



Rivers of Life

The Climate Connection

#TheClimateConnection
www.britishcouncil.org/climate-connection



Foreword

I am delighted to present ten stories of ten climate actions in the Mekong Delta as part of our Rivers of Life project.

These ten stories illustrate the impact and results of ten climate action projects, which were designed and delivered by 23 youth leaders and more than 100 high school students. The key feature of the projects has been the diversity of the approach of the youth leaders in raising awareness on climate challenges among high school students and the wider community, thus encouraging greater community engagement in climate actions.

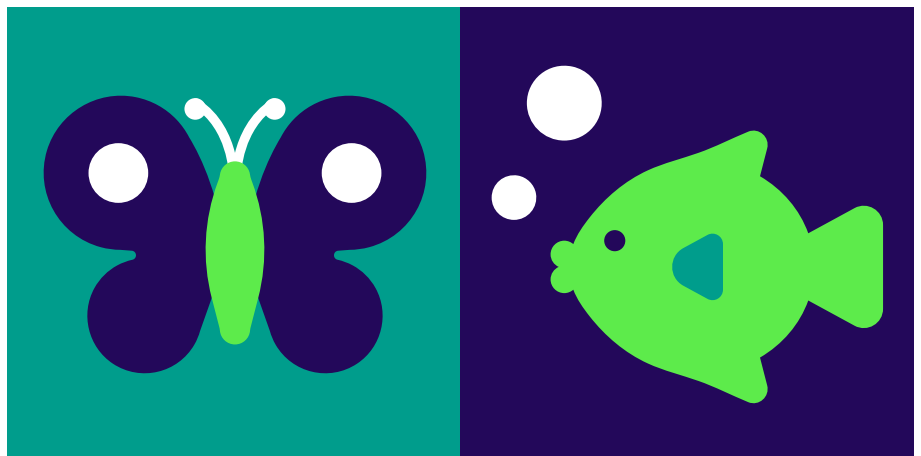
Through the integrated lenses of science, arts, communications and education, and with the support of scientists, artists and communication experts, the youth leaders and students innovatively conducted research, made cartoons and experimental films, created art works, developed educational materials and organised campaigns calling for stories, photos, songs about the rivers to increase awareness about climate challenges amongst young people and their communities.

I am very happy to see many young people in Viet Nam taking a very direct and inspirational role in climate actions. The British Council is happy to support this initiative and we look forward to the further continuation and growth of this approach.

On behalf of the British Council, I would like to thank Dong Thap Department of Education and Training for their collaboration in delivering the project, UK and Vietnamese environmental experts and academics, scientists, artists, communication experts, guest speakers, youth leaders, high school students and all stakeholders who actively and inspiringly contributed to the success of the project.

Join us in enjoying these stories!

Donna McGowan
Country Director
British Council in Viet Nam



Mặn (Saltwater)

In the present day, in the Vietnamese Mekong Delta, there are four close friends, who are none other than the legendary quartet: Rising Rice, Solid Soil, Whooshing Water, and the eldest brother Farmer. They live happily and, together, create the ivory-white rice grains whose fragrance is of the earth, the sky, the sun, and the wind.... Until one day, something strange happens.

One day, Rising Rice is under the weather: his leaf tips have turned white, are curled up, and dehydrated. He is weak, tired and unable to bloom. Solid Soil becomes desiccated and cracked, his whole body stifled and sullen, feeling like thousands of grains of salt are reluctantly stuck on its body. The garrulous and generous Whooshing Water, seeing the sorrow on his friends' faces, keeps wondering what he has done wrong when his liquid drops can no longer nourish Rising Rice and Solid Soil. The Farmer has no luck either, the soil's surface is full of cracks, water is lost, and now his rice is disappearing. When the sun is at its zenith, all four friends could finally have an extremely straightforward and sincere talk...'

Based on what Rising Rice and Solid Soil have said, can you guess what has happened? What can the Farmer and Whooshing Water do to ease the situation? A group of first-year students in Can Tho helped find the answer for these four friends.

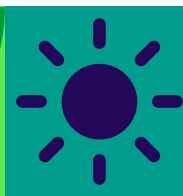
From April to September 2021, five first-year students with limited experience



Excerpt from the book The Story of Saltwater

of community work joined hands and created the project Mặn (Saltwater). The project focused on assessing the impact and social damage of salinisation during 2019–2020 and 2020–2021 to the livelihoods and life of the people in Ben Tre province. This is one of the six provinces in the Mekong Delta most affected by saltwater intrusion since 2015 until now. Project Saltwater has inspired the youth and young leaders to take action towards the environment and climate change.

'In the format of a meaningful scientific and communication project, Saltwater not only evaluates the impact of saltwater intrusion on the livelihoods of local people but also transforms this rather dry technical information into an e-book with a fresh and accessible style. After some time as a Saltwater project member, I myself have gained a lot of new knowledge, new experience, and especially new friends. I have become aware of my own role and responsibility in environmental issues and the ongoing climate change and am also working to spread a positive message to the community





to encourage sustainable actions towards the environment and society.' said Quynh Tram, a project member of Saltwater.

Adventurous, creative and daring to accept challenges - the group decided on a fresh and lively format and style for a visual report instead of opting for a more orthodox one. At this point, you might have worked out that the book *The story of Saltwater* is the visual report of the project Saltwater. Through the characters and their narratives, the signs of saltwater intrusion and its impact are gradually revealed. The story of Saltwater also portrays the difficulties of communities living in the area, from the beginning with a lack of information and experience to a future when they are equipped with the necessary knowledge to recognise and prevent such issues.

Through an approachable manner of storytelling and lively illustrations, a significant amount of scientific knowledge has become easier to understand and remember for readers of all ages. The book *The Story of Saltwater* - the project's visual report - has received positive feedback from its audience: 'The project's story is awesome and very meaningful.', 'Amazing! A storybook truly worth waiting for.'



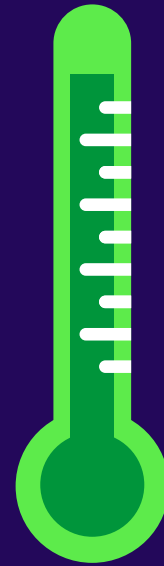
'Joining the Rivers of Life project, I was only a freshman with little experience of community action projects. The training sessions from the coaching staff helped me formulate many of my optimistic thoughts and develop my desire to contribute to the project's success' - Tran Nguyen Hoang Long, project leader of Saltwater.

While the project period of surveys and research may have ended, it has opened up new approaches for spreading values and raising awareness of saltwater intrusion through art and creativity for young people. Project Saltwater has inspired first-year students like Tran Nguyen Hoang Long to charge ahead and continue to be a leader, realising new initiatives.



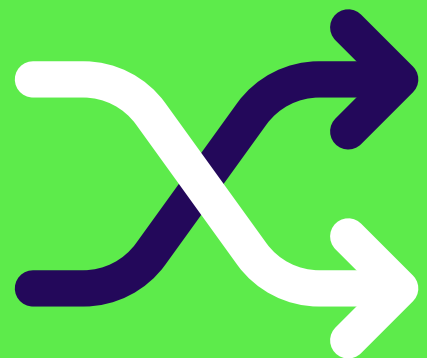
The project Saltwater uses research to study salinity in Ben Tre province, and presented the results in an innovative way through an illustrated story with personalised images of rice, soil, water and the farmer.

You can read The story of saltwater [here](#).

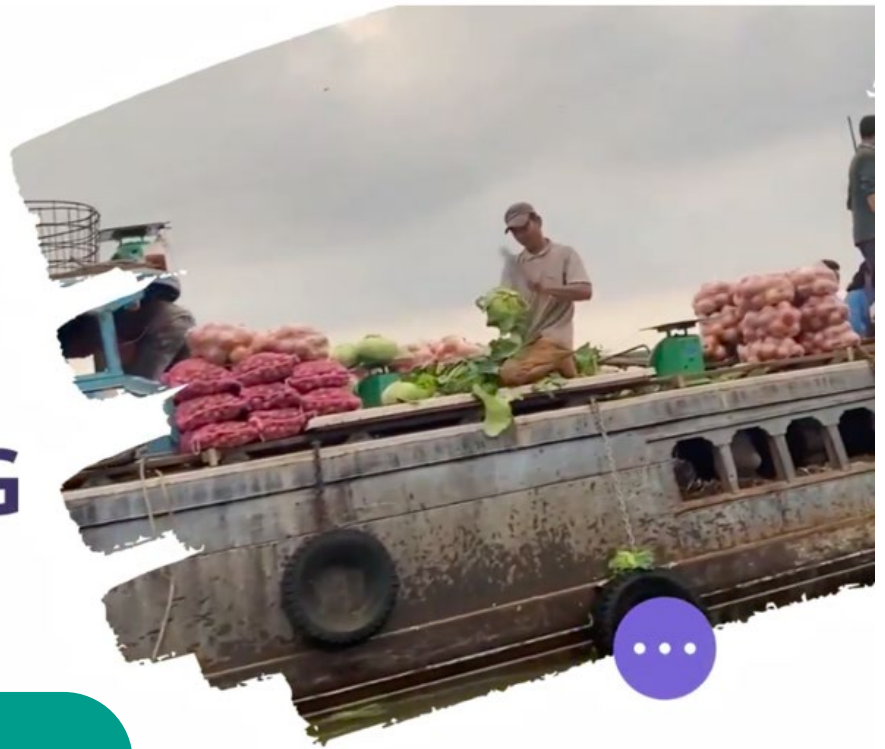


Project team members

Tran Nguyen Hoang Long
Tran Long Hai
Le Nguyen Quynh Tram
Nguyen Thi Thuy Vy
Phan Ky Trung



DỰ ÁN CHỢ NỔI CÁI RĂNG



Cai Rang Floating Market

The Mekong Delta is in a special position in terms of biodiversity, agricultural development, river trade, and tourism. However, climate change has had a considerable impact on this region. One particular case is that of Cai Rang Floating Market, Can Tho, one of the six most bustling, popular and distinctive floating markets of the Mekong Delta.

