

## Grantee information

### **Name of Grantee:** Toshiyuki Doi

He works as Senior Advisor to Mekong Watch, a Tokyo-based advocacy NGO, and researches at the Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia, Mahidol University in Thailand. Toshi's research interests include sociolinguistics and language in development.

### **Collaborators:**

- 1) Bampen Chaiyarak (API Year 2009), Research Officer, Ecology and Culture Study Group, Kingdom of Thailand;
- 2) Syvongsay Changpitikoun (API Year 2011), National Program Officer for Governance, Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women, United Nations, Lao People's Democratic Republic (PDR);
- 3) Leakhana Kol (API Year 2012); Freelance Researcher, Kingdom of Cambodia;
- 4) Satomi Higashi, Lao Program Director, Mekong Watch, Japan; and
- 5) Tomohiro Oh, Project Researcher, Research Institute for Humanity and Nature, Japan.

### **Project title:**

From stories to policies: Enriching discussions over key development issues through local verbal repertoires in three Mekong countries

### **Abstract:**

In this research project, we view the verbal repertoires of local community members, among them folktales, proverbs, and narrative accounts, as shared intellectual resources where the community's analysis over various development issues, especially from value, ethnical, and aesthetic perspectives, is deposited and expressed in ordinary and effective language. Such verbal performances, named in the project as "local verbal repertoires" or LVRs, can be developed into powerful tools to promote understanding and discussion over such critical concepts as "sustainable natural resources management", "inclusive development/benefit-sharing", and "gender reequity". They can also be utilized to complement and enrich these and other concepts, which are mostly of Western origin and are often presented in "abstract, analytical, objective, and scientific" English writing. More specifically, we will analyze LVRs collected through fieldwork in five locations in three countries, namely Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Thailand, to produce an annotated database and written report. A similar effort is being made in northeastern Thailand, where one of us has long documented stories of local communities to claim interconnectedness between the local environment and ways of life under the banner of "Eco-Culture". Such an initiative will be strengthened and shared with members from Cambodia and Lao PDR to capitalize a collaborative aspect of this project. We also believe that the project is in line with the API Community's mission to lead understanding and discussion over critical issues facing the Asia region.

### **Deliveries:**

- 1) A publically accessible digital archive of LVRs. Each LVR is annotated in English with relevant visuals, such as pictures and video clips; and
- 2) A booklet consisting of a synthetic chapter to report, among others, commonalities and differences in LVRs across the research sites, and the implications of the project, as well as a collection of representative LVRs.

Outputs:

- 1) Understanding and discussion of critical development issues will be promoted in publically accessible manners;
- 2) Existing initiatives in civil society in will be strengthened and shared with other civil societies in Asia;
- 3) Recognition of LVRs as viable intellectual resources that can be developed into awareness-raising tools will be obtained.