

GEF-8 REQUEST FOR CEO  
ENDORSEMENT/APPROVAL

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>GENERAL PROJECT INFORMATION .....</b>	<b>3</b>
Project Summary .....	4
Project Description Overview .....	5
<b>PROJECT OUTLINE .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>A. PROJECT RATIONALE .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>B. PROJECT DESCRIPTION .....</b>	<b>21</b>
Institutional Arrangement and Coordination with Ongoing Initiatives and Project.....	38
Core Indicators .....	40
Key Risks .....	44
<b>C. ALIGNMENT WITH GEF-8 PROGRAMMING STRATEGIES AND COUNTRY/REGIONAL PRIORITIES .....</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>D. POLICY REQUIREMENTS .....</b>	<b>50</b>
Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment.....	50
Stakeholder Engagement .....	51
Private Sector .....	51
Environmental and Social Safeguards .....	52
<b>E. OTHER REQUIREMENTS .....</b>	<b>52</b>
Knowledge management .....	52
Socio-economic Benefits .....	52
<b>ANNEX A: FINANCING TABLES .....</b>	<b>53</b>
GEF Financing Table .....	53
Project Preparation Grant (PPG) .....	53
Sources of Funds for Country Star Allocation.....	54
Focal Area Elements .....	54
Confirmed Co-financing for the project, by name and type.....	54
<b>ANNEX B: ENDORSEMENTS .....</b>	<b>55</b>
Record of Endorsement of GEF Operational Focal Point (s) on Behalf of the Government(s):.....	55
<b>ANNEX C: PROJECT RESULTS FRAMEWORK.....</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>ANNEX D: STATUS OF UTILIZATION OF PROJECT PREPARATION GRANT (PPG) .....</b>	<b>68</b>
<b>ANNEX E: PROJECT MAP AND COORDINATES .....</b>	<b>69</b>
<b>ANNEX F: ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL SAFEGUARDS SCREEN AND RATING.....</b>	<b>74</b>
<b>ANNEX G: BUDGET TABLE.....</b>	<b>74</b>
<b>ANNEX I: RESPONSES TO PROJECT REVIEWS .....</b>	<b>113</b>

## General Project Information

Project Title

Enhancing transboundary fisheries management in the Lower Mekong Basin

Region	GEF Project ID
Asia	11304
Country(ies)	Type of Project
Regional	FSP
Cambodia	
Lao PDR	
Viet Nam	
GEF Agency(ies):	GEF Agency Project ID
IUCN	
Project Executing Entity(s)	Project Executing Type
Mekong River Commission	Others
Ministry of Agriculture, Forest and Fisheries, Royal Cambodian Government	Government
Lao PDR National Mekong Committee	Government
Vietnam Research Institute of Aquaculture, Government of Viet Nam	Government
Department of Fisheries, Royal Thai Government	Government
GEF Focal Area (s)	Submission Date
Multi Focal Area	2/6/2025
Type of Trust Fund	Project Duration (Months)
GET	60
GEF Project Grant: (a)	GEF Project Non-Grant: (b)
10,709,176.00	0.00
Agency Fee(s) Grant: (c)	Agency Fee(s) Non-Grant (d)
963,824.00	0.00
Total GEF Financing: (a+b+c+d)	Total Co-financing
11,673,000.00	46,027,912.00
PPG Amount: (e)	PPG Agency Fee(s): (f)
300,000.00	27,000.00
Total GEF Resources: (a+b+c+d+e+f)	
12,000,000.00	
Project Tags	

CBIT: No NGI: No SGP: No Innovation: No

Project Sector (CCM Only)

### Taxonomy

Focal Areas, International Waters, Fisheries, Freshwater, River Basin, Influencing models, Transform policy and regulatory environments, Deploy innovative financial instruments, Strengthen institutional capacity and decision-making, Demonstrate innovative approaches, Stakeholders, Beneficiaries, Civil Society, Community Based Organization, Non-Governmental Organization, Local Communities, Awareness Raising, Public Campaigns, Behavior change, Gender Equality, Gender Mainstreaming, Gender-sensitive indicators, Sex-disaggregated indicators, Gender results areas, Knowledge Generation and Exchange, Capacity, Knowledge and Research, Capacity Development, Knowledge Generation, Training, Workshop, Seminar, Indicators to measure change, Theory of change, Adaptive management, Peer-to-Peer, South-South, Conference, Field Visit, Strategic Action Plan Implementation, Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis and Strategic Action Plan Preparation, Women groups, Learning

### Rio Markers

Climate Change Mitigation	Climate Change Adaptation	Biodiversity	Land Degradation
No Contribution 0	Significant Objective 1	Principal Objective 2	Significant Objective 1

### Project Summary

Provide a brief summary description of the project, including: (i) what is the problem and issues to be addressed? (ii) what are the project objectives, and if the project is intended to be transformative, how will this be achieved? (iii), how will this be achieved (approach to deliver on objectives), and (iv) what are the GEBs and/or adaptation benefits, and other key expected results. The purpose of the summary is to provide a short, coherent summary for readers. (max. 250 words, approximately 1/2 page)

The Lower Mekong Basin (LMB) is home to the most productive inland fisheries on the planet, generating an annual value of \$8-9 billion in fish and other aquatic animals. These fisheries contribute significantly to the GDP of Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, and Thailand, while supporting food security, cultural identity and local economies. Freshwater fish provides a major share of national animal protein intake and plays a vital role in child nutrition and health. The LMB's extraordinary productivity stems from a complex mosaic of dynamic freshwater ecosystems, with fish species diversity per unit area of catchment roughly three times that of the Amazon. These ecosystems rely on interconnected wetland landscapes that serve as crucial habitats for fish to complete their life cycles. The resilience of these biodiversity hotspots is a critical indicator of ecosystem health, sustainable livelihoods, and economic stability.

However, the LMB's fisheries face a growing crisis, which all riparian countries acknowledged. Since 2018, fishery harvests and incomes have declined by nearly 20%, driven by habitat fragmentation, degradation, and loss. Dams and irrigation structures have disconnected the Mekong River from its tributaries, disrupting fish migration and reproductive cycles. Unsustainable agricultural and forestry practices have diminished water quality, nutrient flows, and wetland recharge.

The project aims to address these challenges by increasing the connectivity, productivity, and resilience of transboundary capture fisheries, aquatic biodiversity, and the ecosystem services they provide. Using an ecosystem-based approach to fisheries co-management, the project emphasizes community ownership, sustainable economic investments, and financial incentives to strengthen stewardship. By delivering multiple environmental benefits, it supports the GEF's International Waters, Biodiversity, and Land Degradation focal areas and aligns with the Mekong River Commission's (MRC) Basin Development Strategy (2021-2030) and the Mekong Basin-wide Fisheries Management and Development Strategy (2018-2022).

The project focuses on six priority landscapes, spanning over 2.1 million hectares, including critical habitats. These areas form the ecological backbone of the Mekong's fisheries, supporting fish migration, breeding, and biodiversity, and sustaining millions of livelihoods.

The project is structured around four components, each guided by a theory of change:

- ❖ **Component 1, Implementation of Transboundary Fisheries Solutions**, will conserve, restore and manage critical fish habitats and implement ecosystem-based fisheries solutions, including co-management whereby rights and responsibilities are shared between government and fishers. By maintaining connectivity and protecting swimways, the project will increase fish numbers, size and diversity, resulting in healthier fish stocks and improved livelihoods. Activities include restoring habitats, operationalizing, co-management and removing barriers to fish migration.

❖ **Component 2: Economic and Financial Incentives for Transforming Fisheries-Based Livelihoods** support the development of fisheries-related value chains that add value to the sector and potentially reduce pressure on fishing as a primary livelihood. By demonstrating the attractive return on investment from capture fisheries, the project will encourage government and development bank investment in the sector, which has historically been ignored in terms of government spending. Activities include establishing cooperatives, promoting ecotourism linked to fish conservation, and establishing mini-trust funds, and saving and loan and other sustainable financing mechanisms.

❖ **Component 3: Mainstreaming Ecosystem-Based Fisheries into Sectoral Policies and Plans** will integrate the results of this and other fisheries projects into policy and planning at the national and regional levels. By demonstrating the full economic value of inland fisheries, the project will encourage governments to institutionalize and scale-up improved capture fisheries. This will include ensuring that investments in hydropower and irrigation are selected that have the lowest impact on fisheries and freshwater biodiversity, e.g., through regional energy planning and investment. Activities include updating nexus studies on water-food-energy, aligning policies with sustainable development goals, and strengthening governance frameworks.

❖ **Component 4: Knowledge-Sharing of Outcomes and Lessons** will establish a robust knowledge-sharing and learning platform

The project's outcomes align with its theory of change, aiming to restore fish stocks, conserve biodiversity, improve livelihoods through sustainable value chains, and embed ecosystem-based fisheries management into policy. By reconnecting habitats, incentivizing sustainable practices, and fostering knowledge-sharing, the project provides a replicable model for transboundary fisheries management.

A M&E system has been set up allowing for adaptive management using gender-disaggregated indicators.

## Project Description Overview

### Project Objective

To increase the connectivity, productivity and resilience of transboundary capture fisheries, aquatic biodiversity and other ecosystem services that provide co-benefits for the people living in the LMB

### Project Components

#### 1. Implementation of transboundary fisheries solutions

Component Type	Trust Fund
Technical Assistance	GET
GEF Project Financing (\$)	Co-financing (\$)
3,792,475.00	15,821,680.00

Outcome:

#### Outcome 1.1

Fisheries management improved in focal landscapes.

Indicators:

1.1.a: Fish catch weight and size in the focal landscapes

1.1.b: Fish catch diversity and value in the focal landscapes

Output:

#### Output 1.1.1

Critical fish habitat maps and threat and opportunity baseline assessments in LMB

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Indicator:

Number of focal landscapes with baseline assessment

GAP Indicator:

% of women participating in the sharing of LEK, ensuring representation across age and socio-economic groups

**Output 1.1.2**

Fisheries management best practice guidelines produced and disseminated

Indicator:

Number of digital or paper copies of the fisheries management best practices guidelines distributed

GAP Indicator:

Number of gender-sensitive best practices incorporated into the guidelines.

**Output 1.1.3**

50,000 hectares of critical fish habitat protected with improved management and/or restoration

Indicator:

Critical fish habitat protected with improved management and/or restoration

GAP Indicator:

Management plans based on gender-sensitive baseline assessments (needs, gaps, expectations), including activities aiming at strengthening women's entrepreneurship capacities.

**Output 1.1.4**

FCoM operated in 100 locally managed fisheries using standardized assessment tools to measure management effectiveness

Indicator:

Number of FCoM frameworks established, with management plans and financial mechanisms effectively implemented

GAP Indicator:

% of women represented in the Focal Landscape Supporting Groups

---

## 2. Economic and financial incentives for transforming fisheries-based livelihoods

Component Type	Trust Fund
Technical Assistance	GET
GEF Project Financing (\$)	Co-financing (\$)
3,587,275.00	15,821,680.00

Outcome:

**Outcome 2.1**

Fisheries and non-fisheries VCs improved.

Indicators:

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### 2.1.a: Increased community fishing household income and subjective well-being based on contributions from new/improved VCs

2.1.b: Economic and financial well-being: % annual income contributed to focal landscapes from sustainable inland aquatic resource value chains.

#### Outcome 2.2

Long-term public financing secured for improved fisheries management

##### Indicators:

2.2.a: Long-term public or public-private financing mechanisms to improve ecosystems-based capture fisheries management and stock protection identified and effectively implemented

2.2.b: Investments mobilized (USD) from public entities, banks, privates and others to improve ecosystems-based capture fisheries management and stock protection

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##### Output:

#### Output 2.1.1

New and improved VCs developed in 16 communities by the end of the project

##### Indicator:

Number of fishing communities (e.g., FCoM communities) that benefit from new or improved VCs

##### GAP Indicator:

% of alternative livelihood strategies explicitly addressing women's involvement.

#### Output 2.2.1

Landscape-level financial needs assessments for improved community fisheries management.

##### Indicator:

Number of financial needs assessments for improved fisheries management

##### GAP Indicator:

Number of financial needs assessments that include a gender analysis and address women, and vulnerable groups needs

#### Output 2.2.2

Long-term public financing mechanisms identified and initiated in focal landscapes

##### Indicator:

Number of public entities, banks and potential private partners involved in the identification and mobilization of additional sources for ecosystems-based capture fisheries management and stock protection

##### GAP Indicator:

Number of proposed national and local action plans that include specific strategies and actions to support women's economic empowerment in fisheries, ecotourism, and wetland conservation

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## 3. Mainstream ecosystem-based fisheries into sectoral policies and plans

Component Type	Trust Fund
Technical Assistance	GET
GEF Project Financing (\$)	Co-financing (\$)

1,063,775.00	5,168,080.00
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Outcome:

**Outcome 3.1** National fisheries management policies and plans harmonized to support transboundary fisheries solutions.