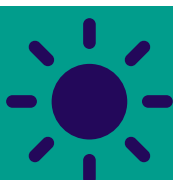
The sad fact is that every day, a huge amount of waste is dumped into the Can Tho River, on which Cai Rang Floating Market sits, from merchant vessels, tourist boats, and the people living in the area. With the hope of restoring a green, clean and beautiful floating market, a group of university and secondary students in Can Tho collaborated to create the Cai Rang Floating Market project. It has not only raised awareness among young people, through surveys, analysis and communication, but also changed the behaviour of the community who make a living and reside

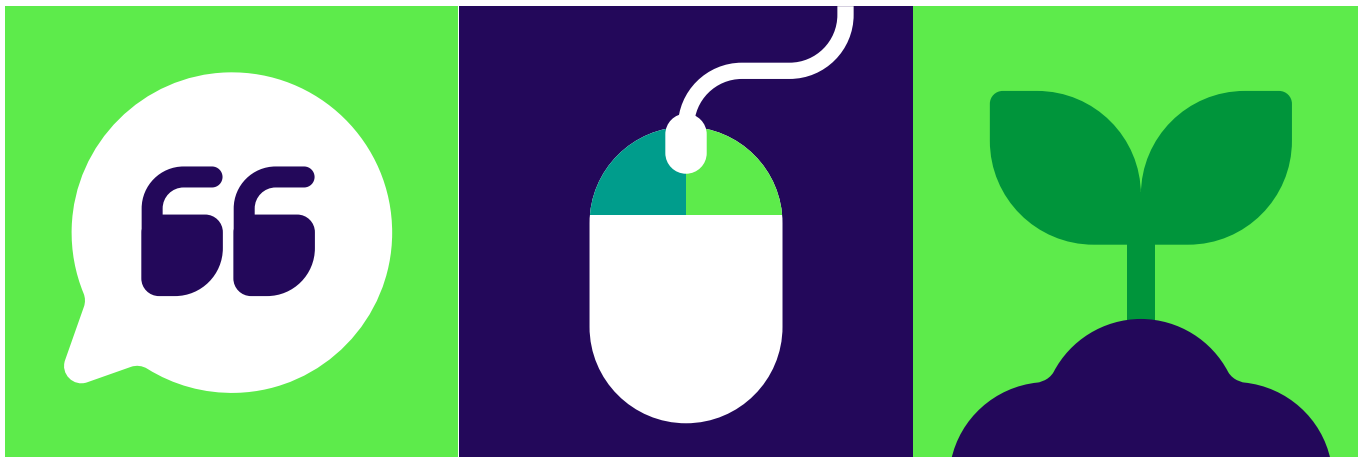
on or near the floating market of the need to reduce plastic waste and collect and manage waste more generally.

In March 2021, the project officially launched with three main activities:

- a series of training sessions for the 17 members of the project with experts in community, design, and statistics
- planning and developing the content and design of a survey form
- media partnerships to enhance communication efficiency and raise awareness among the community as well as young people.

Ton Nu Van Anh, a member of the project that formed a media partnership with the Cai Rang Floating Market project said: 'I am eager to experience the new environmental changes at Cai Rang Floating Market after the project is finished. Following our collaboration, I hope that future generations will have a better perspective and conscience towards the floating markets in particular, and the environment in general.'





Starting from a blank canvass, after just six training sessions, these students were able to design surveys, collect information, analyse the data and write reports themselves. The survey was well received, not only by the Can Tho students, but also by the merchants and residents of the floating market (42 responses), as well as tourists visiting the market (70 responses via online forms).

‘Many people care about environmental issues and understand what the project team is doing. The problem they are facing is the lack of tools for proper protection of the environment.’, said Hoang Son, a member of the media partnership with Cai Rang Floating Market project.

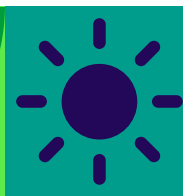
The visual report *The voice of the floating market* is clear evidence of the project members’ exceptional creativity, not only in collecting and analysing information through the survey, but also in illustrations and novel approaches, featuring ordinary conversations between imaginary grandfather and grandchildren boats, which did not burden the audience with statistics but rather was comprehensible and easy to understand.

‘Back in the day, the river of our floating market was very clean, it was also easy to bring passengers back and forth. Now when transporting, my oars and propellers keep getting caught in these plastic bags, it’s

terrible! There is rubbish everywhere we look...’, said the grandfather boat in the visual report *The voice of the floating market*.

‘It seems like people are becoming more aware of the problem, I heard them speaking about various ideas: reducing plastic, managing waste...! Examples include a 43% increase in awareness of the need for plastic reduction, 47% self-waste management, 10% improvement in waste collection policy. Although there is still a lot of rubbish in the floating market, I believe that people are becoming more conscious and will come up with interesting solutions to make river clean again, as it was before.’, said the grandchild boat with optimism in the visual report *The voice of the floating market*.

Perhaps this is the voice from the hearts of



The project is very interesting and informative. I hope that there will be more projects like this.', Chinh Hoang Van commented. Many others even offered to contribute: 'Is the project recruiting volunteers to pick up rubbish?' Tran Nguyen Bao Han asked.

A meaningful project, meaningful not only to the project team but to everyone.', said Ly Khanh Tran, a member of the Cai Rang Floating Market project team.

'I now have within me a true concern for the environment that makes me want to participate in other environmental projects.', said Tran Ngoc Minh, a member of the Cai Rang Floating Market project team.

people in the floating market when participating in the survey, and the optimism and environmental actions of the young people here. As a result, the visual report 'The voice of the floating market' received numerous likes, shares and comments from

the youth who are studying and living in the Mekong Delta.

The Cai Rang floating market project ended in October 2021. The eight-month period was not long, but long enough to spark inspiration, affection and responsibility towards the environment, laying a foundation for the involvement of young people in the Mekong Delta. This future generation have not only helped to evaluate the current situation of climate change in the past few months, they are also taking the right actions to effectively protect the environment and contribute to the sustainable development of the Mekong Delta in the future.

The project Cai Rang Floating Market uses research, surveys and interviews with the community about waste in this area. The project communicated their research results in an innovative way through an imagined conversation between a grandfather boat and his grandchild boat – the characters are familiar and echo those of the residents of the floating market.

You can read the illustrated story The voice of the floating market [here](#).

Project team members

Tran Long Hai
Tran Nguyen Hoang Long
Pham Cam Tu
Vo Thi Kieu Anh



The Way of Salt

With its unique experimental film approach, *The Way of Salt* evoked strong emotions among viewers; at the same time, introducing multi-dimensional perspectives on the harsh, aching reality of the salt marshes in the Mekong Delta.

The film is composed of two parts – *Memories of the River* and *Thirsty Land* – which were created using pre-recorded footage of the nature, the scenery and the daily life of the people of the Delta, combined with liberating experimental music, as well as the expressive and spontaneous movements of the dancers. Without aiming for a clear storyline or a specific message, *The Way of Salt* breaks down every single structure there is, while

vivid visual and audio languages blend together, creating a world of both familiarity and oddness, of reality, intimacy, and of haunting obscurity.

One viewer commented, ‘The water source is exhausted, layers of soil are salinised, barren, withered, struggling to nourish the growing rice plants... interlocked scenes, drum beats in harmony with the artist’s movement, everything is intertwined as if to express the voice of the land, of the water and of the people in the Mekong Delta. The film is a wake-up call, a message before the salinisation takes life away from everything and everyone.’



