

# CAPACITY BUILDING ON WATER AND NATURAL RESOURCES IN SOUTH-EAST ASIA - BENEFITS FROM THE WANASEA PROJECT

Nguyen Vo Chau Ngan<sup>1\*</sup>, Truong Chi Quang<sup>1</sup>, Lim Ngoc Han<sup>2</sup>, Tran Thi Minh Thao<sup>2</sup>, Tran The Nam<sup>2</sup>, and Phung Diep Anh<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>College of Environment & Natural Resources, Can Tho University, VietNam

<sup>2</sup>International Relations Office, Can Tho University, VietNam

<sup>3</sup>International Relations Office, Vietnam Maritime University, VietNam

<sup>4</sup>Vietnam Graduate Academy of Social Sciences, VietNam

\*Email: [nvcngan@ctu.edu.vn](mailto:nvcngan@ctu.edu.vn)



## 1. INTRODUCTION

The project “Strengthen the production, management and outreach capacities of research in the field of **W**ater and **N**atural resources in **S**outh-**E**ast **A**sia” granted by Erasmus+ Programme (EU) for the period of 2018 - 2020.

The WANASEA consortium lead by University of Nantes and having other 14 partners from Denmark, France, Spain, Cambodia, Thailand, Vietnam.

The main purpose of the project is improve the cooperation between these states on Water and Natural Resources Management (WNRM) with details:

- Promote the multidisciplinary research;
- Foster an institutionally-supported research practice, which goes beyond pure academic research and contributes to the creation of new knowledge and to the understanding and treatment of contemporary problems as well;
- Help position universities as places for the production and transmission of knowledge, which are open to the world and interact regularly with public and private actors involved in any process of change.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> work package of the project aims to build the research capacity of students and young researchers on **W**ater and **N**atural **R**esources **M**anagement (WNRM) → launching the annual ASEAN Water Platform (AWP).

AWP is a 2-weeks research seminar and training event which brought together young researchers from all partners. Its main objective is increasing research capacity by learning new innovative methodologies, multi-disciplinary approach to solve complex problems, and by creating durable links between each other.

With same title of “Water and Its Many Issues - Methods and Cross-Cutting Analysis”, AWP was organized in Vietnam (2018), Cambodia (2019), ASEAN partners (2021, online form).

## Annual AWP Program

Year	Plenary sessions	Thematic workshops
2018	Session 1: Water resources changes - A great threat for sustainable development in the Mekong Basin Session 2: Global challenges for fisheries management & South-East Asia perspective Session 3: Holistic urban water resources management Session 4: An inquiry into the implementation of Phuoc Hoa Water project, Vietnam (video presentation) Session 5: Some examples about environmental and social challenges: Solid waste management and human impacts on deltas (video presentation)	Workshop 1: Risk management Workshop 2: Water management in an urban environment Workshop 3: Inputs of modeling for the analysis of saline intrusion in the Mekong Delta Workshop 4: Field research - Usage and management of the water resources in the context of change
2019	Session 1: What role for a development bank in the improvement of the urban water supply and sanitation services? The case of AFD in Asean Session 2: Using simulations to design evacuation strategies in case of flooding Session 3: Knowing and governing water Session 4: Valuation of ecosystem services of mangrove forests in Cambodia Session 5: Equitable, reasonable and sustainable use of water resources in Cambodia Session 6: Inland commercial fishing lot and mobile gear fishing in Tonle Sap lake Session 7: Evaluating the success and sustainability of community fisheries in Tonle Sap lake after fisheries reforms Session 8: Knowledge and development - From principles to practice	Workshop 1: Transboundary river management / water governance Workshop 2: Development of maritime policy in ASEAN and comparisons with the EU Workshop 3: Urban water risks: designing evacuation strategies in case of flooding with Agent-Based modeling and GAMA Workshop 4: Non-conventional water resources: Wastewater reclamation and reuse Workshop 5: Field research - Irrigation & agricultural management in Kandal Stung system Workshop 6: Modeling and simulation of water basin integrated management
2021	Session 1: Qualitative methodologies in social sciences Session 2: Sustainability of small-scale fisheries - Community based resource management approach in Cambodia, Vietnam and Bangladesh Session 3: Technology adoption in agriculture: Theory and application to irrigation technology Session 4: Water resources in the Mekong Delta Session 5: Bio-diversity versus climate change in the Mekong Delta Session 6: Restitution of inequalities and environmental changes Nexus project Key: Innovative Research Competition	Workshop: Qualitative methodologies in social science - Covid-19 as case study Workshop: Overview of Mekong river ecology and its relationships with people livelihood Workshop: Role of Mekong River Commission and research on transboundary water governance