Indicator:

Drafted framework for harmonization of cross sectors to support transboundary fisheries solutions.

**Outcome 3.2**

Mainstream ecosystem-based fisheries into regional non-fisheries strategies, plans and policies

Indicator 3.2 Updated MRC BDS (2031-2040) and SP (2031-2036) with transformative outcomes and lessons approved by MRC Council

Output:

**Output 3.1.1**

Ecosystem-based fisheries management prioritized in national plans

Indicator:

Number of legal instruments drafted to support prioritization of fishery investment in fisheries management

GAP Indicator:

% of policy briefs and draft legal instruments with gender-specific provisions, gender-sensitive language and measures for increased investment in transboundary fisheries management and sustainable financing mechanism for fisheries management

**Output 3.2.1**

Ecosystem-based fisheries management included in agriculture and energy policy and planning

Indicator:

Number of focal landscapes targeted by existing updated or new nexus assessments with new fisheries related knowledge and recommendations to optimize water-food-environment-energy synergies, including ESV studies

GAP Indicator:

Number of nexus studies to optimize water-food-environment-energy tradeoffs that include gender-disaggregated data and findings

#### 4. Knowledge management and communication

Component Type	Trust Fund
Technical Assistance	GET
GEF Project Financing (\$)	Co-financing (\$)



1,544,301.00	5,413,890.00
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Outcome:

**Outcome 4.1.** Project implementation is improved through better knowledge management

Indicators:

4.1.a: Number of updates or upgrades of the existing MRC State of Basin Monitoring and

4.1.b: Number of visitors of the MEL platform website(s)

## **Outcome 4.2**

Project stakeholders are informed and engaged

Indicator: Number of people involved in communication activities or made aware of the project's activities and results

Output:

### **Output 4.1.1**

MRC-managed State of Basin Monitoring and Reporting System strengthened to better support planning and decision making relating to fisheries and development outcomes

Indicator:

Number of technical staff members and co-managers trained on MEL

GAP Indicator:

% of gender-sensitive indicators in the MEL system that track women's participation and empowerment in fisheries management.

### **Output 4.1.2**

Project Stakeholders in the Mekong River Basin are trained and supported to tailor capacity building actions in response to specific needs and thus achieve greater impacts

Indicator

Number of meetings and workshops to identify IWRM innovations and best practice

GAP Indicator:

% of women participating in capacity building activities

### **Output 4.1.3**

Knowledge management products (Studies, Maps, IWRM Best Practice Guide, Posters, Video reports, Photos, Concept papers, etc.) are developed and sessions organized

Indicator

Number of gender-responsive knowledge management products developed

GAP Indicator

# of gender-responsive knowledge management products developed

### **Output 4.1.4**

Knowledge sharing and stocktaking reviews conducted

Indicator

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Number of international and national knowledge sharing and outreach meetings with MCs, NGOs, academia, DPs and other key-players, including the International Waters Conferences (IWC) and the regional meetings and workshops organized by the IW: LEARN Network

**GAP Indicator:**

Number of gender-focused lessons shared through GEF IW LEARN.

**Output 4.2.1**

A project specific communication strategy and action plan is developed and updated

**Indicator**

Communication strategy and action plan developed

**GAP Indicator:**

% of women participating to consultation workshops for developing and finalizing the project communication strategy and action plan

**Output 4.2.2**

Targeted communication materials (Web site, podcasts, learning videos, flyers, etc.) are developed and disseminated in appropriate channels

**Indicator**

Targeted gender-responsive communication materials (web site, podcasts, learning videos, flyers, etc.) are developed and disseminated online and across the focal landscapes

**GAP Indicator:**

Number of communication materials (website, podcasts, learning videos, flyers, etc.) developed and disseminated online and across focal landscapes targeting women and vulnerable group

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**M&E**

Component Type	Trust Fund
Technical Assistance	GET
GEF Project Financing (\$)	Co-financing (\$)
214,000.00	1,226,282.00

Outcome:

**Outcome**

Implementation of project mechanisms for the monitoring of project progress

**Indicator:**

Number of working M&E system

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Output:

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## Output

Project monitoring system established (incl. MTR and TE)

## Indicator:

Number of quarterly and annual reports approved by IUCN

## Component Balances

Project Components	GEF Project Financing (\$)	Co-financing (\$)
1. Implementation of transboundary fisheries solutions	3,792,475.00	15,821,680.00
2. Economic and financial incentives for transforming fisheries-based livelihoods	3,587,275.00	15,821,680.00
3. Mainstream ecosystem-based fisheries into sectoral policies and plans	1,063,775.00	5,168,080.00
4. Knowledge management and communication	1,544,301.00	5,413,890.00
M&E	214,000.00	1,226,282.00
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>10,201,826.00</b>	<b>43,451,612.00</b>
Project Management Cost	507,350.00	2,576,300.00
<b>Total Project Cost (\$)</b>	<b>10,709,176.00</b>	<b>46,027,912.00</b>

Please provide Justification

## PROJECT OUTLINE

### A. PROJECT RATIONALE

Describe the current situation: the global environmental problems and/or climate vulnerabilities that the project will address, the key elements of the system, and underlying drivers of environmental change in the project context, such as population growth, economic development, climate change, sociocultural and political factors, including conflicts, or technological changes. Describe the objective of the project, and the justification for it. (Approximately 3-5 pages) see guidance here

### THE ECOLOGICAL AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE OF THE LOWER MEKONG BASIN

The Lower Mekong Basin (LMB) spans 650,000 km<sup>2</sup>, forming an interconnected network of rivers, wetlands, floodplains, and brackish ecosystems that drive the world's most productive inland fisheries, valued at \$8-\$9 billion annually. These fisheries contribute significantly to gross domestic product (GDP), food security, and local livelihoods in Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, and Thailand. Beyond its economic value, the LMB is an ecological powerhouse, second only to the Amazon and Congo basins in biodiversity richness.

The Mekong River is one of the most hydrologically dynamic systems on Earth, with a vast network of tributaries, floodplains, oxbow lakes, and seasonally inundated wetlands that sustain its ecological and economic productivity. Seasonal flooding is the driving force behind the basin's resilience, replenishing soils, distributing nutrient-rich sediments, and creating ideal conditions for fish spawning and wetland plant growth. These fluctuations support terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems, ensuring a stable food supply for both wildlife and human communities. Wetlands, such as flooded forests, marshes, and swamps, serve as essential breeding, nursery, and feeding

grounds for diverse fish species, migratory birds, amphibians, and semi-aquatic mammals. The Stung Treng Wetlands in Cambodia, the Xe Champhone Wetlands in Laos, and the Mekong Delta Ramsar sites in Vietnam are among the most critical ecological zones, supporting endangered species and sustaining fisheries-dependent communities. Recognizing their global significance, Mekong countries adopted the Ramsar Convention in 1993, leading to the classification of key wetland areas for long-term conservation and sustainable use.

The LMB is home to over 1,000 documented fish species, with an estimated 500 more yet to be described, making it one of the most diverse freshwater ecosystems globally. Iconic and endangered species, such as the Mekong giant catfish, giant barb, and Irrawaddy dolphin, depend on the basin's uninterrupted hydrological flow for survival. These species, along with softshell turtles, freshwater mollusks, and crustaceans, play essential roles in the basin's ecological balance, from nutrient cycling to sediment stabilization and water quality maintenance. Despite its remarkable biodiversity, the Mekong faces mounting threats from habitat fragmentation, overfishing, dam construction, and climate change. A recent assessment found 113 fish species, representing 15% of those assessed, listed as Threatened on the IUCN Red List, with 24 species classified as Critically Endangered. The Irrawaddy dolphin population, now estimated at fewer than 100 individuals, continues to decline due to habitat destruction, gillnet fishing, and hydropower development, signalling a broader ecological crisis.

The Mekong River supports one of the largest and most complex fish migrations in the world, with 20% of its species depending on seasonal movements to complete their life cycles. These migrations are essential for maintaining fisheries productivity, ensuring that fish populations remain sustainable for local communities. During the wet season, rising water levels flood wetlands, forests, and agricultural lands, transforming them into nutrient-rich breeding and nursery grounds. Juvenile fish thrive in these habitats before migrating back to deep river channels, tributaries, and reservoirs as water levels recede during the dry season. The Tonle Sap system in Cambodia, where the Tonle Sap River reverses its flow during the wet season, creates one of the richest fish nurseries on the planet, driving the Mekong's fisheries productivity. However, these migratory routes are increasingly threatened by human-made barriers, including dams, irrigation systems, and urban expansion, which block fish movement and reduce spawning success. Without immediate conservation efforts, the decline of migratory species will severely impact food security, local economies, and traditional fishing practices.

The LMB provides critical ecosystem services that support climate resilience, food and water security, and biodiversity conservation. Wetlands, floodplains, and forests act as natural buffers against extreme weather events, helping to regulate floodwaters, recharge groundwater supplies, and prevent soil erosion. These services are essential for regional adaptation to climate change, especially as droughts, floods, and erratic rainfall patterns become more frequent. The Mekong's wetlands serve as significant carbon sinks, storing vast amounts of carbon in their soils and vegetation. Recent studies suggest that the Mekong's inland fisheries alone help avoid 215 million tons of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions annually, making them a natural alternative to higher-emission food sources like livestock.

The LMB produces 1.6 million metric tons of fish and 500,000 metric tons of Other Aquatic Animals (OAAs) annually, providing 80% of the animal protein consumed by local communities. The nutrient-rich floodplains also sustain high-yield rice cultivation, ensuring that millions of people benefit from sustainable food production systems. The hydrological cycle further supports agriculture, aquaculture, and drinking water supplies, maintaining livelihoods and economic stability across the region.

Despite its global significance, the Mekong is under severe pressure from infrastructure development, land use changes, and unsustainable resource extraction. Without immediate conservation and sustainable management strategies, fish stocks will continue to decline, wetlands will degrade, and the region's resilience to climate change will weaken. Addressing these threats requires integrated, transboundary management, ensuring that hydropower, agriculture, and fisheries policies align with conservation goals. Sustainable solutions, such as ecosystem-based fisheries management, habitat restoration, and improved governance frameworks, will be crucial in preserving the Mekong's biodiversity and securing its economic and ecological future. By recognizing the Mekong's vital role in regional and global ecosystems, there is an urgent need for collective action to safeguard its rich biodiversity, sustain its fisheries, and enhance its resilience for future generations.

## THREATS

The LMB, one of the most biodiverse and productive freshwater systems in the world, faces interconnected threats that are undermining its ecological integrity and reducing its ability to support both biodiversity and livelihoods. These include habitat degradation and land use change, ecosystem fragmentation due to infrastructure development, unsustainable exploitation of natural resources, climate change and pollution.

Failure to address these threats will further weaken the Mekong's resilience, and its ability to recover from natural and human-induced disasters. Land use changes, particularly deforestation and wetlands encroachment, compromise groundwater recharge in the basin, further exposing communities to impacts from floods and droughts, and have led to a loss of key breeding areas for aquatic species which are essential for local livelihoods.

**Land use change** and the resulting **habitat degradation** is among the most pressing challenges in the basin, leading to the loss of critical wetlands, floodplains, and forests.

Over 75% of the basin's original wetlands have been converted to agricultural lands, aquaculture facilities, and urban developments. Across the region, wetlands have been largely overlooked in land use policies, leading to disruptions of the hydrological cycles that are essential for fish production and water retention, filtration, and nutrient cycling.

The LMB has some of the highest rates of deforestation in the world, which has led to increased runoff and erosion, limiting groundwater recharge while simultaneously increasing erosion and downstream sedimentation. Land conversion for monoculture plantations and agricultural production in wetlands and upland forests are the primary effects of policies that fall short of recognizing the diverse values of inland fisheries and wetlands. Irrigated agriculture, especially for floodplain rice, has further disconnected critical fish habitats leading to sharp declines in fish stocks and catches. Throughout the basin, agriculture largely relies on unsustainable practices such as tilling, and the use of fire and synthetic fertilizers which lead to erosion, soil degradation, and increased water pollutants, which are toxic to aquatic life. There is a need to address these unsustainable practices to reverse the decline of freshwater biodiversity and ensure food security at the local and national levels.