Still taken from The Way of Salt - Part 2: Thirsty Land





The Way of Salt is a project by four members: Le Nguyen Quynh Tram, Ngo Dao Hai Dang, Bui Nguyen Phuong Nhi, and My Nguyen, with the guidance of Mzung Nguyen, an independent filmmaker and visual artist. The aim of the collaboration is to raise awareness and encourage actions by local people, spreading the message about the current threat of salinisation in the Mekong Delta, and calling for more sustainable actions towards the environment and society.

Hai Dang said that avant-garde films remain quite new to a majority of people, and while this form of art is perplexing, it is also enticing and intriguing. 'Instead of providing a concrete message, the ambiguity and abstraction in its language opens up an infinite space for the viewers to reflect, contemplate and feel in their own ways. It questions and forces them to take a deeper look into the problems and come up with their own answers.'

'Approaching climate change issues through avant-garde films, or more generally speaking, art, can have a powerful impact. Through visual and aural setups, these works can bring a direct impact to human senses, and together with abstract images, they evoke and invite the viewers to think more', says one viewer.

An important thing to note is that all the visual materials were contributed by the community. Quynh Tram, the project leader, credits an exciting and inspirational call-for-submissions campaign. Within just one month, the team was able to gather many precious footage and images from various sources, ranging from individuals and organisations to local newspapers and radio channels, as well as reporters and editors.

'For a community project, the most important thing is that it comes from the community.' Hai Dang said that the highlight of The Way of Salt is its ability to powerfully mobilise, connect and radiate from the very beginning, everyone can get involved in the film-making process and become a part of the final result – 'a meaningful journey of collective creativity and community engagement.'

Looking back on the six-month journey with The Way of Salt, Quynh Tram said: 'The project has brought me an abundance of emotions. I feel like I have become a better version of myself after the learning and experiencing journey. As the project leader, I am truly happy that the project has garnered such great interest, and even more delighted that the project was able to send a message about the environment and climate change, as well as the unwanted results from the salinisation in the Mekong Delta.'



The project **The Way of Salt** uses art in the form of experimental films to communicate messages about the salinity of the Mekong Delta.

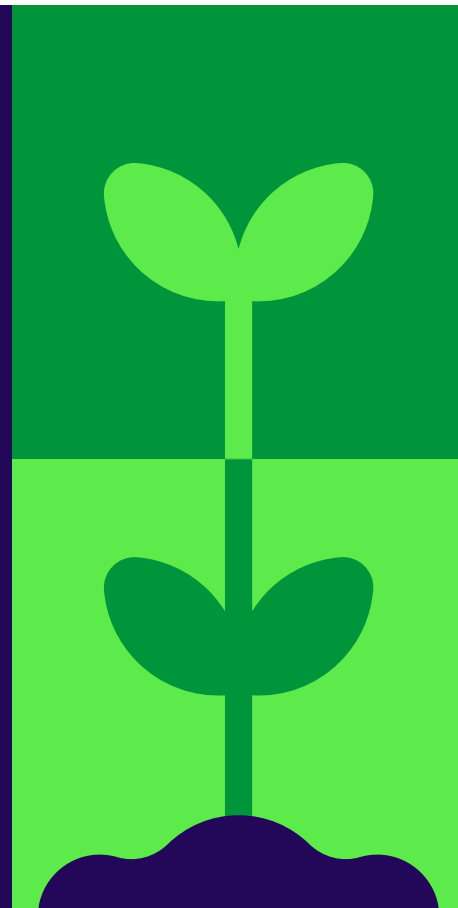
You can watch the films

Part 1 – Memories of the river: [here](#).

Part 2 – Thirsty Land: [here](#).

Project team member

Le Nguyen Quynh Tram



Excerpt from the film The Way of Salt





Excerpt from the film The Death of a River

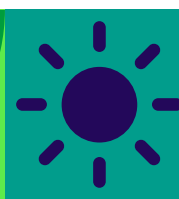
The Death of a River

The short animated film *The Death of a River* begins with a funeral, an old man appearing next to a darkened stream, his words making us wonder for whom this funeral is held? How did they die? And above all, 'we have been together for years, but now he leaves me to go far', it seems like the elder man is speaking about a close friend with whom he grew up together. It takes a few more scenes, until we realise that, his dear friend is in fact the river he had grown up with since his childhood.

The story revolves around the life of a river, depicted as being that of a person, of numerous people, of the witnesses who grew up with the river and bear to see it 'die' before their eyes, to dig deeper into how the climate and environment is changing, changing because of natural causes or because the human race has rendered the river 'dead'.

Anthropomorphism is not a strange method in storytelling, but to tell the story in a unique,

captivating manner that speaks to people, then with simple face shapes, watercolours, creatures, these young people have creatively portrayed in detail the changes in the river, in parallel with the development of humans. From the serene pure greens in childhood to the sombre brownish greys in the heyday of trade, and at last the sorrow blacks filled with plastic waste in the old age, 'born alongside human development, dead also because of human development', the river had a name, age, it grew old, got sick, and passed away as if that is only natural. Yet the contrast between words and actions, between the bond in humans' memories as affirmed by their words, and their heartless act of dumping trash into the river in the final farewell, between the weeping remark in the obituary, the sorrowful silence of those attending the funeral, to the act of letting float plastic waste in this last mourning, has highlighted the biggest contradiction to nature of humankind in this ecosystem.





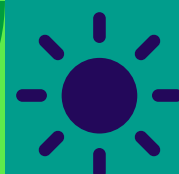
This short animated film project has been realised by young people - university students living and studying in Ho Chi Minh City - in collaboration with high school students in Sa Dec City, Dong Thap Province. Through the film, the project team has successfully shone a light on pollution in

the rivers, with 52,100 views on Facebook, 23,280 views on YouTube, plus 30,600 views on their partners' Facebook pages. The Death of a River also speaks to its audience in terms of raising awareness about domestic waste pollution in the Mekong River.

Project leader Nguyen Tran Mai Chi said: 'Although the film was created entirely online with members who live far away from one another, the project was lucky to have discovered interesting ideas and profound messages beyond our expectations from the students in the Mekong Delta, and from the film crew through virtual meetings. With the project's results in terms of communication, the team believes that our short film is itself an unexpected surprise message within the framework of Rivers of Life.'

'The film makes me rethink my indifference to nature and the times I carelessly threw trash into the river,' said Nguyen Thi Mai Suong, a university student from Long An Province.

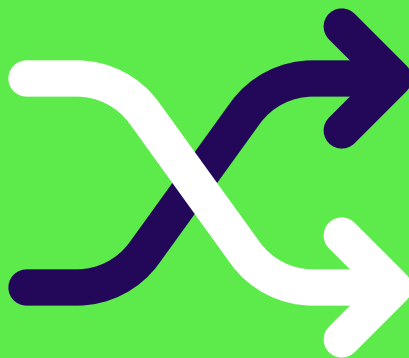
Truong Thi Kieu Duyen, a senior high school student in An Giang, emphasised that, 'The movie is about a reality that is not so new, yet it is like a slap in the face in terms of raising our collective awareness.'





The Death of the River project uses animated cartoons as the approach to tell the story of a river changing over time due to people and climate challenges. The emotional animated images in the cartoon draw the attention of the community.

You can watch the film [here](#).



Project team member
Nguyen Tran Mai Chi





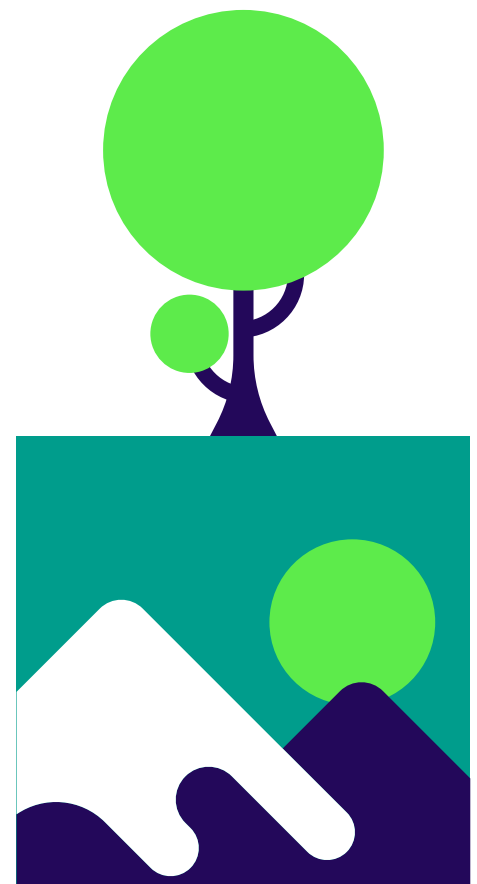
© Mzung Nguyen

Performance eARTh

Climate change and its consequences are not only frequent themes in science fiction films, but also increasingly in contemporary art practices. Performance eARTh has succeeded in using art to open up multi-disciplinary, multi-dimensional dialogues, giving viewers a new approach to art practices and climate change, as well as prompting reflections on the future.