## AWP Feedback

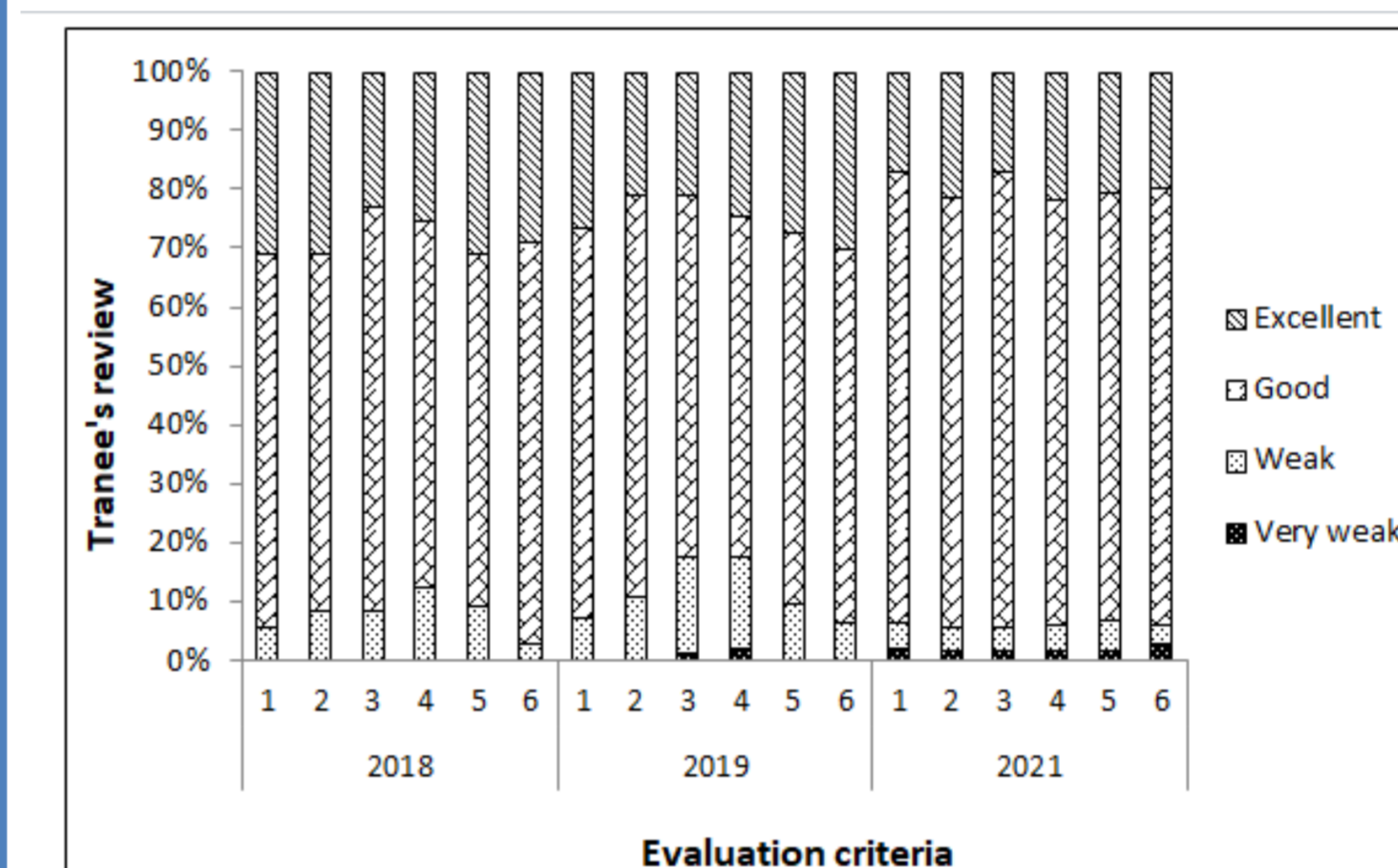


Fig 1. Feedback on plenary sessions (average record from all sessions)  
Criteria: (1) Relevance of subjects treated to general thematic of AWP, (2) Overall quality of presentations, (3) How enlightening was the presentation in terms of multi-disciplinary approach, (4) New scientific / methodological perspectives, (5) Quality of the interactions to speaker, (6) Quality of the organization of the plenary sessions