**Sediment trapping by upstream dams**, coupled with the **large-scale extraction of aggregates**, including sand and gravel, are increasingly impacting freshwater habitats in the LMB, particularly, Viet Nam's Mekong Delta. Monitoring in Pakse shows that from 2003 to 2009, average suspended loads declined from 120 million tonnes/year to 60 million tonnes/year, a 50% reduction. Large-scale river sand mining is another pressure that has resulted in channel incision, riverbank collapse, and increased saltwater intrusion, all of which reduce the availability of critical habitats for the recruitment of fish populations in the basin.

**Infrastructure development**, particularly the construction of dams, irrigation infrastructure and levees, is a critical threat to fisheries in the LMB. Two mainstream hydropower dams are built and others planned or under construction, in addition to 88 and 20, respectively, on Mekong tributaries. These structures block migratory routes for fish, preventing them from accessing critical spawning and nursery habitats such as deep pools, flooded forests and seasonal floodplains. Species that depend on long migratory routes, such as the Mekong giant catfish and striped catfish, are especially vulnerable.

Hydropower dams have altered river dynamics, reduced fishery yields, and exacerbated flood risks in downstream areas. The impacts of these disruptions extend beyond biodiversity, threatening food security for millions and increasing erosion along riverbanks and in the Mekong Delta.

Altering downstream river flows can be catastrophic for the LMB's fish populations and biodiversity, especially in the flooded forests and fast-flowing sections. In the LMB, fishways have rarely been integrated into dams, and they are generally seen as being ineffective at allowing migration. Catches of migratory fish are anticipated to decline by nearly half if the new large dams (> 200 MW) planned for construction are built. The impacts of large-scale dams are exacerbated by the **localized small-scale fragmentation of the floodplain and small river channels by irrigation infrastructure and levee systems**. There are around 25,000 small irrigation reservoirs in the LMB, and 78% of wetland habitat has been converted, mainly for rice cultivation. Small-scale interventions such as small-scale dam and levee removal or modification, small-scale fish passages, and the removal of invasive plants that choke waterways, can help restore connectivity and hydrology, and significantly improve livelihoods, food security and biodiversity.

**Overfishing and unsustainable harvesting practices** add further pressure to the Mekong's ecosystems and biodiversity. The basin's fisheries, which provide over 80% of the animal protein consumed by the local population, are being depleted due to excessive fishing pressure and destructive practices. Overfishing disrupts population structures, reduces biodiversity, and weakens the resilience of aquatic ecosystems. Keystone species, including the giant barb and small-scale fishery staples such as *Henicorhynchus spp.*, are in sharp decline. This threatens not only the food security of millions of people but also the economic stability of fishing communities that depend on these resources for their livelihoods.

In the LMB, declining fish catch rates, sizes and changes to species composition in the main fishing grounds, including deep pools are leading to increasing fishing efforts to meet market demands. To increase fish catch, rural fishers are fishing in deep pools, which are typically established as sanctuaries, particularly in the dry season when fish aggregate in these pools. Fishers are also using illegal fishing techniques, such as electrofishing, poisoning and explosives, to increase their catch, yielding large scale habitat destruction.

Weak and ineffective enforcement of fisheries laws is compounding the impacts of overfishing, leading to declining fish catch and yield. Further, there is limited public funding for capture fisheries (as opposed to aquaculture), specifically, funds are severely limited for supporting local communities to implement fisheries sustainable management plans and investing in improved value chains that enhance the value of already undervalued capture fisheries.

**Climate change** compounds these existing threats by intensifying droughts, floods, and temperature fluctuations, which in turn exacerbate water scarcity and habitat degradation. Rising temperatures and altered precipitation patterns disrupt the natural hydrological cycles that underpin the Mekong's ecological balance. Seasonal flooding, which is essential for creating nutrient-rich habitats for fish breeding and juvenile development, is becoming less predictable, with significant implications for fish populations and productivity. Droughts exacerbate the challenges posed by water retention structures, further limiting the availability of freshwater for ecosystems and communities alike.

According to the MRC, "climate change will increase the vulnerability of freshwater ecosystems due to changes in precipitation, more frequent severe weather events, and prolonged droughts.

Changing climate conditions are increasingly resulting in freshwater scarcities, due to increasing air temperatures and changing rainfall patterns. Rainfall patterns across MCs are strongly linked to ENSO events, the location of the Intertropical Convergence Zone, and seasonal monsoons. As a result, rainfall is increasingly variable from year to year. Extreme rainfall and flooding events are increasing in the basin, leading to runoff and the risk of flooding.

**Pollution** from agricultural runoff, industrial discharges, and urban waste presents another growing challenge. Fertilizers, pesticides, and untreated sewage entering the river degrade water quality, harm aquatic organisms, and disrupt food webs. Nutrient overloads from agricultural runoff led to algal blooms, depleting oxygen levels in the water and creating hypoxic conditions that are lethal to fish and other aquatic species. **These impacts further threaten biodiversity and compromise the health and productivity of Mekong's fisheries.**

The cumulative effects of these threats are profound. The degradation of ecosystems, fragmentation of habitats, and declining fish populations jeopardize the basin's ability to provide essential ecosystem services, including food and water security, climate regulation, and biodiversity conservation. These changes not only threaten the well-being of the basin's 63 million inhabitants but also undermine the global significance of the Mekong as one of the world's most biodiverse and productive freshwater systems.

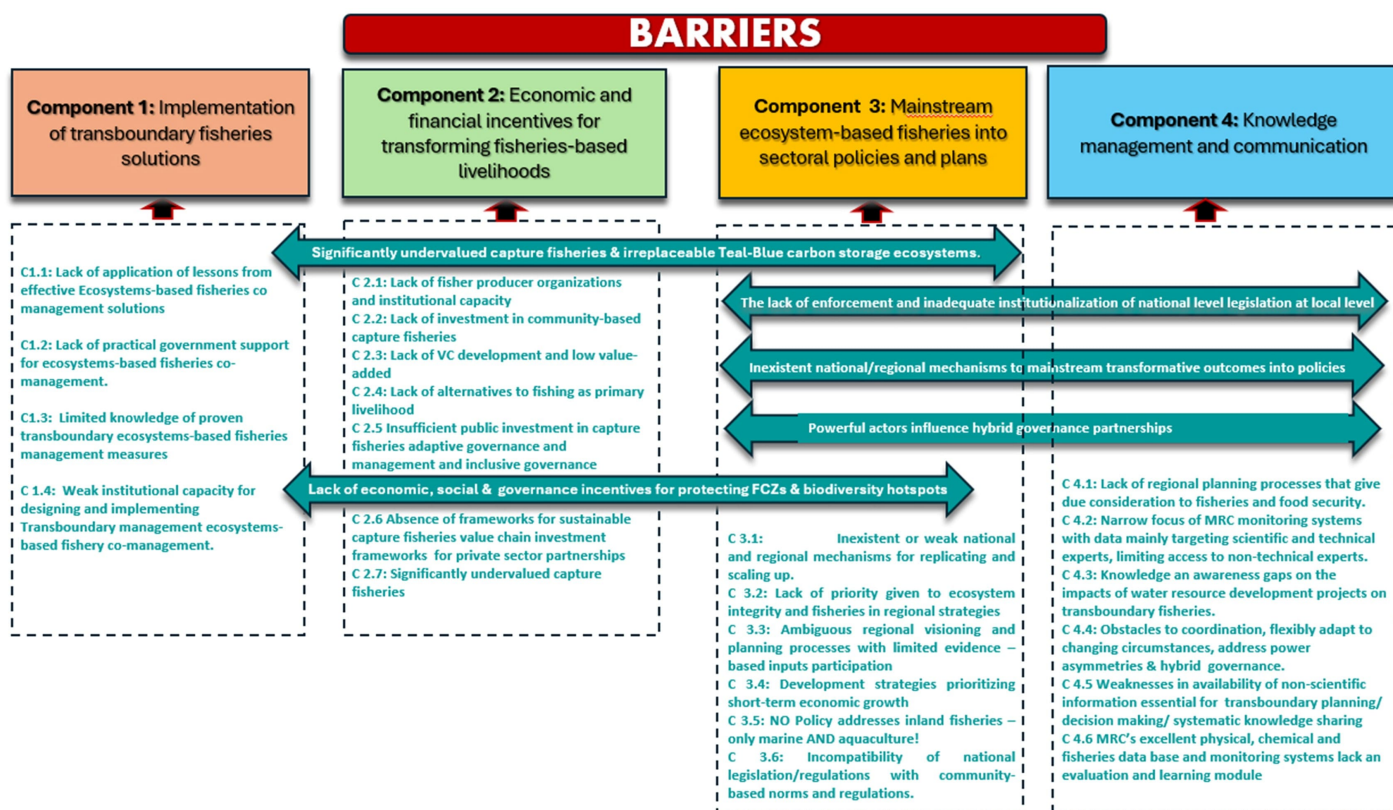
## **BARRIERS**

Following recommendations by the STAP and additional analyses by the PPG team, the barriers identified in the PIF were expanded and re-formulated (see analysis in ProDoc Appendix 18), based on peer review articles, country site visit interviews and the GEF IEO's Strategic Evaluation. The most important barriers are:

- 1) **Significantly undervalued capture fisheries.** The assumption that there is no financial return from investments in capture fisheries is one reason that governments have not invested more in the sector. Governments have failed to address investment decisions that threaten capture (addressed in Component 2).
- 2) **Failure to acknowledge the multiple ecosystem services provided by freshwater wetlands.** This includes their role in water regulation and flood and drought prevention, the provision of food through fisheries, and water for agriculture. (addressed in Components 2 and 3).
- 3) **Lack of integrated transboundary fisheries resources management.** The MRC has raised concerns about the need for stronger transboundary cooperation on water and fisheries management. But countries have historically prioritized economic growth irrespective of the environmental impacts, which are often hard to quantify and monetize. <sup>[1]</sup> There is inadequate understanding of the economic losses caused by projects that ignore the values of capture fisheries and other ecosystem services (addressed in Component 3).
- 4) **Lack of economic, social and governance incentives for protecting biodiversity hotspots** and the services they provide to local communities (addressed in Components 1, 2 and 3);
- 5) **Weak national and regional mechanisms to replicate and scale up models of successful capture fisheries** There are many examples of NGO-supported investments in community-based capture fisheries that have resulted in fish stock recovery and increased catch. But there are never scaled up using public funding (addressed in Components 3 and 4).

**MRC monitoring systems with data mainly targeting sector specific without cross sector collaboration for change.** Given the comprehensive MRC monitoring system, the monitoring disciplines (fisheries and other environmental) are still running parallel without further coordination to show a causal links between environmental disciplines, which make the report information limited scope for cross sector coordination. In addition, the problem also relates to MCs capacity to integrate the data into their national system to support planning and management. These prevent broadening discussions related to balancing investment between sectors for synergy. Ideally, MRC monitoring systems can move towards integrated analysis and targeting cross sector collaboration and a cross-sector expert group (e.g., fisheries, agriculture, environment) should be reinstalled so that experts with strong backgrounds (e.g., fisheries, agriculture, environment) are prioritized (addressed in Components 3 and 4);



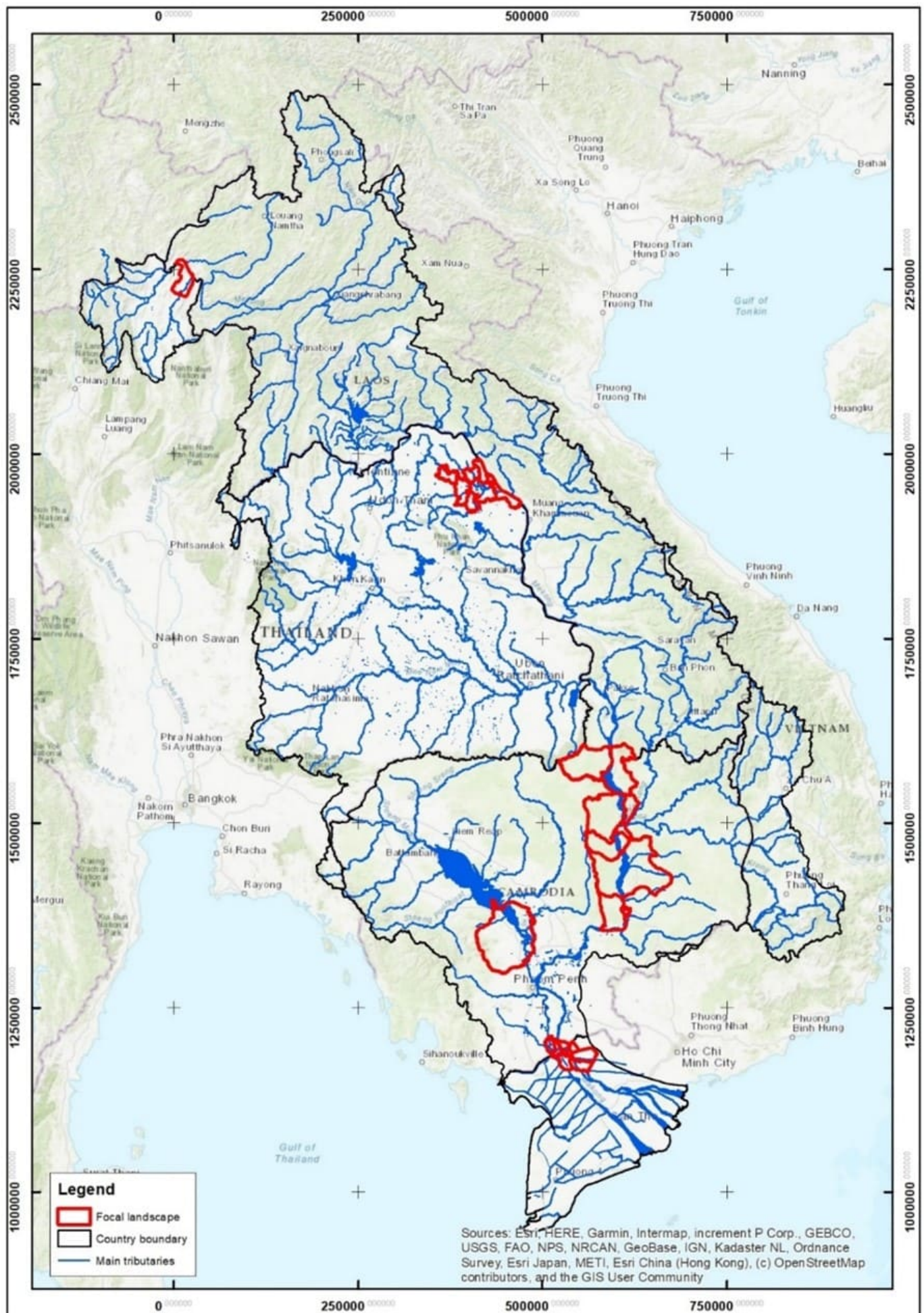


**Figure 1.** Design of the 4 components to address the barriers

## INTERVENTION STRATEGY

To address these challenges, the project identifies **six focal landscapes** that are critical habitats for fisheries and biodiversity conservation. These include the Lower Songkhram River Basin and Ing River Mouth in Thailand, the Siphandone wetlands in Laos, the Kratie - Stung Treng wetlands and Eastern Tonle Sap in Cambodia, and the Upper Mekong Delta in Vietnam. These landscapes collectively span over 2.1 million hectares and are vital for fish breeding, migration, and biodiversity conservation. They support millions of livelihoods and serve as ecological backbones for the Mekong's fisheries.

Each landscape was selected based on its ecological significance, socio-economic importance, and the potential for replicable interventions. For instance, the Siphandone wetlands in Laos are critical for migratory species such as the giant catfish, while the Eastern Tonle Sap floodplains in Cambodia are essential for fish reproduction and food security. The Upper Mekong Delta in Vietnam, a hotspot for aquaculture and agriculture, faces severe challenges from wetland conversion and climate change, making it a priority for sustainable management interventions.





**Figure 2.** *The six Focal Landscapes and target Districts in which the Demonstration Sites are proposed.*

The project aims to address critical challenges in the Lower Mekong Basin (LMB) by implementing integrated and ecosystem-based fisheries management to protect fish stocks, biodiversity, and livelihoods. The project underscores the importance of holistic, adaptive approaches that integrate ecosystem-based fisheries management with community-driven Fisheries Co-Management (FCoM) to address the interconnected challenges of biodiversity loss, habitat degradation, and climate change and to recognize the multiple services provided by inland fisheries. Although each country has revised its legislation and regulations to support and enable FCoM, there is considerable room to adjust regulations to support a more holistic, ecosystems-based and adaptive management approach to address the complexity and uncertainties associated with the LMB's capture fishery dynamics.

**Component 1** focuses on scaling up FCoM practices, emphasizing habitat connectivity and restoration. It seeks to address weak enforcement, limited local community involvement, and inadequate ecosystem-wide management by establishing protected fish habitats and conservation zones. This holistic approach aims to reverse declining fish stocks and biodiversity while improving local livelihoods.

**Component 2** focuses on strengthening value chains to increase economic returns for fishing communities and securing long-term financing for ecosystem conservation. By enhancing market access for sustainable fisheries products, diversifying livelihoods, and engaging private and public investments, this component supports economic and ecological sustainability. It builds partnerships with initiatives like WASSA and the ADB Nature-based Solution Finance Hub to incentivize investments in nature and fisheries.

**Component 3** works to harmonize policies across LMB countries, integrate sustainable practices into regional and national frameworks, and address transboundary management challenges. This involves updating legal instruments, improving governance mechanisms, and fostering collaboration to mitigate habitat degradation and improve ecological connectivity.

**Component 4** enhances knowledge management, monitoring, and learning to inform policies and share best practices across stakeholders. By building on existing data and capturing transformative lessons, it supports adaptive management and evidence-based decision-making.

The project aligns with the following GEF's core focal areas (International Waters, Biodiversity, and Land Degradation):

- **International Waters (IW):** Enhance transboundary fisheries governance and management across priority landscapes in four LMB countries.
- **Biodiversity:** Protect key habitats for threatened freshwater species within six focal landscapes.
- **Land Degradation:** Restore 50,000 hectares of critical freshwater ecosystems.

By delivering these global environmental benefits (GEBs), the project ensures long-term sustainability, strengthens community resilience, and supports global commitments like the SDGs.

The **Mekong River Commission (MRC)** and relevant government line agencies of the LMB Countries will be the Executing Agencies and have full control of the project, while IUCN is the GEF Implementing Agency of this project and only has a role in administrating the project.

Under the 1995 Mekong River Agreement, the MRC is mandated to facilitate dialogue between Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Viet Nam to ensure effective coordination of basin planning and investment. Fisheries is a core focus of the MRC and MRC has supported monitoring of the status and trends of capture fisheries in the LMB since 1995. In 2020, the MRC published the Mekong Basin-Wide Fisheries Management and Development Strategy (BFMS) based on the results of more than a decade of fisheries research. The BFMS is part of the MRC Basin Development Strategy 2021-2030 (BDS) and Strategic Plan 2021-2025 (SP). However, funding for the BFMS has yet to be secured at any scale. The project builds on the MRC's experience and expertise in transboundary fisheries management.

The MRC has invested considerable effort in harmonizing regional efforts for sustainable development and management of the Mekong's fisheries through several important initiatives that are currently ongoing: that include the following: including through sharing of technical know-how on fisheries management, raising awareness on the sector's significance for the Mekong's environment and its people, and promoting an integrated approach with other sectors.

Recently, the MRC published a report on lessons learned from capture fisheries co-management in the LMB and opportunities for further support. Its findings and recommendations have been integrated into the PPG. Multiple and diverse lessons learned from over

a decade of fish-stock monitoring initiatives by the MRC and partner countries offer concrete examples that can produce project outcomes for social-ecological systems in the target countries.

The project will help the MRC and member countries to scale up fisheries restoration, sustainable financing mechanism, and adaptive governance processes that have been outlined in MRC strategies and guidelines to target some of the **root causes of the LMB's declining fisheries**. Building on decades of MRC-led research and engagement (see Appendix H of the PIF), the project will address barriers through dialogue and engagement, enhancement of the resilience of the fishing communities and strengthening capacity and local environmental knowledge (LEK) base. The project will provide funding to facilitate implementation of the jointly agreed action plan (see Appendix J of the PIF).

## **LESSONS LEARNED FROM PAST AND ONGOING RELEVANT INTERVENTIONS IN THE LMB**

Many projects have been implemented to enhance fisheries management over the past 20 years in Cambodia, Vietnam, Lao PDR and Thailand. These projects, led by national governments, MRC, NGOs, and international organizations (e.g. IUCN, WWF), offer critical lessons for designing and implementing future interventions.

### **Cambodia**

The Cambodia Programme for Sustainable and Inclusive Growth in the Fisheries Sector (CAPFISH) and the EU-NSA Project highlighted the importance of involving local communities in fisheries management. CAPFISH effectively established no-take zones and restored critical fish populations, including the endangered Mekong giant catfish, while promoting sustainable fishing practices. However, the persistence of illegal fishing and habitat degradation emphasized the need for stronger enforcement mechanisms and sustained community support. Similarly, the EU-NSA Project demonstrated the success of demarcating Fish Conservation Areas (FCAs) to improve fish stocks and local incomes but underscored the importance of financial sustainability and integration into broader policy frameworks.

Projects like the Tonle Sap Biosphere Reserve (TSBR) emphasized the value of inclusive governance and community participation in protecting unique ecosystems. Capacity-building and collaboration between government and local stakeholders proved critical. Similarly, fish population restoration efforts in the Tonle Sap Lake, including the release of critically endangered species, highlighted the need for targeted interventions to boost aquatic ecosystem health.

The PaFF program's two phases demonstrated the importance of scaling sustainable practices across provinces. Its focus on developing community fisheries and forestry groups, along with ecotourism and non-timber forest product enterprises, showed how biodiversity conservation can be linked to improved livelihoods. Coordination between stakeholders was key to fostering broader sustainable resource management.

The Climate Resilient by Nature (CRxN) project introduced NbS to enhance community resilience and aquatic biodiversity. Its integration of sustainable fishing practices with eco-tourism and livelihood support highlighted the potential of holistic approaches to link conservation with socioeconomic benefits.

The Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center (SEAFDEC) projects underscored the value of infrastructure, such as fish passages, and technical capacity-building to support fish migration and conservation. However, these efforts revealed challenges related to maintaining long-term community engagement and adequate funding.

Across projects, the need for coordinated approaches and policy integration emerged as a key lesson. Sustaining gains requires aligning local efforts with national strategies and ensuring financial sustainability through innovative mechanisms such as revolving funds introduced in fisheries projects. Collaboration among stakeholders, including government agencies, NGOs, and local communities, was critical for achieving long-term conservation goals.

### **Lao PDR**

Several initiatives in Lao PDR highlight the importance of involving local communities in fisheries and wetland conservation. The WWF Community Fishery Projects and the WWF Lao-Thailand Fishery Management Project established Fish Conservation Zones (FCZs) that protect migratory species like the giant catfish while enhancing local livelihoods. These efforts emphasize the need for long-term community engagement and local ownership to sustain conservation outcomes.

Projects like the FAO Climate Change Adaptation in Wetland Areas and the MRC, LNMC Wetland Management Project demonstrated the value of restoring wetlands for biodiversity conservation and enhancing community resilience to climate change. These initiatives showed that integrating climate-resilient agricultural practices and wetland management can create sustainable livelihoods while addressing environmental challenges.

The WB Sustainable Floodplain Management Component and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF) projects focused on rehabilitating critical infrastructure, such as flood gates and irrigation systems, while promoting adaptive agricultural practices like

floating rice. These projects highlight the importance of integrating infrastructure improvements with sustainable agricultural systems to mitigate climate impacts.

The MRC-LNMC Transboundary Fishery Management Project facilitated joint fisheries management plans between Lao PDR and Cambodia, fostering regional cooperation to address shared challenges in fisheries management. This underscores the potential of transboundary collaboration to enhance resource governance and environmental sustainability.

Efforts by the WCS and WWF Siphandone Fishery Project supported crocodile conservation and fish hatchery programs while promoting alternative livelihoods. These projects highlight the importance of species-specific conservation efforts coupled with community livelihood improvements.

Projects like the WWF Enhancing Management of Aquatic Resources are scaling fisheries co-management and ecosystem-based adaptation strategies to improve livelihoods and conserve freshwater resources. Similarly, the WCS Community-Led Initiatives focus on wetlands conservation, crocodile recovery, and policy engagement, emphasizing the critical role of biodiversity protection in ensuring sustainable development.

Key takeaways from initiatives in Lao PDR highlight the critical role of community-driven conservation, transboundary collaboration, and ecosystem-based approaches in achieving sustainable resource management. Effective projects integrated wetland restoration, fisheries co-management, and climate-adaptive agricultural practices to enhance biodiversity and community resilience. Infrastructure improvements, such as irrigation and flood management, proved impactful when combined with sustainable practices. Transboundary efforts fostered regional cooperation, while biodiversity-focused projects tied to local livelihoods demonstrated the importance of aligning conservation goals with community well-being for long-term success.

## **Vietnam**

The project 'Sustainable development of one million hectares specializing in high-quality and low-emission rice cultivation associated with green growth in the Mekong Delta until 2030' [\[1\]](#) focus on developing one million hectares of high-quality, low-emission rice cultivation in the Mekong Delta and emphasized the potential for sustainable agricultural transformation. It achieved significant reductions in input costs (30%), increases in profit margins for farmers (50%), and reductions in greenhouse gas emissions (10%). This initiative highlighted the importance of aligning sustainable farming practices with Vietnam's international environmental commitments. Successful outcomes were linked to value chain reorganization, circular production models, and innovative financial mechanisms, such as carbon credit. The pilot model's scalability was key, with plans to expand nationwide to establish Vietnam's 'Green Development' rice brand. The project underscored how sustainability-focused interventions can also enhance economic competitiveness.

Projects such as the WB Sustainable Fishery Development Project (SFDP) and the USAID-funded Mekong Delta Coastal Habitat Conservation Project highlighted the importance of smart infrastructure and partnerships for sustainable fisheries management. These initiatives demonstrated the need for better data systems, climate-resilient aquaculture, and improved governance frameworks to combat threats like illegal fishing and overexploitation.

The USAID-funded Mekong Delta project showed the effectiveness of integrating biodiversity conservation with local livelihoods, focusing on mangrove forests, seagrass beds, and marine protected areas. However, addressing overexploitation and development pressures required stronger governance and community engagement.

The MRC-RIA2 project on co-management of deep-pool fisheries demonstrated the value of shared management responsibilities among fishers, local authorities, and line agencies. However, challenges such as insufficient funding, limited community commitment, and weak leadership transitions emphasized the need for sustainability in financing and local ownership.

FAO-MONRE-GEF's Integrated Sustainable Landscape Management project showcased the potential for NbS to enhance resilience in rice-dominated landscapes. The project's focus on multi-benefit strategies—combining food security, biodiversity conservation, and climate adaptation—offered lessons on integrating NbS into broader landscape management.

The SFDP and other fisheries projects emphasized the role of 'smart' infrastructure in improving governance and adding value to fisheries. Success depended on technical capacity building, integration into national policies, and robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

Across all projects, inclusive governance, local community participation, and capacity-building were critical for success. Ensuring financial sustainability, aligning projects with broader policies, and fostering long-term partnerships with businesses, governments, and local actors were identified as key factors for achieving lasting impact.

## **Thailand**

Thailand's efforts highlight the importance of community-driven and transboundary initiatives.

Projects like the Mekong Integrated Water Resource Management (MIWRM) (2012–2018), supported by the World Bank, showcased the benefits of improving water management and wetland conservation while fostering regional collaboration on shared fisheries resources. Similarly, the Lower Mekong Fish Passage Initiative (2016–2021) successfully constructed fish passages, supporting migratory fish species, though ongoing infrastructure challenges remain.

Through the Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center (SEAFDEC), Thailand implemented stock enhancement programs and promoted alternative livelihoods, alleviating pressure on overexploited fish stocks. These initiatives demonstrated the need for integrating sustainable fisheries management into broader policy frameworks to enhance their effectiveness.

NGO-led projects like the WWF Greater Mekong Programme and the Living Rivers Siam Community-Led Fish Conservation established **FCZs** to protect fish habitats and promote biodiversity, emphasizing the role of traditional knowledge in conservation. Projects such as the IUCN Mekong WET Project (2017–2020) further reinforced the importance of wetland restoration and climate resilience for sustainable fisheries.

The Transboundary Fisheries Management Initiative (2020–2025) and other collaborative projects highlighted the value of harmonized fishing regulations and cross-border cooperation in addressing shared environmental challenges, such as hydropower impacts and climate variability.

Planned initiatives like the Sustainable Hydropower and Fisheries Impact Mitigation Project (2023–2030) aim to balance energy development with fisheries conservation by constructing fishways and restoring habitats. Thailand's focus on the MRC Strategic Plan (2021–2025) underscores its commitment to monitoring, ecological sustainability, and mitigating hydropower impacts.

Despite progress, challenges persist, including hydropower-induced habitat disruptions, limited scaling of successful initiatives, and the need for stronger integration of conservation efforts into national policies. The importance of diversifying income sources through initiatives like eco-tourism and sustainable agriculture was also emphasized to reduce reliance on fishing.

## STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

National, provincial, and local institutional stakeholders, along with NGOs, play critical roles in implementing the project based on their mandates and operational scopes.

**National institutions** provide overarching policy direction, technical expertise, and coordination, ensuring the alignment of project activities with national strategies and frameworks. These bodies also act as key decision-makers, overseeing project implementation, and integrating its outcomes into broader national agenda, particularly in areas of fisheries management and environmental sustainability.

At the **provincial level**, specialized departments act as critical intermediaries between national policies and local implementation. They provide technical expertise, enforce compliance with environmental and fisheries regulations, and monitor project activities within their jurisdiction. Provincial stakeholders are also instrumental in addressing region-specific challenges, such as enhancing local capacities and improving community engagement in sustainable resource management. A Strategic Evaluation of the GEF support to LMB countries **over** the past 15 years found that the provincial level is a crucial enabler or barrier to replicating and upscaling projects, as well as mainstreaming good practices and lessons into improved policies and sectoral development plans (GEF IEO, 2020). They are also important drivers of building ownership of donor-funded projects and consequently, they will be the central conduits for channeling information and guidance between the central level and the lowest practical levels which will pass through the **districts**. They will play a key role in **project implementation**.

**Local stakeholders**, including district and commune leaders, play an essential role in mobilizing community participation, monitoring project implementation at the grassroots level, and ensuring compliance with environmental and social safeguards. In Cambodia Community Fisheries (CFi) groups are directly involved in resource management, enforcement of local fisheries regulations, and the implementation of livelihood activities, fostering a participatory approach to conservation and resource use.

**Fisheries and Farmers Associations** like Thailand Fisheries Association (TFA), the Living River Foundation, Wone's seaweed Association, Lao Farmers Network (LFN), Vietnam Fisheries Society (VINAFIS), Vietnam Association of Seafood Exporters and Producers (VASEP), Vietnam farmer Association play important roles in providing local communities and fisher organizations with training, logistical support and connecting with external freshwater commodity markets. These local actors have considerable experience with hands-on and practical solutions to many of the issues facing the focal landscapes and Demonstration Areas. will provide training and technical guidance for Components 1, 2 and 4, and they are important actors for introducing sustainable ecosystems-based fisheries co-management, as well as improving sustainable land use and agricultural management. They will also play a vital role in Component 2, providing proven alternatives to unsustainable practices. For example, Women's riverweed and another carrying out fermentation will help provide such alternatives, while others will help establish community credit funds and mini-trust funds and business planning expertise.

**International NGOs**, such as WWF, WCS, Oxfam, CARE International, **and national and local civil society organizations**, such as Khmer Association for Development of Countryside (KAFDOC), the Stung Treng Women's Development Center (SWDC), Khmer Youth and Social Development (KYSD), Gender and Development for Cambodia (GADC), Lao and Vietnam Women's Union (WU), Living River Association (LRA), Thailand International Cooperation Agency (TICA), the Thailand Women Development Committees and other bring expertise in community development, gender equity, and capacity building. These organizations are particularly crucial in addressing gender-related aspects of the project. They contribute to implementing the Gender Action Plans (GAP) by promoting women's participation in decision-making, supporting women-led livelihood initiatives, and enhancing awareness of gender equity at all levels. These organizations will help build synergies with the project and hopefully provide additional funding to replicate good practices that they have developed in the LMB.

While **these** institutions are important for strengthening fishery co management at the lowest practical levels, most people consider themselves to be Buddhists and consequently, **Buddhist monks and temples** near the Mekong River and its tributaries play a crucial role in providing spiritual guidance based on Buddhist principles related to environmental stewardship. There are eight key religious principles compatible with conservation approaches and these principles provide a spiritual framework for more sustainable and successful fish conservation. The effectiveness of managing FCZ adjacent to Temples in all countries, as well as the important role that the monks play in resolving conflicts over freshwater resources was observed throughout the field missions in the four countries. The Monks and temples will play important roles 'within those landscapes where they are adjacent to FCZs. They will also help contribute the fundamental requirements for sustaining the project interventions long after GEFs support ends.

[1] Decision No. 1490/QĐ-TTg dated 27/11/2023 Approving the Project 'Sustainable development of one million hectares specializing in high-quality and low-emission rice cultivation associated with green growth in the Mekong Delta until 2030'

[1] PIF *op cit*.

**B. PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

This section asks for a theory of change as part of a joined-up description of the project as a whole. The project description is expected to cover the key elements of good project design in an integrated way. It is also expected to meet the GEF's policy requirements on gender, stakeholders, private sector, and knowledge management and learning (see section D). This section should be a narrative that reads like a joined-up story and not independent elements that answer the guiding questions contained in the guidance document. (Approximately 3-5 pages) see guidance here

The intervention logic and theory of change of the project have been adjusted in response to recommendations from the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP) to better align with the project's objectives and the Global Environment Facility's (GEF) priorities. The four components, with their corresponding outcomes, outputs, and activities, have been designed to meet the project's overarching goal while ensuring long-term sustainability.

The project's outcomes align with its theory of change, aiming to restore fish stocks, conserve biodiversity, improve livelihoods through sustainable value chains, and embed ecosystem-based fisheries management into policy frameworks. By reconnecting habitats, incentivizing sustainable practices, and fostering knowledge-sharing, the project provides a replicable model for transboundary fisheries management. This approach ensures ecological, social, and economic benefits, securing the future of fisheries and livelihoods in the LMB and beyond.

The narrative describing the revised Theory of Change (ToC) shown in the following figure is described as follows:

<b>Component #1</b> - Implementation of transboundary fisheries solutions	<b>Causal Pathway 1:</b> <i>IF improved fisheries management solutions are implemented at scale THEN ecosystem health will be maintained, AND fish biomass and biodiversity will increase, leading to increased fish stocks, biodiversity, and social well-being.</i>
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<b>Component #2</b> - Economic and financial incentives for transforming fisheries-based livelihoods	<b>Causal Pathway 2:</b> <i>IF sustainable financial and economic investments are developed to increase market demand for sustainable freshwater value chains, THEN the value of fisheries will increase, which will attract new investments AND reduce dependence on fisheries and fish stocks</i>
<b>Component #3</b> - Mainstreaming ecosystem-based fisheries into sectoral policies and plans	<b>Causal Pathway 3:</b> <i>IF project results are effectively communicated AND if political economy barriers are overcome, THEN governments will increase investment in fisheries and ensure that sector plans avoid unnecessary impacts on fisheries.</i>
<b>Component #4</b> – Knowledge sharing of outcomes and lessons	<b>Causal Pathway 4:</b> <i>IF a robust knowledge-sharing and learning platform within the MRC, THEN project outcomes will be replicated, scaled up, and mainstreamed into regional development plans</i>

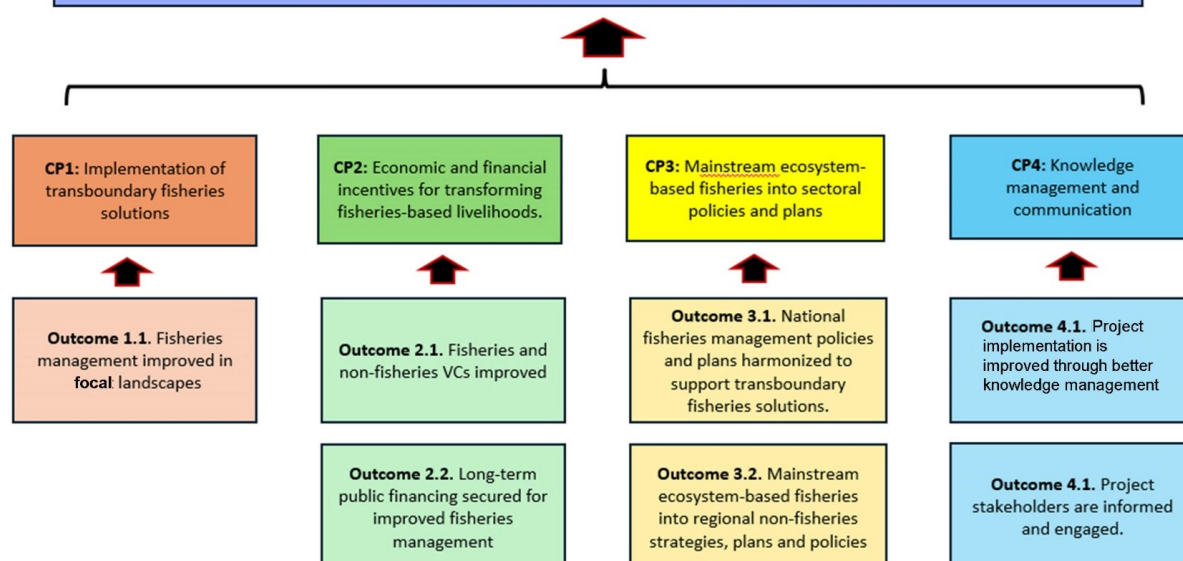
### Theory of Change

**Long-term Goal:** Upscaling of pathways to deliver enduring transformative changes in the LMB's transboundary connectivity of Social and Ecological systems to improve biodiversity, transboundary capture fisheries biomass and other ecosystem service benefits.

**Midterm Goal:** Scale up of integrated ecosystem-based fishery management measures & co-benefits to increase biodiversity interconnectivity in the LMR.

**PO:** To increase the connectivity, productivity and resilience of transboundary capture fisheries, aquatic biodiversity and other ecosystem services that provide co-benefits for the people living in the LMB.

Assumption: See Component-specific assumption in Section 4.3



**Figure 3.** Project's Theory of Change

*Notes: For assumptions and risks see the following components' description*

## COMPONENT 1

Component 1 focuses on expanding proven fisheries co-management (FCoM) practices to protect and increase fish stocks using an ecosystem-based approach. It addresses key barriers such as weak enforcement, inadequate institutional support, and insufficient local empowerment to implement sustainable practices.

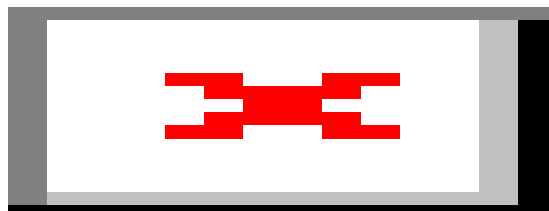
Building on evidence of successful fisheries management, this component will scale up best practices, including networks of protected fish habitats and restoration of swimways to support migratory species. While many Lower Mekong Basin (LMB) countries recognize FCoM, around 60% of Fish Conservation Zones (FCZs) remain under-managed, covering less than 10% of key fisheries. Consequently, fish stocks and biodiversity continue to decline, requiring urgent intervention.

A major limitation of current FCoM and FCZ approaches is their focus on isolated habitats rather than broader ecosystem connectivity. Effective fisheries co-management requires a holistic approach that integrates ecological and social factors, recognizing the link between biodiversity and livelihoods. This adaptive, learning-based approach aligns with the Mekong River Commission's (MRC) strategy for sustainable fisheries management.

To achieve its goals, this component will expand FCoM capacities by implementing ecosystem-based approaches that protect fish migration corridors and develop buffer zones for sustainable harvesting. It will also focus on protecting critical fish habitats, including deep river pools, tributaries, and floodplains, while mitigating the impacts of agricultural expansion. In addition, it will promote inclusive co-management by extending community-based management beyond conservation areas to surrounding buffer zones.

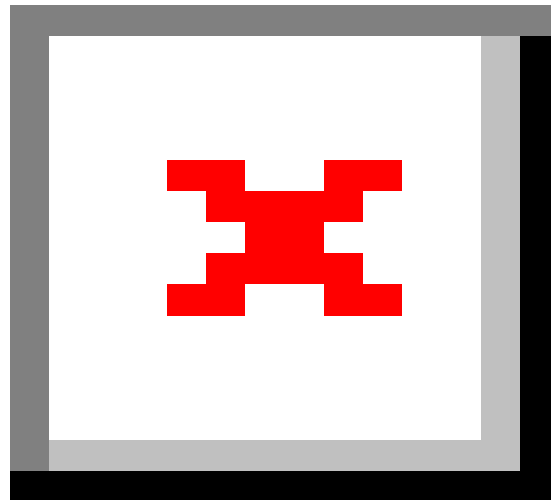
By prioritizing ecosystem connectivity, habitat protection, and inclusive co-management, Component 1 aims to strengthen fisheries and biodiversity while improving local livelihoods. The component's key outcome, 'Fisheries management improved in target landscapes,' will be measured through two indicators, four outputs, and ten activities. Expected outputs include managing 50,000 hectares of critical fish habitats, enhancing knowledge sharing, and strengthening governance and financial capacities of local fisheries. These efforts align with the MRC's strategic goals to restore fish stocks, ensure sustainable fisheries yields, and contribute to broader biodiversity conservation across the LMB.

### Outcome 1.1 Fisheries



management improved in focal landscapes

A recent  
 MRC report  
 on FCoM  
 emphasizes  
 the need for  
 a  
 consolidated  
 fisheries co-



management (FCoM) system that integrates ecosystem-based approaches. Without this framework, efforts risk being ineffective and unsustainable. By demonstrating the implementation and scalability of evidence-based FCoM practices across six selected landscapes, this outcome establishes a foundation for adaptive management that strengthens resilience in the Lower Mekong Basin (LMB).

The project will develop critical fish habitat maps and conduct baseline assessments to identify key threats and opportunities (**Output 1.1.1**). These tools will guide ecosystem-based fisheries management interventions by pinpointing vital spawning, feeding, and migration areas. Data collection will combine scientific research with local ecological knowledge to assess vulnerabilities and ensure targeted conservation efforts. The resulting maps will provide a basis for restoring ecological connectivity, protecting critical habitats, and enhancing fish stocks across the LMB.

Another key output will be the development of best-practice guidelines for FCoM and Fish Conservation Zones (FCZs) (**Output 1.1.2**). Although some guidelines exist, there is no standardized approach at the MRC level. This project will consolidate and refine these guidelines, integrating evidence-based management practices with participatory decision-making, governance mechanisms, and conflict resolution strategies. The guidelines will also outline the roles of local governments and community managers in enforcing conservation measures and ensuring compliance.

To protect and restore critical fish habitats, the project will conserve 50,000 hectares across the focal landscapes (**Output 1.1.3**). This effort will involve establishing new conservation areas, developing tailored management plans, and implementing protection instruments such as FCZs, other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs), and Ramsar site designations. The conservation strategy will integrate scientific assessments, stakeholder consultations, and participatory governance to ensure both ecological and socio-economic benefits.

Further efforts will focus on removing or modifying barriers that disrupt fish migration (Activity 1.1.3.3). Many irrigation structures and dikes prevent fish from reaching essential habitats, threatening their life cycles. This project will identify and prioritize key barriers, implement cost-effective solutions such as fish passages and bypass channels, and work with communities to maintain these interventions. Training programs will ensure that local stakeholders can manage and sustain these improvements over time.

A crucial aspect of this outcome is the establishment of 100 locally managed FCoM frameworks (**Output 1.1.4**). These frameworks will provide structured governance for community-led fisheries management, ensuring sustainable resource use and equitable benefit



distribution. Capacity-building programs will train local fishery committees and government officials on co-management principles, financial sustainability, and monitoring strategies. These frameworks will also integrate adaptive management to enhance ecological connectivity and support long-term fisheries sustainability. **IPs will be identified and consulted to provide information on project, ESMF and GCM, assess their specific needs and expectations and obtain the needed FPIC. Specific documentation on project, ESMF and GCM will be disclosed in local languages during the first round of meetings with the local communities.**

Sustainable financing mechanisms will be introduced to ensure the longevity of ecosystem-based fisheries management (Activity 1.1.4.3). The project will implement mini-trust funds and rotating credit funds, allowing local fishing communities to finance conservation activities. These mechanisms will be managed by community finance committees, with a strong emphasis on gender equity to ensure inclusive participation. Partnerships with external funders will further strengthen the financial sustainability of fisheries conservation initiatives.

The project will also facilitate knowledge exchange through national and regional visits, establishing communities of practice among fishers and fisheries co-management practitioners (Activity 1.1.4.4). These networks will foster collaboration, allowing stakeholders to share successful strategies and scale up best practices across the region. By strengthening local governance, integrating scientific and traditional knowledge, and enhancing sustainable financing, this outcome will contribute to the long-term resilience of fisheries, biodiversity, and livelihoods in the LMB.

#### Component 1 – Assumptions and Risks

<b>A1.1</b>	Adequate and timely technical support, oversight and continuous accompaniment by MRCS and National counterparts.	<i>MRCS and Executing agencies</i>
<b>A1.2</b>	Expanded legal recognition of fishing rights conferred for exclusive community co-managed areas including FCZs Open Access Fishing buffer areas in MCs demonstration areas.	<i>Competent National &amp; Provincial Authorities</i>
<b>A1.3</b>	Ecosystem-based fisheries management is fully applied in the site-specific demonstration areas within each Landscape, institutionalized, enforced by local government.	“ “ “ “ “ “
<b>A1.4</b>	Formalized agreements with local fishing communities and where applicable, with Monks/Temples as co-managers	“ “ “
<b>A1.5</b>	Formalized agreements for cooperation/coordination & data sharing with WASSA+ AusAid-Royal Haskoning- WWF wetlands and other projects like FAO and WorldFish.	<i>MRC, IUCN and AusAid and other actors</i>
Risks include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promoting livelihoods beyond the fishery, it may not make a difference because most fishing is part time, and they just keep fishing.</li> <li>Reducing livelihoods dependency on fisheries runs another risk of removing the motivation to conserve the fishery (and habitats), which could lead to further losses of the fishery. And it is imperative that this is taken seriously to ensure that the GEF will not be indirectly promoting fisheries declines further.</li> </ul>		

## COMPONENT 2

Component 2 takes a twofold approach: strengthening fisheries and non-fisheries value chains (VCs) to increase economic returns for fishing communities and securing long-term public financing for ecosystem conservation. This approach balances economic and ecological priorities to ensure the long-term sustainability of fisheries and their ecosystems.

The first aspect focuses on improving fisheries-related VCs by enhancing economic viability and ensuring fair profit distribution. The smallholder-driven and fragmented nature of the fisheries sector in the Lower Mekong Basin (LMB) has led to missed opportunities for aligning economic incentives with sustainability. The gap between landing point value and retail value can be as high as 400%, underscoring the need for fishers to capture a larger share of the profits. Strengthening value chains will create fairer profit distribution, incentivize sustainable practices, and support diversified livelihoods, reducing dependence on fishing and opening opportunities for future generations.

Efforts will focus on increasing demand for sustainably sourced fish by linking top-down market-driven approaches with bottom-up supply-building efforts. National markets will be leveraged to promote responsible purchasing policies, raise awareness, and facilitate

multi-stakeholder engagement through government-led platforms. This will not only protect threatened species but also promote alternative income-generating activities that ease pressure on capture fisheries. In parallel, sustainable non-fisheries value chains will be developed in communities with viable market demand, fostering circular economies that integrate sustainable fish products, locally processed aquatic foods, and ecotourism linked to habitat conservation. Financial mechanisms such as community membership fees, licensing fees for commercial fishing, and small levies on fish sales will also be introduced to generate additional revenue for local fisheries management.

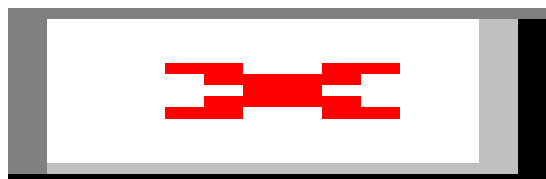
To secure financing, the component will leverage partnerships with private sector initiatives such as the \$114 million Wetlands-Based Adaptation in South and Southeast Asia (WASSA) project, which will allocate \$10–\$20 million to support small and medium enterprises (SMEs) through equity investments in LMB landscapes.

The second aspect of Component 2 addresses the need for public financing to support ecosystem management and restoration. Public investment will focus on protecting key habitats such as wetlands, rivers, and floodplains, which are essential for maintaining biodiversity and fisheries productivity. However, despite their high-value ecosystem services, governments in the region are often reluctant to invest in nature-based solutions due to uncertain financial returns. To address this, partnerships with initiatives such as the Asian Development Bank's (ADB) Nature-based Solution Finance Hub (NSFH) will be established. NSFH aims to lend \$5 billion by 2030 for nature-based solutions and will support improved cost-benefit analyses that highlight the economic value of healthy ecosystems. This will help incentivize public investment in sustainable fisheries management. By combining grant financing with economic valuation methodologies, NSFH will create opportunities for increased public and private investment in LMB's fisheries and ecosystem conservation efforts.

## Outcome

### 2.1.

#### Fisheries and non- fisheries VCs improved



The goal of  
Outcome  
2.1 is to

increase the value of fish and other aquatic animal (OAA) catch by developing and improving fisheries and non-fisheries value chains (VCs). These include processed fish products such as dried and smoked fish, as well as ecotourism-based activities like birdwatching, village homestays, clean water supply, and plastic recycling. Strengthening VCs will enhance fishers' incomes while reducing their reliance on fishing as a primary livelihood, allowing future generations to pursue alternative careers and alleviating pressure on fish stocks. Since capture fisheries in the Lower Mekong Basin (LMB) are largely smallholder-driven, significant investment in producer organizations is needed to enable the growth of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and social enterprises (**Output 2.1.1**).

The project will support the development of new and improved VCs in 16 communities by assessing their market potential and investment needs. Initial priorities include dried and smoked fish, ecotourism, and supporting industries such as clean water supply and plastic waste recycling. The success of similar social enterprises in the Tonle Sap region highlights the potential for replication in other high-tourism areas across all six focal landscapes. Additionally, the project will explore the feasibility of establishing certified supply chains between fishing communities and urban markets in Phnom Penh and Ho Chi Minh City, where consumers increasingly seek trusted food sources despite premium pricing (Activity 2.1.1.1).

To support value chain development, the project will establish and strengthen 16 community-based producer organizations (POs) to manage fisheries and fisheries-related businesses (Activity 2.1.1.2). While Cambodia already has 475 community fisheries committees with legal status, few have transitioned into POs. The project will assist these committees in formalizing their operations and improving financial management, allowing them to engage in collective bargaining and secure better market prices. In other Mekong countries, where community fisheries committees are less operational, efforts will focus on strengthening governance and enabling cooperative formation.

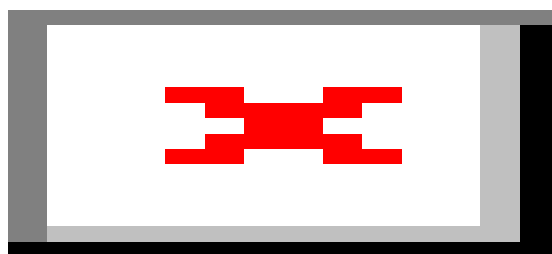
Ecotourism is a major opportunity for diversifying livelihoods, particularly in well-known destinations such as the Tonle Sap and the Siphandone-Stung Treng-Kratie corridor. Post-COVID-19, demand for clean and safe nature-based attractions is rising, and fishing communities can benefit directly from community-based tourism or by partnering with established tour operators. The project will collaborate with tourism stakeholders to promote sustainable ecotourism while ensuring compliance with national guidelines on waste management and benefit-sharing. Experience from past initiatives has shown that well-managed ecotourism supports fish

conservation, while the loss of ecotourism revenue—such as when the Siphandone dolphin population declined—can lead to increased illegal fishing.

To operationalize these VCs, the project will provide seed funding to POs to cover essential investments such as cold storage, fish processing equipment, ecotourism facilities, water purification, and plastic recycling infrastructure (Activity 2.1.1.3). This funding will come from the project budget as well as partnerships with larger-scale initiatives like the Wetlands-Based Adaptation in South and Southeast Asia (WASSA) project, which supports SME development.

A monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) framework will track the percentage change in at least three VCs, assessing improvements in gender and vulnerable group participation, as well as reductions in community dependence on fisheries for livelihoods and food security. By developing market-driven value chains and strengthening producer organizations, this outcome will enhance economic resilience while promoting sustainable fisheries management across the LMB.

## Outcome 2.2 Long-term public financing secured for improved fisheries management



Despite the critical role of fish protein in food security across the Lower Mekong Basin (LMB), governments remain reluctant to invest in capture fisheries due to the difficulty in quantifying returns on investment. While small-scale financing mechanisms like mini-trust funds (MTFs) and revolving funds can improve community capacity, they are insufficient to meet the larger financial needs of sustainable fisheries management. Development banks, such as the Asian Development Bank (ADB), are addressing this gap by offering loan packages that integrate grants and technical assistance. Through its Nature-based Solutions Finance Hub (NSFH), ADB has committed \$5 billion in lending for nature-based solutions, including capture fisheries, by 2030. The project will work with ADB and other institutions to develop at least one feasibility study for a loan package worth at least \$100 million (**Output 2.2.2**).

To support long-term financing strategies, the project will conduct financial needs assessments for improved fisheries management across six focal landscapes covering 50,000 hectares (**Output 2.2.1**). This assessment will map state and non-state stakeholders and quantify the costs required for effective fisheries management, including salaries for fisheries officers, training, travel, and co-management expenses. In some areas, NGOs currently fill funding gaps, but this approach is ad hoc and insufficient for sustaining fisheries at scale. While financing data exist for Cambodia's FCZs, similar assessments will be conducted for the other three Mekong countries (Activity 2.2.1.1).

Building on these financial assessments, the project will organize at least four investment forums or donor roundtables to engage governments and development banks in discussions on financing mechanisms for capture fisheries (Activity 2.2.2.1). These discussions will be informed by analyses of the economic and environmental co-benefits of improved fisheries management, including the potential impact of declining fish stocks on national protein consumption, deforestation, and carbon emissions. Research has shown that large reductions in fish catch could significantly increase land conversion for food production, with Cambodia alone requiring a 43% increase in agricultural land—an unsustainable prospect given current expansion rates. This underscores the link between fisheries conservation and climate change mitigation.

The project will also develop feasibility studies for national and international project funding (Activity 2.2.2.2). At least one feasibility study will be prepared to secure a \$100 million loan to sustain improved capture fisheries management in the LMB. Governments and development banks will be engaged to quantify the contributions of fisheries to national economies, health outcomes, and international climate commitments. Improved fisheries management aligns with wetlands conservation and contributes to multiple Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Monetizing these ecosystem services will strengthen cost-benefit analyses, making a stronger economic case for public investment.

Beyond development banks, the project will explore other large-scale funding sources that combine climate adaptation and fisheries management, including the Green Climate Fund (GCF), the Adaptation Fund (administered by UNEP), and Germany's International Climate Initiative (IKI). By integrating financing strategies across multiple scales, this outcome aims to secure long-term investments that ensure sustainable fisheries management, biodiversity conservation, and economic resilience in the LMB.

## Component 2 – Assumptions and Risks

A2.1	Adequate National counterpart & MRC Technical support, oversight and continuous accompaniment.	<i>MRCs, Executing Agencies and Fisheries Directorates</i>
A2.2	Private investments in supporting Landscape Demonstration Site user associations' active participation in Roundtable governance mechanisms and providing a sanitary certification (at a minimum) process for value chain products produced by the project.	<i>Competent National &amp; Provincial Authorities</i>
A2.3	Ecosystem-based freshwater resource co-management giving full weight to Landscape Demonstration Site ecosystem services institutionalized and applied in all new transboundary fishery co-management projects in MCs.	“ “ “ “ “ “
A2.4	Formal recognition of incentive structures for strengthening sustainable capture fisheries and non-fishery livelihoods.	“ “ “
A2.5	Willingness to provide loan guarantees and need to identify the guarantors (banks, national institution, environmental funds, etc.).	<i>MRC and MCs</i>
A2.6	Profits from the new Value Chains will be distributed equitably among all stakeholders.	<i>District and Provincial Governments</i>
<p>Risks include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resistance or lack of buy-in from local communities and stakeholders.</li> <li>• Conflicts between priorities and competencies of different institutional levels (national and states).</li> <li>• Risk of insolvency or loans not repaid.</li> <li>• Bank interest rates are too low to make the approach sustainable.</li> <li>• That the profits from the VC will NOT be distributed equitably. It is imperative that the business and management plans clearly describe where that money is going and how it is re-distributed.</li> </ul>		

## COMPONENT 3

Component 3 aims to take preliminary steps to the extent possible to harmonize economic sectoral development strategies and policies that are frequently incongruent with ecosystems-based freshwater management of fisheries and biodiversity. The component underscores the importance of re-assessing economic development policies and strategies so that they incrementally align with the true values of freshwater capture fisheries and biodiversity to build synergies, rather than sectoral competition. This will not only strengthen economic development to new levels by taking an ecosystems-based approach, but it will also significantly enhance freshwater fishery biomass, contribute to more resilient biodiversity improve the livelihoods of local communities to reduce poverty, as well as the high levels of GHG emissions in the LMB.

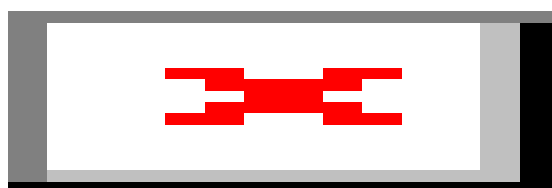
A key priority is the development of legal instruments across Mekong Countries (MCs) to support investments in transboundary fisheries management, establish sustainable financing mechanisms, and promote policy alignment across sectors. These frameworks will strengthen Fisheries Co-Management (FCoM) systems, integrate adaptive management principles, and enhance the role of wetlands in carbon sequestration and climate resilience. To address policy fragmentation at national and local levels, the component will focus on improving institutional arrangements for decentralized FCoM. Strengthening coordination between fisheries

management and other sectors, such as agriculture and water resource systems, will help mitigate habitat degradation, improve ecological connectivity, and protect critical fish habitats.

At the regional level, the component will support updated nexus assessments to optimize water-food-environment-energy synergies. These assessments will generate insights into mitigating the impacts of unsustainable land use and agriculture on fisheries and wetlands. They will also inform future iterations of the MRC's Basin Development Strategy (2031–2040) and Strategic Plan (2031–2035), ensuring that transformative lessons are incorporated into long-term regional planning.

Ultimately, Component 3 fosters an integrated and holistic approach to fisheries governance by aligning national and regional policies with ecological and socioeconomic objectives. Its success will be measured through defined outcome indicators, supported by two outputs and four activities.

### **Outcome 3.1. National Fisheries management policies and plans harmonized to support transboundary fisheries solutions.**



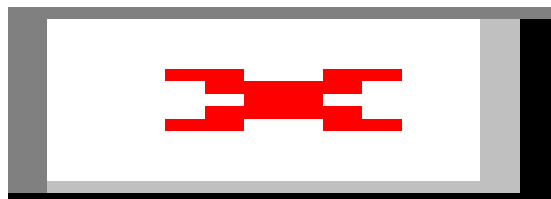
To improve transboundary fisheries management, national policies must be better aligned with ecosystem-based approaches. While capture fisheries remain vital for food security and livelihoods, they often receive less investment than aquaculture, largely due to policy conflicts, institutional gaps, and a lack of legal frameworks. In some cases, fisheries and biodiversity laws contradict each other, making it difficult to define community roles in resource management, as seen in Vietnam. In other countries, such as Thailand, Lao PDR, and Vietnam, despite fisheries co-management being recognized in law, there are no clear legal instruments or national guidelines on implementation. The absence of dedicated legal frameworks contributes to low public investment in capture fisheries.

To address these challenges, the project will prioritize ecosystem-based fisheries management in national policies (**Output 3.1.1**) by supporting Mekong Countries (MCs) in drafting legal instruments for transboundary fisheries investment (Activity 3.1.1.1). The process will begin with a comprehensive review of institutional challenges, policy conflicts, and governance gaps in each country. This review will identify interconnections, synergies, and conflicts across policy areas and propose strategies for improving policy coherence. Additionally, it will assess decision-making mechanisms, gaps in policy-relevant information, and ways to integrate fisheries conservation into broader development priorities. Findings and recommendations will be discussed in national workshops to determine the legal instruments required for strengthening transboundary fisheries governance. These instruments may include strategies for conserving swimways and critical aquatic species, ensuring national consensus on transboundary management issues. Draft legal instruments will then be submitted to ministerial-level authorities in each MC for consideration.

A key element of improving fisheries governance is strengthening cross-sectoral policy coordination and implementation (Activity 3.1.1.2). Currently, fisheries-related decision-making remains fragmented, with policies often prioritizing economic and development goals over ecological sustainability. To bridge this gap, the project will establish or strengthen national and regional working groups for fisheries management. At the national level, working groups will enhance intersectoral coordination and validate the findings from legal reviews conducted under Activity 3.1.1.1. At the regional level, a working group will facilitate collaboration among MCs, ensuring knowledge exchange and alignment with the Mekong River Commission's (MRC) coordination efforts. These groups will consolidate national policy reviews into a regional strategy that integrates capture fisheries into broader policy discussions.

By the end of the project, these efforts will enhance policy integration, improve institutional coordination, and create legal pathways for ecosystem-based fisheries management. Strengthening technical support and governance mechanisms will help balance fisheries data with economic and social considerations, ensuring resilient and sustainable fisheries management across the Lower Mekong Basin.