‘The Mekong River and what lies deep in its heart or people and what exists in the mind share numerous similarities with great connections. These works not only focus on a river but also highlight humankind’s best values - things that need to be preserved.’, said independent filmmaker, multimedia artist Mzung Nguyen.

‘The Mekong River and what lies deep in its heart or people and what exists in the mind share numerous similarities with great connections. These works not only focus on a river but also highlight humankind’s



best values - things that need to be preserved.’, said independent filmmaker, multimedia artist Mzung Nguyen.

‘Everything is so abnormal and fractured. It is no longer like the old times. They don’t let the land breathe, they don’t let the trees grow. They only make space for lifeless buildings and they are greedy. To me, this is a very broad topic for artists to work on.’, Artist Trung Nghia shared his views on climate change and his creations in the Seven days of creativity dialogue series for young people.

Art, music, and movies are all things that intrigue young people. Performance eARTH attracts young audiences not only because of its artistic elements, originality or novelty, but also because of author Mzung Nguyen's consistent artistic practice, summarised as no pressure on the environment. When creating a work, she always thinks of ways to limit use of

environment we live in or care too little about our direct and indirect impacts on the environment. And whether we will continue to move into the future creating waste and causing environmental pollution. The answer lies in the young people and their actions today.

The environmental art project Performance eARTH closed its first series of activities in September 2021 and will continue with further activities in February 2022. Each activity leaves a deep impression on the general public, spreading the message of action for the environment and for the Earth. It is hoped that the series of activities of the environmental art project Performance eARTH will continue to expand, bringing positive energy to the public, young people, art lovers and environmental activists.



resources or not create more rubbish or waste. Mzung Nguyen's artistic practices are built largely from recycled materials such as old picture frames, newspapers, biodegradable and water-soluble papers...

21 digital photos combined with others taken by author Mzung Nguyen make young people wonder whether they too are indifferent and ignorant about the





Project team members

Pham Thi Hong Tham

Mzung Nguyen

Ha Minh Thu

Performance eARTh is a project oriented towards artistic and cultural activities to initiate dialogues between experts in the field of environment and art and the public at large, particularly the young, on environmental topics in the arts through a multi-dimensional approach, from deep experience to new criticisms.

See more of the 21 digital photos R I V E R S by independent filmmaker, multimedia artist Mzung Nguyen at [RIVERS](#)



© Mzung Nguyen



Chuyện kể từ vùng Đồng Tháp Mười



Tales from the Plain of Reeds

Those from the Mekong Delta, do you remember the stories your parents told you in the past?

There were so many fish during the flood season that people could catch them without a net. The story of the abundant anchovies, of the flood season, of sitting in a boat picking water lilies, of going to the field to catch fish and crabs while singing folk songs and humming tunes, the games that are silly yet so much fun, idyllic but full of love and warmth...

In recent decades, the Delta has changed rapidly due to climate change and urbanisation. During the flood season, fish are less abundant, and children have also ceased the hobby of bathing in the river. Those once upon a time stories now follow time and the footsteps of those who have left to fade into obscurity. The once-beautiful Plain of Reeds only lives in the vague memories of those who lived in days gone by.
- From the The Plain of Reeds project.

In 2021, Xuan, Tien and Quynh decided to initiate the project Tales from the Plain of Reeds in order to record the collective

memories of local people, bringing stories of the pure beauty of the ecology of the Plain of Reeds to younger generations, even though they themselves may never have lived in such an environment, so as to nurture their love and determination to preserve the ecosystem here.

'If you visit the Plain of Reeds during the flood season, please visit Tram Chim forest, sit on a long tail boat and observe the skillful hands of the ladies moving each paddle up and down breaking the surface of the soft blue water, and connect with the cool breeze here. You can try the fish sauce hotpot with a basket of tasty herbs - the crispness of the white waterlily, the bitter taste from the sesban flowers or sweetness of the young squash, before they can even mature, waterlogged from sitting in the water so long.' - From Tales of ancient water by Nguyen Thi Kim Mong.

'Evening was always a dreamy time. When my father went fishing in a small boat, I always asked to go with him. Even when I couldn't help much, he still let me accompany him. Then I'd lie down in the boat,



watching the moon and stars twinkling in the sky, while the boat gently rocked back and forth, it was an indescribable feeling of light-headedness.'

- From Tales of ancient water by Nguyen Thi Kim Ngan

The pieces contributed to the project come from fresh and young people, with little to no experience of this storytelling approach. The stories are honest, relatable, nostalgic, and a clear indication of the bygone richness of the ecosystem and people here. One writes about a pure and immense land of elegant practices, such as bringing tea into the lotus stamen and tying it, so that the tea is imbued with fragrance. Another contemplates their childhood of bright sunny days when their group of friends would play, catching crabs and fish during the flood season... More than 40 written pieces somehow show us the impact of modernisation on the ecosystem of the Plain of Reeds, of what we might have lost and, just as importantly, what young generations can do to preserve them.

'Because the stories focus on the memories of the land, there was always this feeling of nostalgia that followed me during the project period - so many of the submissions rekindled my own childhood memories. Almost every one of the stories we received, whether happy or sad, bore precious memories of the delta's people. Through those pieces, we can truly feel the writers' love for the land. This, and the awareness that the project can create an impact and meaning for the future, however small, has very much inspired and encouraged us during our project.'

- Hong Xuan, project member

The project Tales from the Plain of Reeds ended with a publication and a short documentary film, preserving the memories. While the publication includes diverse narratives, all concise on paper; the



documentary film found ways to recreate the image of the Plain of Reeds in the memories of pioneering generations from this land. The Plain of Reeds in these stories, without too much extravagance, is enough to make viewers feel nostalgic. Back in those halcyon days, nature was beautiful like a dream and was home to humankind. It was only when those things began to vanish that we started to cherish them.

'With every passing day, we have learned and our love towards the environment, the people, the culture as well as our local knowledge has grown. On reflection, we are truly grateful for the trust of the researchers on the Mekong River and the Delta, of experts from diverse fields from both in and out of the country, of the farmers in the area, and of the many contributors during our project's run. Although maybe from different generations or having different expertise, all share their love for the sustainable development of the Mekong Delta.' - Hong Xuan and Ha Tien, two core members of the Tales from the Plain of Reeds project.

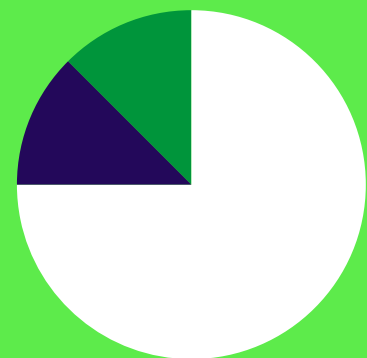
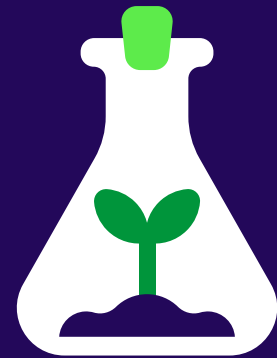


The Tales from the Plain of Reeds project focuses on capturing the collective memory of the people living in the Mekong Delta - the decade-long witnesses of the changes in biodiversity of this important wetland.

See more stories [here](#), and the documentary film [here](#).

Project team members

Le Nguyen Hong Xuan
Le Thi Ha Tien
Nguyen Thi Nhu Quynh



@British Council



Act together

Act together – The Rivers of Life is a project aimed at raising farmers' awareness in the Sa Dec flower village in Dong Thap Province on the use of pesticides in floriculture through surveys and interviews conducted by the students of Sa Dec City High School themselves, with support from teachers participating in the Rivers of Life project.

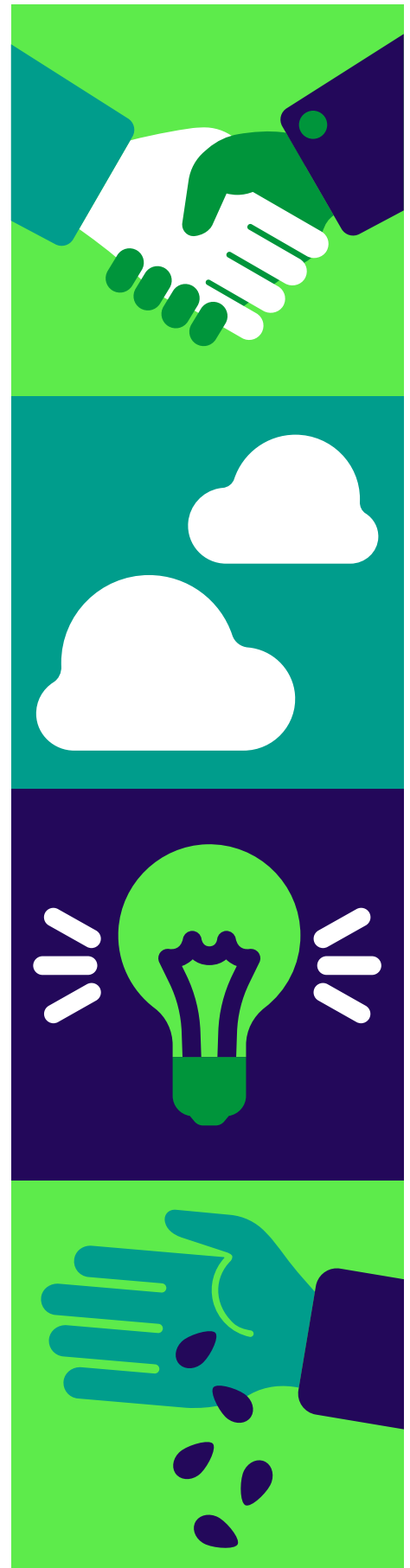
Within a short period from August to September 2021, a group of five students from Sa Dec City High School learned about the harmful effects of using agricultural chemicals improperly in the Sa Dec flower village by speaking with the farmers about their habits of using these products. They then presented the information gathered through self-recorded and edited video clips – as well as entries for the online contest Voices of the farmers.

'Through this project, I hope that we will have a better awareness of agricultural chemicals and how to use them safely and effectively.', said Le Thi Nhu Huynh, a contestant in Voices of the farmers.

What was special about this contest is that each student directly talked to flower growers about using chemicals and the measures they take to protect themselves against the harmful effects. Some conducted phone interviews, some went to the village themselves to record videos and interview people.

Through the questions, that at first were simply designed to help the students gather information, the farmers' responses showed that to some extent they were aware of the danger of using pesticides, and knew that they should reduce the harmful effects of this process both for the environment and for their own health.

One such example is the video made by Le Thi Nhu Huynh, a student in class 10A2 of Sa Dec City High School. In this four-minute video, Huynh spoke to Le Minh Thanh, a flower grower, right in his garden.



- She asked: ‘So how much pesticide do you use each time?’
- Thanh responded: ‘I follow the instructions on the package. We shouldn’t use too much, overusing it will affect the environment and our life.’
- Huynh continued: ‘So after use how do you handle the packaging (of the pesticides)?’
- Thanh immediately picked up the empty package on the ground, put it in a plastic bag and tied the bag, and answered: “I put it in a plastic bag, take it somewhere far from the house where there are no people, and burn it.”

However, some other submissions demonstrated that farmers in a number of areas in Sa Dec had not had the opportunity to learn how to make bioproducts as an alternative to pesticides nor received guidance on the safe, comprehensive and systematic use of these chemicals, but rather have to collect and dispose of this waste themselves.

Speaking about the contest, Nguyen Huynh Nhu, a student from Sa Dec City High School and a member of the organising team, said:

‘The project has provided young people in Sa Dec with a lot of knowledge on agricultural waste and its effects, as well as advice on how to use pesticides the right way to avoid affecting the living environment of local people, their health, and the water source’.

‘I hope through the contest Voices of the farmers, local people’s perceptions will change and the government will provide more solutions, such as reserving areas for treating pesticide-related waste so people can dispose of it in an appropriate manner, rather than throwing it away carelessly, and that there is more communication on the harmful effects of pesticides, and most importantly, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development will listen to farmers on the struggles they face, so together we can build a green, clean and beautiful environment.’

Tran Thi Hong Gam, Senior Programme Manager, Education at British Council in Viet Nam, said: ‘The project Act together has created an opportunity for students – especially schoolgirls passionate about science – to take their first steps as scientific researchers. I believe they will continue to pursue this interest to become female scientists and researchers in the future’.

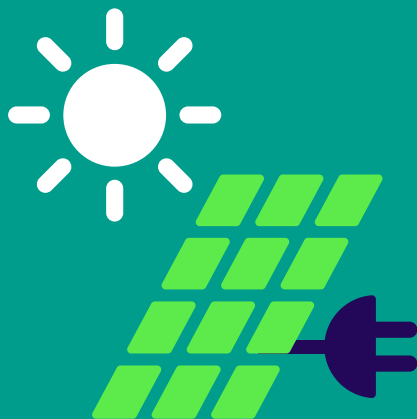
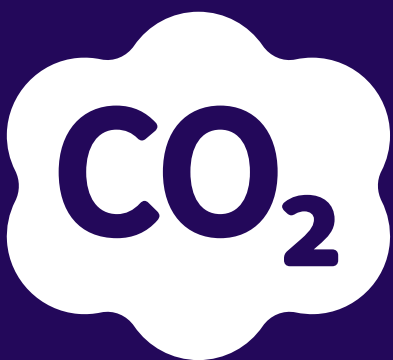
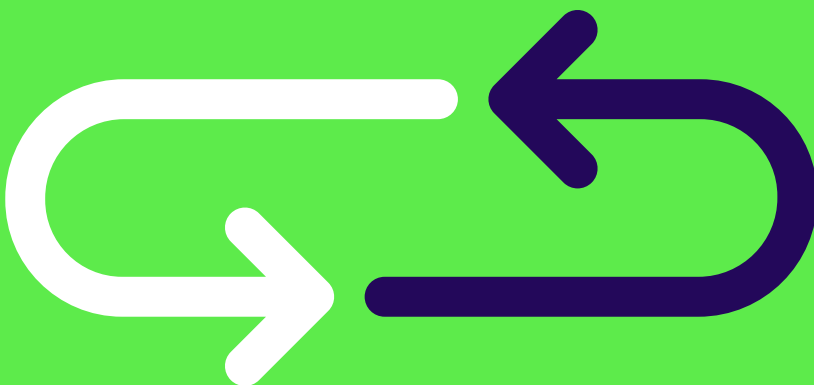
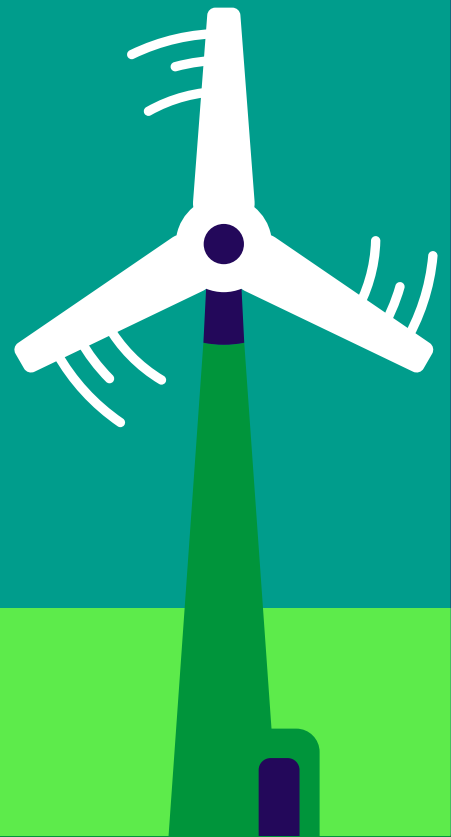


The project Act together uses research, surveys and interviews of the Sa Dec flower growers to understand more about agriculture waste and usage of pesticides, then communicating key messages about this to the local community to protect the environment.

You can see the project report [here](#).

Project team members

Nguyen Hoang Ngung
Le Thi Truc Linh

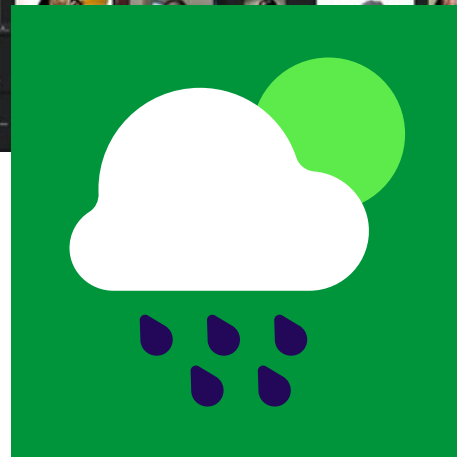




Hungry Water

Through a project sponsored by the British Council, students from Do Cong Tuong High School and Nguyen Quang Dieu High School for the Gifted have had the chance to delve deeper into an environmental phenomenon that is directly affecting the Mekong River, instead of just being presented with theoretical knowledge in their textbooks.

It is the phenomenon of ‘hungry water’, which is the reduction of alluvium (sediment) and nutrients in water sources due to the development of the number of hydroelectric dams in the upper river. This phenomenon has greatly affected ecological systems in rivers such as algae and vegetation, both large and small, and has become a matter of concern for policy makers, scientists and environmental activists.



Based on this phenomenon, the educational project Hungry Water was founded, with the aim of creating a practical learning environment for high school students. The project team also worked with Geography and English teachers from both schools to integrate real-world knowledge of the Mekong River into current curriculums, with a focus on the challenges that the river and the people in the Delta are facing. After that, more than 100 students from three classes were divided into groups. Together, they learned and discussed the causes and impacts of the phenomenon, as well as proposing practical solutions to respond to the challenges posed.