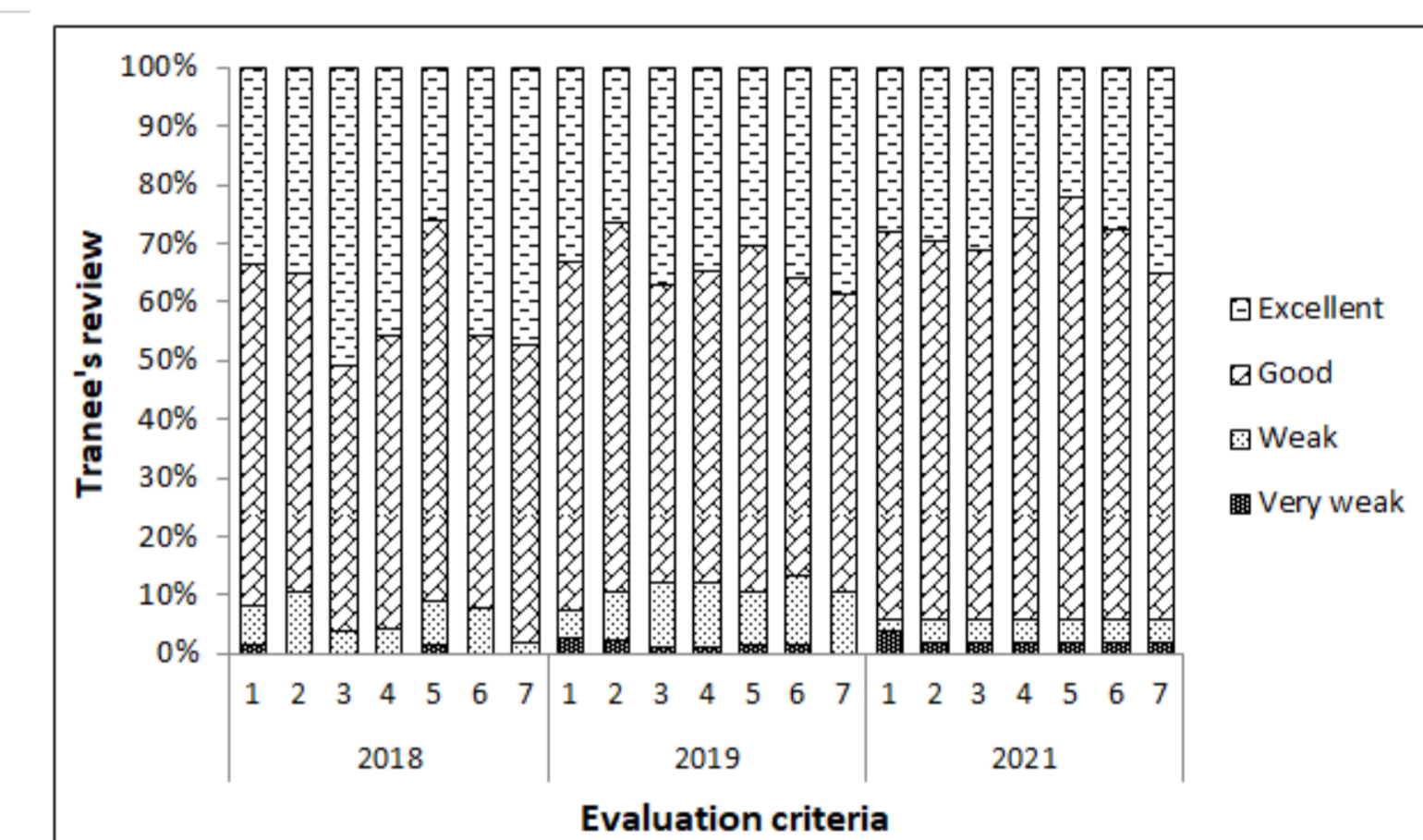


Fig 2. Feedback on thematic workshops (average from all workshops)  
Criteria: (1) Clarity of the program and objectives of workshop, (2) Consistency between the program and its objectives, (3) Dedication and availability of trainers, (4) Collective and participatory approach of the teaching, (5) Amount of personal work required, (6) Improve skills and abilities, (7) Relevant and useful knowledge

## 2. ASEAN WATER PLATFORM (AWP)

### AWP Structure & Supports

In structure, all AWP was organized along two complementary axes: Plenary sessions (the first 2 days), Thematic workshops (3 to 5 topics), and Workshop restitution at the last day.

