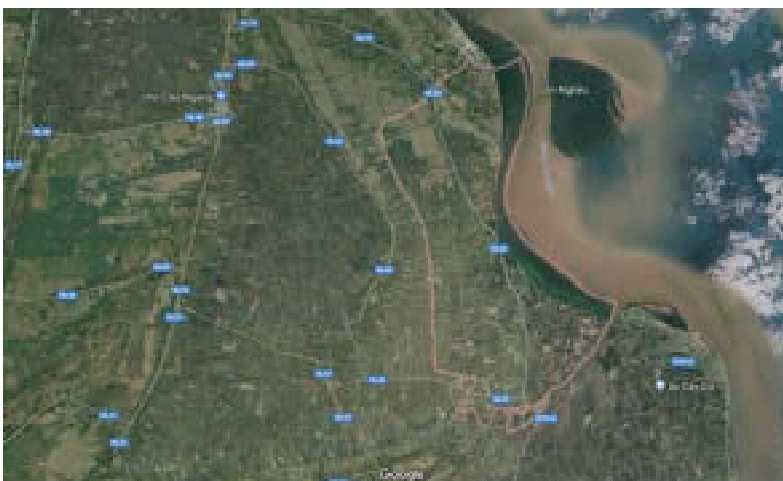


Figure 2. Location of field site (zoomed in).

HERE IT COMES!

Day 0



Figure 3&4. Dinner at a restaurant on day 0. Getting hyped up for our amazing time together!

Day 1



Figure 5. Preparing for empathy exercises



Figure 6. Lectures on environmental issues in Mekong delta conducted by renowned experts.



Figure 7. Before you make videos, you got to watch videos.



Figure 8. Planning storyboard.

Day 2

After a long and bumpy ride from Can Tho, we reached our field site which is Tra Vinh.



Figure 9,10,11&12. Village near the coast of Tra Vinh city. Wide varieties of crops grown here from rice to vegetables to shrimps. You can tell that the area is really dry, mud cracks are omnipresent.



Figure 13. Teams split ways to visit the locals and learn about their stories.



Figure 14. They treated us to some food and beer at the end of the day.

Day 3



Figure 15 - 20. Post production. Time to tidy up the videos!

Day 3 – Final showcase!

We invited locals (they are seated at the first row) to join us in the final showcase. Besides explaining the story behind their videos, the teams also shared the challenges they faced while interacting with the locals. I was the emcee for the night.



Figure 21&22: Showcase time.



Figure 23 - 26. End of workshop. Look at all those happy faces!

Day 4



Figure 27. Time to bid farewell. BUT it's not a goodbye, it's a **"see you soon"**.

Extras



Figure 28. This is me with Takashi, a Japanese artist. He is on a 59-day exploration trip around South East Asia. He hangs his latex work in museums to create conversations about social and political issues. We are happy to have worked with him.



Figure 29. My beloved team.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Young Southeast Asia Leadership Initiative (YSEALI) and OG Department Stores for giving my team grants so that we can create this workshop. I thank School of Slow Media for partnering with us and helping us to plan for this workshop. They also helped us in facilitating and teaching soft skills to the youths. I thank NTU and FPT university for their support in our project, providing us with venues, logistics and any help that we need. I thank the participants for all the trust they have in us. I thank the locals for all the help, connections and translations they have provided me. It wasn't easy planning for this workshop because it was our very first time to Tra Vinh. Through connections, I met up with them during my recce trip and they brought me to farmers and assisted me in tons of administrative work like food, lodging and transport. Lastly, I thank my team for their passion and commitment. We are looking forward to creating more meaningful projects. Feel free to contact me for collaborations!



It's **NOT** the end.
Lens on Mekong continues...