Sharing about the inspiration for the project, Bui Huu Nhan, Secretary of the Youth Union of Nguyen Quang Dieu Gifted High School for the Gifted, and project leader for 'Hungry Water' said: 'With my own experience as a teacher, I always ponder how to create educational activities that encourage practical experience, because it is through such experiences that students gain knowledge in the most effective and meaningful way.'

'Especially with climate change issues – even though they are happening on a daily basis in the Mekong Delta – many young people born and raised here are very ignorant and have little chance to learn more about them. Integrating those experiences in their learning curriculum will be a great opportunity to learn and dig deeper into these issues, empathise more, and in the future, hopefully they can come up with solutions to the problems that the Mekong Delta is facing.'

Due to Covid-19, many students could not attend classes during the project's run – from 1st August to 14th 2021 – all the activities were therefore conducted via Zoom. Meet-ups were held virtually on diverse topics to support students' research process, including Global Day - providing

English vocabulary about rivers, canals and the related phenomena; Geography Day - equipping them with relevant and interesting facts about the Mekong River; and Training Day - guiding the students in selecting topics and techniques to create a report. All groups presented their ideas during the Conference Day.

'Students nowadays are actually very proactive and creative. All they need is a few suggestions and a little guidance on the research process, data collection and intervention approaches, etc. They will then take the initiative in learning about those issues, at times even introducing newer, more exciting perspectives and analysis that surprise the project team', said Nhan on the achievements of the project. 'After conducting research with the support and companionship of the project team, students got to report back, and it felt like we had nurtured many young scientists who were extremely knowledgeable about the climate change issues affecting the Mekong River.'

'The support and companionship of British Council, along with the guidance and advice of Nguyen Van Thai, the group's consultant – really helped the team overcome the challenges during Covid-19 and carry out the ideas – therefore bringing the knowledge about the Mekong River closer to the students.'

The students themselves showed great enthusiasm for the project. Following the presentation on what they had learned about climate change in the Mekong Delta, one student said: 'Even though we just got to know one another, we found ways to work as a team, I am truly happy and glad that I joined this project. It broadened my knowledge and connected me with lots of new friends.'



Hungry Water was evaluated as the most impactful climate action project by the British Council, Dong Thap Department of Education and Training, and guest experts. In his closing speech on the project in October 2021, Mr Huynh Thanh Hung,

Deputy Director of Dong Thap Department of Education and Training, acknowledged the project's achievements and proposed to expand the model to high schools across Dong Thap province.

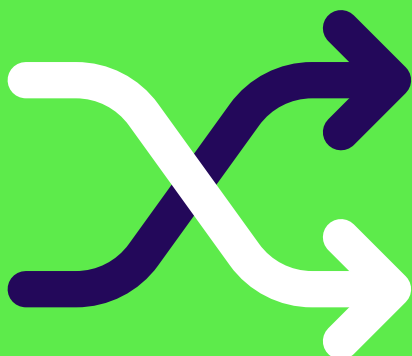


The Hungry Water project brings education to high school students through project-based learning, helping them become more familiar with research skills to understand about the ‘hungry water’ issue in the Mekong Delta, and raising their awareness about climate change and climate actions.

You can watch the project summary [here](#).

Project team members

Bui Huu Nhan
Truong Thi Ngoc Chau
Trinh Thi Trang



XUÔI NGƯỢC MEKONG

Hình ảnh dòng sông Việt Nam nói chung
và Đồng bằng Sông Cửu Long nói riêng.

Hưởng ứng phong trào "Thanh niên hành động
vì biến đổi khí hậu toàn cầu & hướng tới COP26".



Along the Mekong

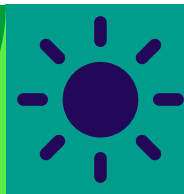
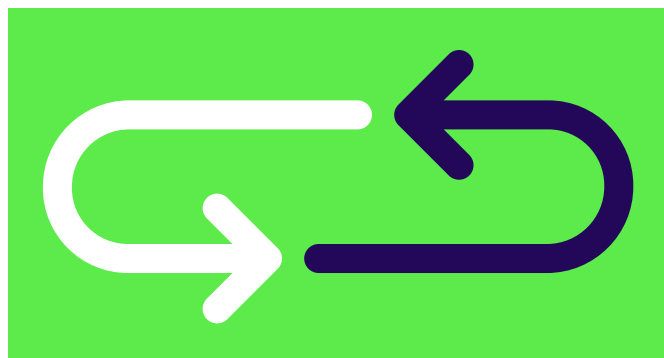
Along the Mekong - a writing contest by young people in the Mekong Delta is part of the Rivers of Life project funded and supported by the British Council.

Using writing and photography formats, the project Along the Mekong creates a platform for students across the country to express their thoughts and feelings and communicate messages about the rivers of their homeland.

This project was the 'brainchild' of four young people from the Mekong Delta, who have been actively participating in climate action projects. Truong Nguyen Luan – the

project leader, who has bonded with the Mekong River since his childhood – cares deeply about climate change in his hometown river, hence his implementation of significant awareness raising projects for the youth on this subject. Together with three of his friends, Luan designed the contest with the aim of spreading meaningful messages about river protection and environmental preservation; at the same time promoting the image of the Mekong River and other rivers in Viet Nam, all through the lens of young students.

While he has organised and managed many youth awareness projects, Along the Mekong River still has great significance to Luan, even though it is not his first or biggest climate change project. 'The project is meaningful because it is the very first project that targets my hometown, the Mekong Delta' Luan shared. 'It is also special because of the effort of the British Council and their attempt at integrating technology, arts and communications to create outstanding projects for the Mekong River and Delta.'



The contest called on young people aged 18 to 24 from across the country who care about the environment to contribute articles and images, and to express their feelings about the challenges facing rivers and canals. Luan and his friends held three discussions to broaden the contestants' knowledge about climate change, while also providing guidance on how to write content and take amazing photos to inspire and equip skills for these young people to participate in the contest.

The idea for the contest came from Luan's observation of the youth's awareness about

During the contest's run, Luan and the project team also published posts on the project's Facebook page about the Mekong River, climate change phenomena and their consequences on human life. These were all written pieces compiled and translated from local and foreign newspaper articles and research papers. After more than three months, the project reached more than 100,000 people and had nearly 1,000 followers, mainly young people living in Ho Chi Minh City and provinces in the Mekong Delta such as Can Tho and Dong Thap.



'Along the Mekong is an extremely insightful and interesting contest for students nationwide.' – Nguyen Duy Phuong, first-prize recipient.

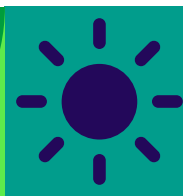
the changes in his hometown river. 'I believe that my homeland, the Mekong Delta, is one of the areas most affected by climate change, but many are still unaware of information, programmes, activities, and competitions on the environment and climate impacts,' said Luan.

For Luan, another special thing about the project is that the team worked with mostly tenth-grade students. 'In previous projects, I had not worked much with high schoolers because they often lacked experience and had difficulties committing to the projects. But this time, the participating students demonstrated incredible capacity, passion, responsibility and enthusiasm.' Luan commented.

Not only did Luan inspire the target audience, as the leader, he also sees positive changes within himself on his chosen topic.

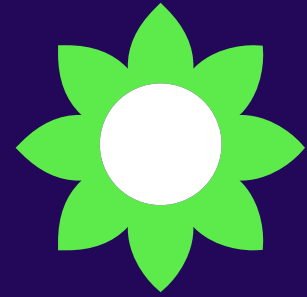
'My biggest takeaway is the deep understanding that climate actions in the Mekong Delta are infinitely more challenging than those in big cities,' said Luan. 'Moreover, I got the chance to sharpen my skills working with the younger students.'

This perception of Luan is perhaps best expressed through the message he wanted to send to Vietnamese youth about the need to act now, for a better future for everyone: 'To my fellow young people, 50 years from now, the consequences of climate change will become much clearer. By then it may be too late to act. So take action from today! Don't let the grass grow under your feet.'



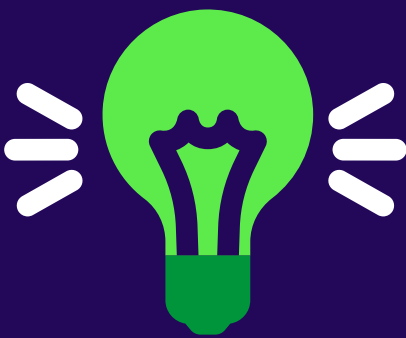
The project Along the Mekong uses images and writing to communicate and inspire the love of nature in young people. The project resulted in a collection of beautiful photos about the rivers with the desire to love and protect them for the future.

You can watch the project report [here](#).