- Plenary sessions: speakers from outside of project were invited to present their experiences, their point of view, or their project results which related to WNRM. The sessions were wound up with a round table that was open to organizations outside of the WANASEA consortium.
- Thematic workshops: putting together the team of trainers through the calls for candidates within the consortium so as to mix ASEAN and European. The training was wound up by a workshop summary session presented.

In supports:

- All participants received the AWP files: the program; reading texts; trainers' biographies; a contact list of the trainees in order to enable networking, etc.
- All the trainees and trainers participating were distributed by AWP labeled T-shirts (2018, 2019) and water bottles (2019).
- A certificate signed by the representative of host institute and Uni of Nantes.
- The plenary sessions were all captured on film. The filmed presentations *in extenso* for viewing on the WANASEA website with English subtitle.
- Filmed interviews were conducted with the speakers and those responsible for each workshop in order to present the goals and methodological tools used in the course. The video-clips are available on the WANASEA website.
- At AWP 2018, the IRD presentation in Vietnam placed at the disposal of the AWP a photographic exhibition about pollution by plastics in Vietnam

### AWP trainees & trainers profiles

The profile of the trainees:

- A female majority: 62% in 2018, 60% in 2019, 53% in 2021 of the trainees.
- A diversity of statuses and levels of education: master, master and teacher/development, doctor/doctoral student and teacher, researcher, researcher and teacher, teacher and development, development practitioner.
- High multi-disciplinarily fields of research: economics, RS&GIS, hydraulics - hydrology, environment, geography, urban planning; development studies.
- Institutional opening out in Vietnam and Myanmar made possible through AUF, IRD, UN, and CTU co-financing model.

## AWP Finding

Principal benefits	Noticeable criticisms
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shared expertise;</li> <li>• Disciplinary diversity; open-mindedness;</li> <li>• Gain in self-confidence (possibility of speaking in group/public);</li> <li>• Input of methodological tools (quantitative and qualitative);</li> <li>• International, regional and personal networking;</li> <li>• Linguistic enrichment.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of balance between theory and practice, better to integrate field visits to each workshop;</li> <li>• Limited space for opportunities to meet and network;</li> <li>• Should have sent PowerPoint presentations before the beginning of the training;</li> <li>• Speakers should deliver presentations slower for plenary sessions;</li> <li>• Weak quality of the catering;</li> <li>• Strengthening the selection by prioritizing the level of English for both trainees and trainers;</li> <li>• A stricter educational approach and greater open-mindedness from some of the trainers;</li> <li>• Too technical an approach;</li> <li>• Strengthening group work for the restitution;</li> <li>• Strengthening (trainers') knowledge about South-East Asia and develop case studies in Asia;</li> <li>• A better qualitative/quantitative balance;</li> <li>• Improving quality of Internet connection;</li> <li>• Better collaboration between trainers during the training.</li> </ul>

## AWP co-financing model

Support the mobility and cost of stay for AWP participants: AUF 16 trainees, IRD 10 trainees, UN 3 trainees, CTU 4 trainees.

Support for awards to AWP 2021's Innovative Research Competition: IRD.

## 4. CONCLUSIONS

Within the WANASEA framework, the training sessions and seminars AWP's gathered researchers, PhD candidates, professors and experts from various fields around the topics of WNRM. This rise awareness about the current transboundary issues in the Greater Mekong Sub-region regarding WNRM. In parallel, the project generated and disseminated new knowledge which goes beyond methodological exchange. Participants on these events had chance to develop their research skills and learn how to work together on complex issues such as WNRM. AWP offered an excellent opportunity to connect ASEAN and European students with ASEAN and European professors.

**Acknowledgement:** The authors gratefully acknowledge the fund support from the Erasmus+ programme of the European Commission on this study under the project WANASEA (Ref. 585771-EPP-1-2017-1-FR-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP).