

News Item: GAIA Project Holds Co-Design Workshop for Trainers' Training on Transdisciplinary Approaches

23–25 March 2026, Los Baños, Philippines — The GAIA (Gearing up and Applying Inter- and Transdisciplinary Skills in Asia) project convened a three-day co-design workshop from 23 to 25 March 2026 at the Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (SEARCA) in Los Baños, Laguna, Philippines, bringing together regional experts and partner institutions to develop a Trainers' Training program on transdisciplinary (TD) approaches.

The workshop aimed to translate transdisciplinary principles into a structured and context-responsive training program that can be implemented across Asia. It brought together a team from academia, research institutions, and regional networks to align on competencies, participant selection, and program design.

The first day combined field immersion and seminar discussions to ground the training in real-world contexts. Participants engaged with biodiversity and sustainability issues through visits to Mt. Makiling and the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), where opportunities for collaboration and exchange were explored. A seminar session, co-organised by SEARCA as part of the Agriculture and Development Seminar series, highlighted the relevance of transdisciplinary approaches in addressing complex socio-environmental challenges, with case studies and country experiences illustrating both long-standing practices and persistent institutional barriers. The seminar featured a keynote framing talk by Dr. Ria Lambino (Research Institute for Humanity and Nature, Japan/Principal Investigator for GAIA project), followed by a case presentation by Dr. Percy Sajise (SEARCA). Country experiences were shared by Dr. Siwatt Pongpiachan (Thailand), Dr. Hein Mallee (Japan), and Dr. Sruthi Subbanna (India online participation), providing diverse regional perspectives on transdisciplinary practice.



The following day focused on translating these insights into concrete design elements for the training. Participants identified core competencies required for transdisciplinary practice, including systems thinking, facilitation, stakeholder engagement, and reflexivity. A proposal-based application process was proposed to select participants capable of developing and delivering their own training programs. The group also outlined expected outputs, including training frameworks and implementation plans, positioning the program as a bridge between learning and application. The curriculum structure was organized around a knowing–doing–being framework, integrating conceptual knowledge, practical skills, and values-based competencies.

On the third day, discussions refined the overall training design and implementation strategy. Key logistical and administrative considerations were addressed, including scheduling, venue planning, and delivery arrangements for the program. The training is tentatively scheduled for early September 2026 in Bangkok.

The workshop also advanced plans for complementary activities, including a regional literature review and documentation of transdisciplinary training practices in Asia, contributing to broader knowledge generation.

Currently in its design phase, the GAIA Trainers' Training program is intended to build regional capacity for transdisciplinary research and practice by equipping participants to develop and implement context-specific training initiatives. Through a structured yet flexible approach, GAIA seeks to strengthen collaboration across sectors and support more integrated responses to sustainability challenges in the region.