Project team members

Truong Nguyen Luan
Vo Nguyen Minh Thuy
Nguyen Trung Hieu
Cao Xuân Peter





Mê•Kông

(*danh từ*) (noun)

Mé là “Mẹ”, còn kôngk (kôngkea) là “nước”, cụm từ này trong tiếng Khmer có nghĩa là “Mẹ của nước”.

Mé means mother, and kôngk (kôngkea) means water, this word in the Khmer language means Mother of water.



Lullabies of the Rivers

‘In the Mekong Delta... The rivers were once so blue, bringing fish to Uncle Hai... Until people starting living fast lives. Oh my, now there is nothing but trash...’

Rustic lyrics and the sound of the ukulele combined with simple and intriguing animation by Nguyen Phuoc Nguyen opened the online concert Ru by the project Lullabies of the Rivers. In a heartbeat, these verses created a connection and evoked loving sentiments towards nature for the concertgoers.

The online concert Ru (Lullaby) took place on the evenings of 14 and 21 November 2021, the final activity that the Lullabies of the River team presented to the community. Through two nights of performance, nine self-composed pieces and an open



platform for discussion, Ru has reached more than 200 young people; enabling them to discuss climate change in the Mekong Delta, and encouraging them to join hands to take action for the climate.

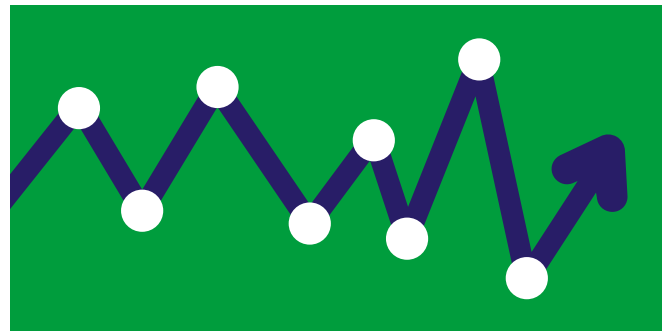
'Your music is really easy for us young people to empathise with and relate to!' - L.M.G.P commented on the Facebook event page for RU.

The three young founders of the Lullabies of the Rivers project are all university students. They got to know each other through a sustainable development forum for youth and decided together to join the programme Rivers of Life, with the hope of presenting a new communicative approach to transforming awareness of climate change, through a friendly and no 'extravagant' manner, which is music.

Throughout 2021, Lullabies of the Rivers gathered around 20 project members, who together explored stories about the impact of climate change on the livelihood and culture of the people in the Mekong Delta, turning those stories into songs that they composed and performed themselves. The project also initiated a singing contest covering songs about the rivers, attracting 38 entries and generating more than 200,000 interactions on social media.

Luc Pham Quynh Nhi, project coordinator of Hieu Van Ngu and music advisor to this project, believes that it has uncovered and encouraged musical talents. The music pieces also resonate with young people - generating tremendous sentiments and encouraging deeper understanding about the Mekong Delta.

Khong Tuan Anh, advisor of the project, said that he was very surprised at its positive result and success. At first, he could not imagine that music could evoke such a connection with a scientific topic like climate change.

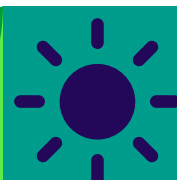


Following the Ru concert, an audience member named Thanh Phuoc said: 'It brings such a positive emotion, and I now have a deeper understanding about how the rivers are being affected by the negative impacts of climate change. I once swam in a river, just like many others, but now it is no longer green and clean. I think that it is now time to take action for the rivers.'

Thanh Nhi, another audience member said: 'The songs were truly touching, I thought a lot when I heard you sing. I myself was born and raised in the Mekong Delta, but I had not realised how frightening pollution was until I listened to your songs.'

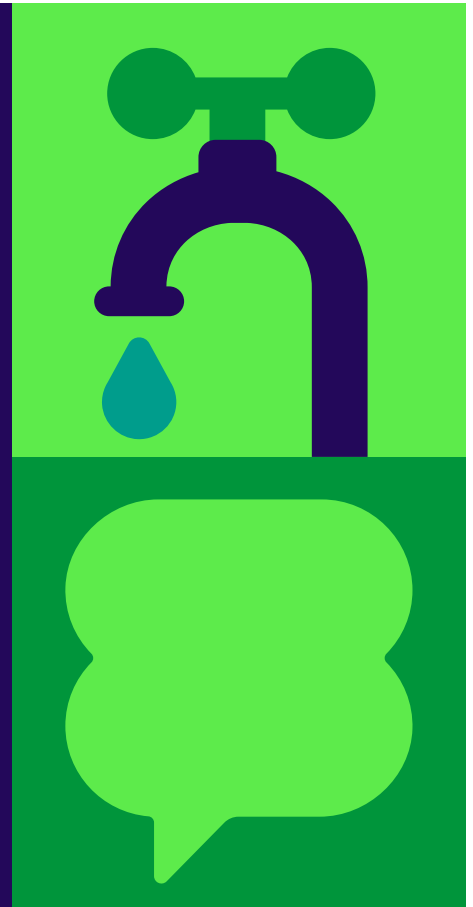
One amazing thing that the project has witnessed is that Lullabies of the Rivers has expanded its reach beyond the Mekong Delta and won the Third Prize at the Youth for Climate Innovation Contest 2021, which was a collaboration between Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth Union Central Committee, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Viet Nam.

Nguyen Phuoc Nguyen, one of the three project founders said about the ripple effect following the events: 'Many people have been inspired to care, to love, and to be more motivated in preserving the rivers, reducing daily waste by a little each day, and taking actions, big or small, to restore the green hue of the rivers. As for me, I still really enjoy running social and environmental projects so I will continue working on similar ones.'



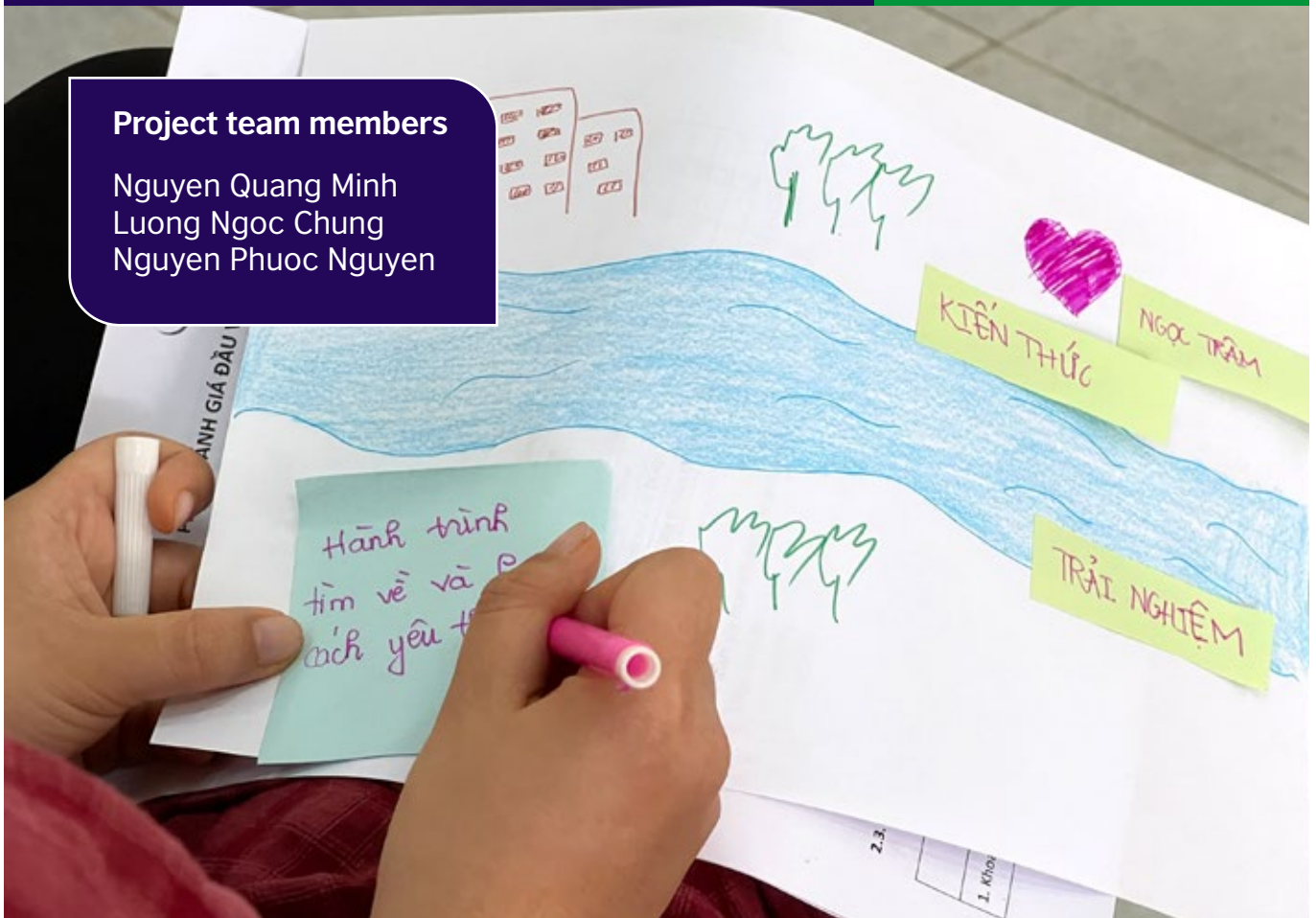
Lullabies of the Rivers is a music composition and performance project for young people, with the aim to encourage their positive and creative participation in addressing climate change issues in the Mekong Delta.

See more about the project [here](#).

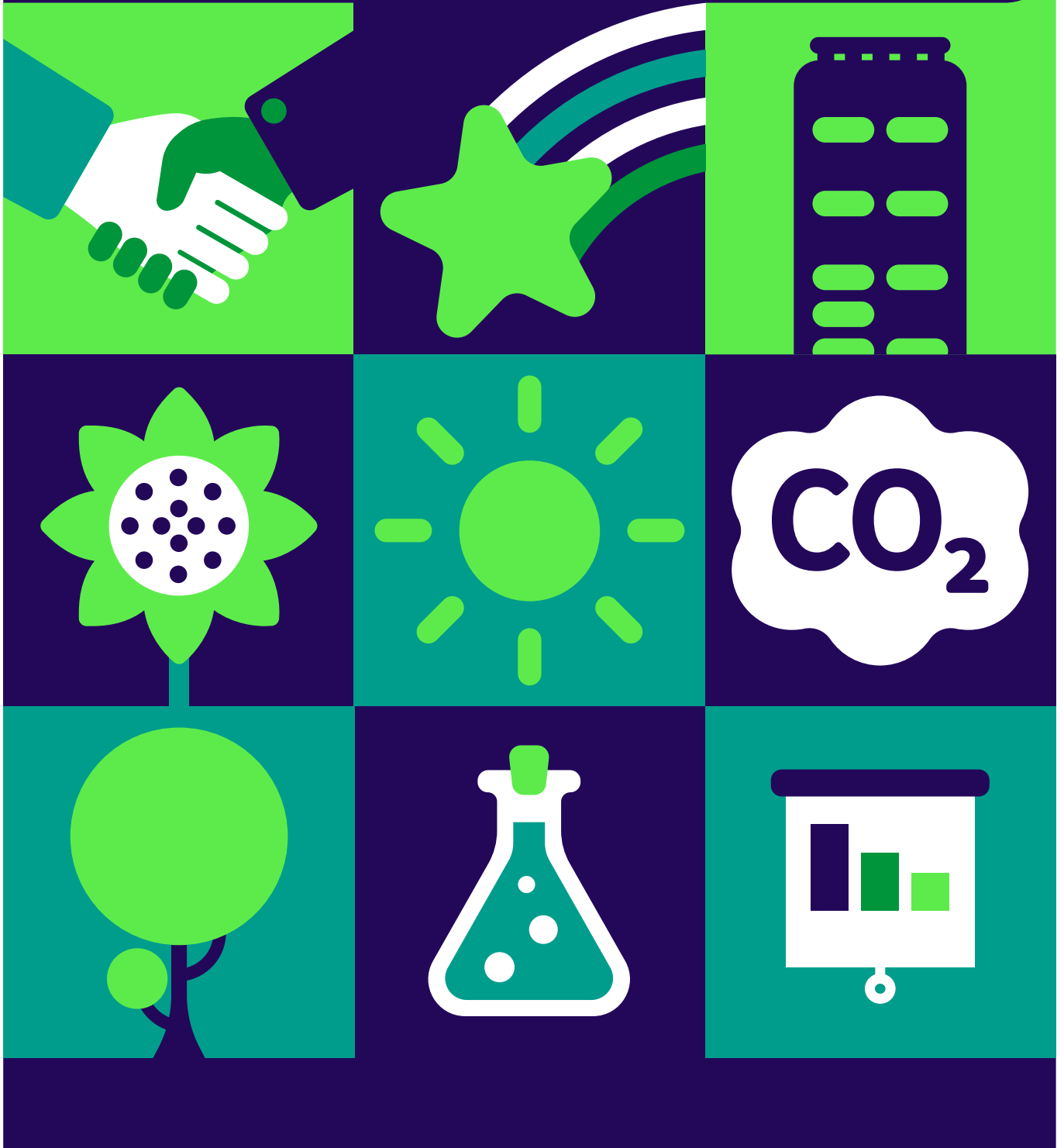


Project team members

Nguyen Quang Minh
Luong Ngoc Chung
Nguyen Phuoc Nguyen



About the Rivers of Life project



- 10 climate action projects
- 23 youth leaders
- Over 100 high school students
- 4 high schools
- Over 700 participants in climate change dialogues
- 15 experts, lecturers, scientists, artists, communication experts
- Over 137,000 reach via online channels

• ‘I encourage my family to save fresh water and limit the use of plastic bags. Now my mother brings her own bag to the market instead of a plastic bag.’

• ‘Before joining the Project, I only had very general knowledge about the environment, now I can identify and study specific problems related to it.’

• ‘After the Boot camp, I have a better understanding of the situation with climate change and environmental pollution. During the project period, I applied a lot of environmental knowledge to the project and put my communication skills into practice.’

• ‘On joining the Rivers of Life project, I was

only a freshman with limited experience in community action projects. The training sessions made me think positively and inspired me to contribute to the success of the project.’ Tran Nguyen Hoang Long.

• ‘In the near future, we wish to expand the Rivers of Life project to high schools across Dong Thap province, on the basis of the original ten climate action projects implemented by 23 youth leaders and selected high schools in our province.

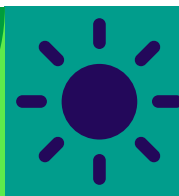
First, we will consider cascading the project-based learning approach used by the Hungry Water project – which helped students understand about landslides and erosion of the Mekong river – to all high schools in Dong Thap province. Other projects also have very effective products such as The story of saltwater, The voice of the floating market, the experimental film The way of salt, the cartoon Death of the river, or stories about the Plain of Reeds, plus songs and images of the Mekong Delta. We can share these products as resources for our high school students’, Mr Huynh Thanh Hung, Deputy Director, Dong Thap Department of Education and Training.



The Rivers of Life project was one of the activities of the British Council's The Climate Connection campaign that brought together people from across the world to address the shared challenge of climate change in the run up of COP26 in 2021.

The Rivers of Life project provided a platform for youth-led climate change actions, targeting the Mekong delta which had increasingly been impacted by climate challenges over the past few years. The project aimed to provide young people with the opportunity to understand the emerging issues of climate change on their lives and communities and the increased sense of urgency about responses to climate challenges; as well as enhancing their skills and behaviours in being able to think critically and respond creatively and digitally.

The project was delivered by British Council in partnership with Dong Thap Department of Education and Training in 2021.





Project members

Mentors



Mzung Nguyễn



Phan Kỳ Trung



Nguyễn Văn Thái



Huỳnh Lê Khánh

Youth leaders



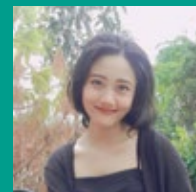
Trần Nguyễn Hoàng Long



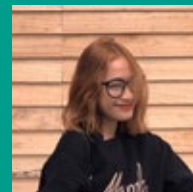
Võ Thị Kiều Anh



Trần Long Hải



Phạm Cẩm Tú



Lê Nguyễn Quỳnh Trâm



Nguyễn Thanh Mai Chi



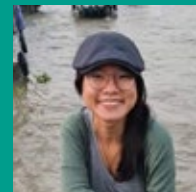
Hà Minh Thư



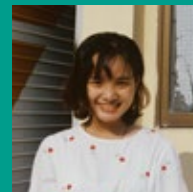
Nguyễn Thị Hồng Thắm



Lê Nguyễn Hồng Xuân



Lê Thị Hà Tiên



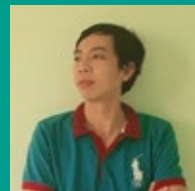
Nguyễn Như Quỳnh



Lê Thị Trúc Linh



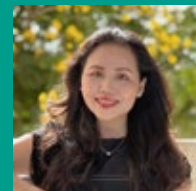
Nguyễn Hoàng Ngung



Bùi Hữu Nhân



Trịnh Thị Trang



Trương Thị Ngọc Châu



Cao Xuân Peter



Nguyễn Trung Hiếu



Trương Nguyễn Luân



Võ Nguyễn Minh Thủy



Lương Ngọc Chung



Nguyễn Phúc Nguyên



Nguyễn Quang Minh

Facilitators



Khổng Tuấn Anh



Nguyễn Anh Thư