### **Outcome 3.2. Mainstream ecosystem-based fisheries into regional non-fisheries strategies, plans and policies.**



To strengthen the resilience of fisheries and aquatic ecosystems, this output focuses on integrating ecosystem-based fisheries management into regional agriculture and energy planning. Expanding sectors such as agriculture, livestock, and hydropower often come at the expense of wetland and fisheries ecosystems, creating economic and environmental trade-offs that must be addressed in policy decisions.

The project will update existing nexus assessments with new fisheries-related knowledge and recommendations to enhance synergies between water, food, environment, and energy sectors (Activity 3.2.1.1). This process will build on insights from Components 1 and 2 and revisit prior MRC assessments, such as the Council Study and Proactive Regional Planning, to identify gaps in cross-sectoral analysis. The activity will evaluate the social, economic, and environmental impacts of rapid land use changes and their inconsistencies with sustainable fisheries management. It will also explore alternative protein sources to compensate for declining fish stocks while assessing trade-offs in food production, environmental sustainability, and economic viability.

To strengthen the evidence base, an economic valuation study of ecosystem services (ESV) will be conducted in at least three of the six focal landscapes. This study will quantify trade-offs between water, food, energy, and environmental policies to inform regional planning and decision-making. Additionally, the project will identify and promote low-cost strategic actions, such as ecosystem restoration initiatives that reconnect floodplain reproduction areas and migratory routes with Fish Conservation Zones (FCZs). The proposed strategies will be presented for ministerial endorsement following regional consultations to build consensus among Mekong Countries (MCs).

The project will also contribute to the implementation of the MRC Strategic Plan (SP) 2026-2030 and support the preparation of the Basin Development Strategy (BDS) 2031-2040 and SP 2031-2035 (Activity 3.2.1.2). These efforts will ensure that transboundary fisheries management is integrated into broader regional policies, harmonizing cross-sectoral planning and investment. Lessons and transformative outcomes from project activities will be incorporated into MRC's strategic frameworks to enhance fisheries governance across the Lower Mekong Basin.

### Component 3 – Assumptions and Risks

A3.1	Adequate National counterpart & MRC Technical support, oversight and continuous accompaniment, including intellectual and operational leadership to MCs on policy analysis	MRC, Executing Agencies and Fisheries Directorates
A3.2	MCs fisheries agencies have the capacity to draft and advocate new fisheries policies and use evidence-based knowledge to reach National and Regional agreements to mainstream the SDGs and the ecosystem approach for incrementally prioritizing resilient transboundary ecosystem services in unsustainable intersectoral planning strategies in MCs.	Competent National & Provincial Authorities
A3.3	MRC and fisheries agencies can influence planning and investment decisions in other sectors that directly impact fisheries	“ “ “
A3.4	MCs commit to increase investments and develop strong cofinancing partnerships to invest in incentives for building certifiably sustainable capture fishery value chains to recover LMB's transboundary capture fisheries.	“ “ “
A3.5	MRC makes maximum use of the results of this and other projects to advocate for policy reform	“ “ “



A3.6	Ecosystem-based approach to FCoM and protecting critical habitats and migratory routes connecting FCZ formally recognized an institutionalized by MCs and applied in all new transboundary fishery co-management projects.	<i>MRC and MCs</i>
<p>Risks include:</p> <p>Persistence of status quo behaviour due to deeply entrenched habits and cultural norms.</p> <p>Deep-rooted cultural and social barrier to promotion of behaviour change and enhancing consumer awareness on healthy food production</p> <p>MRC fails to capitalize on new knowledge to influence policy reform at MC level</p> <p>MC fisheries agencies do not have the technical capacity or political space to incorporate projects results into policy</p> <p>Institutional fragmentation and political economy limit ability of fisheries agencies to influence policy and practice in other sectors</p>		

## COMPONENT 4

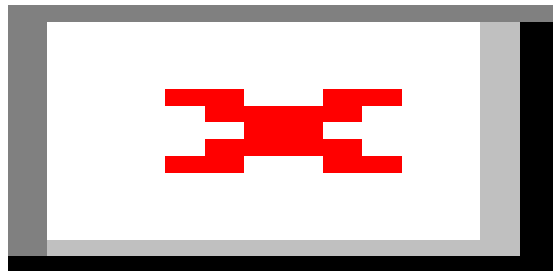
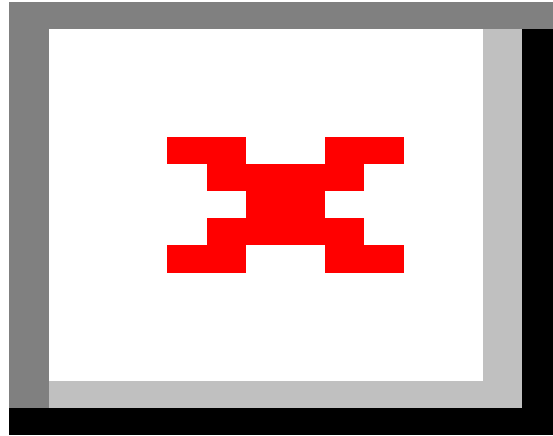
### Component 4

This component aims to ensure that project implementation is grounded in continuous learning, knowledge sharing, and effective stakeholder engagement. Recognizing the richness of existing data and monitoring systems in the LMB, this component addresses critical gaps in adaptive management, cross-sectoral learning, and accessibility of information beyond technical and scientific communities.

Outcome 4.1 focuses on strengthening monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) systems at both national and regional levels. It enhances the MRC's State of Basin Monitoring and Reporting System to better capture project outcomes, lessons learned, and transformative impacts, particularly in relation to ecosystem-based fisheries management, biodiversity, and community well-being. Capacity building is embedded across activities to empower national agencies, fisheries departments, and community-level stakeholders—including women and youth—to actively participate in knowledge management and data use. A wide range of gender-responsive knowledge products, such as thematic maps, IWRM guides, case studies, and multimedia tools, will be produced and disseminated to support learning, awareness, and policy influence. The project will also contribute actively to IW:LEARN, sharing lessons and engaging in twinning and exchange activities with similar initiatives worldwide.

Outcome 4.2 ensures that stakeholders are informed, engaged, and able to contribute to the project's communication and learning agenda. A dedicated project communication strategy and action plan will be developed through participatory processes to guide messaging, outreach tools, and content targeting. Regular consultation meetings will enable the strategy to evolve based on feedback and needs. Gender inclusion is a key focus, with a commitment to ensure that at least 30% of all communication materials are tailored to women and vulnerable groups. Targeted outputs include the development of a project-specific graphic identity, a dedicated webpage within the MRC platform, printed and audiovisual materials, and broad dissemination via appropriate channels.

**Outcome 4.1. Project implementation is improved through better knowledge management**



While the Mekong River Commission's (MRC) monitoring systems are among the best globally, gaps remain in assessing the effectiveness of fisheries co-management (FCoM) solutions, tracking policy impacts, sharing knowledge beyond scientific communities, and driving adaptive management. Additionally, national and regional monitoring systems need improvements to better inform decision-making and systematically capture good practices and lessons learned. This outcome aims to enhance national and regional Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) systems to provide real-time insights into fisheries, biodiversity, food security, and community well-being.

To support more effective decision-making, the project will strengthen the MRC-managed State of Basin Monitoring and Reporting System (**Output 4.1.1**). A key priority is integrating adaptive learning into the system to ensure that MCs, fisheries departments, community stakeholders, and NGOs have access to relevant data for evidence-based planning. Current national-level information storage and sharing processes are weak, limiting the use of MRC data for decision-making. Technical support will be provided to improve these processes at the national level.



The project will upgrade the MRC State of Basin Monitoring and Reporting System to capture project results, lessons learned, and adaptive management strategies (Activity 4.1.1.1). This involves assessing existing MEL platforms, identifying gaps, and incorporating multidimensional data—including social, biological, and economic indicators—into a single integrated system. Data will be continuously fed into the platform from multiple sources, including national fisheries departments, district authorities, and mobile applications used by resource users. The MEL system will track progress across all project components while maintaining confidentiality protocols between MRC and MCs.

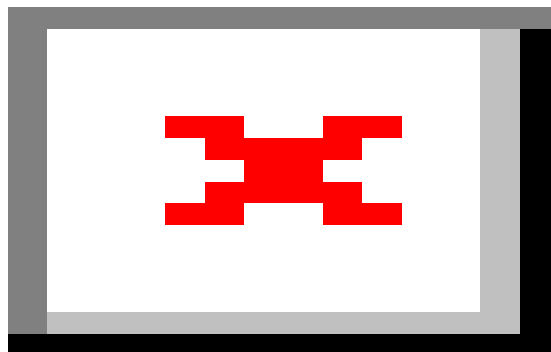
Training will be provided to fisheries department staff and co-managers to ensure they can manage, maintain, and update the MEL system (Activity 4.1.1.2). This includes capacity assessments, hands-on training in database management, and guidance on analyzing changes in key indicators. Where possible, the system will incorporate physical-chemical data collected by projects like WASSA. A user-friendly interface, such as a QGIS-based freeware or an ESRI platform, will be recommended to facilitate data visualization and interpretation.

To enhance knowledge sharing, stakeholders will receive training to actively participate in MEL and knowledge management processes (**Output 4.1.2**). Community-level capacity-building activities will equip local actors, including women and youth, with the skills to disseminate information on ecosystem-based fisheries management (Activity 4.1.2.1). Regular meetings across the basin will serve as platforms for sharing best practices and integrated water resource management (IWRM) innovations. Additionally, awareness campaigns targeting national decision-makers will strengthen policy engagement (Activity 4.1.2.2).

A key component of this outcome is the development of gender-responsive knowledge management products (**Output 4.1.3**). These will include thematic maps, concept papers on fisheries management and gender inclusion, IWRM best practice guides, and audio-visual materials for community learning (Activities 4.1.3.1 - 4.1.3.4). The project will ensure that social and cultural aspects, particularly gender dimensions, are incorporated into all knowledge products.

To facilitate broader knowledge exchange, annual regional and national meetings will be held to discuss project achievements, best practices, and implementation effectiveness (**Output 4.1.4**). These events will bring together government agencies, NGOs, academia, and development partners to share insights on fisheries governance (Activity 4.1.4.1). In parallel, annual stocktaking reviews will capture key results and lessons learned, ensuring that best practices are documented and shared with all stakeholders (Activity 4.1.4.2). The project will also engage with the GEF IW:LEARN platform to share knowledge and learn from global transboundary water initiatives (Activity 4.1.4.1). Participation in IW:LEARN events and activities—such as conferences, webinars, and thematic exchanges—will help showcase project innovations, promote adaptive management, and support sustainability. The project will contribute articles, case studies, and communication materials, promote cross-project exchanges, and utilize the MEL Platform to share key lessons and outcomes. A Senior Advisor will assist in leveraging IW:LEARN resources and reporting on engagement.

#### Outcome 4.2. Project stakeholders are informed and engaged



To ensure effective outreach and engagement, the project will develop a tailored communication strategy and action plan (**Output 4.2.1**). This process will begin with a stakeholder mapping exercise during the inception phase, using the stakeholder analysis and engagement plan. The strategy will align with the specific communication needs of each project component, ensuring that key messages reach the intended audiences.

A knowledge management (KM) and communication specialist will support the Project Management Unit (PMU) in designing the strategy through a participatory process. Beginning in the second year, annual meetings will be held with stakeholders to assess the effectiveness of the communication strategy and action plan, allowing for updates as part of the project's adaptive management approach (Activity 4.2.1.1). These consultations will ensure that communication tools remain relevant and responsive to stakeholder needs (Activity 4.2.1.2).

**Output 4.2.2** focuses on producing and distributing communication materials related specifically to the project, complementing the broader knowledge products developed under Output 4.1.3. The communication materials will align with the strategy developed in Output 4.2.1 and will prioritize gender inclusivity, with at least 30% of materials specifically targeted toward women and other vulnerable groups.

A project-specific graphic identity will be created to ensure a recognizable visual presence across all publications (Activity 4.2.2.1). A dedicated webpage will be developed within the MRC website to serve as a central repository for project activities, updates, and resources, including gender-focused content (Activity 4.2.2.2). Print materials such as posters and flyers will be prepared and disseminated to expand outreach efforts (Activity 4.2.2.3). Additionally, audio-visual content produced under Output 4.1.3 will be distributed via national and regional media, including television, radio, and online platforms (Activity 4.2.2.4).

By integrating a clear communication strategy with targeted materials and adaptive outreach mechanisms, this output will ensure broad awareness, knowledge dissemination, and engagement across key stakeholders, strengthening the overall impact of the project.

#### Component 4 – Assumptions and Risks

A4.1	Adequate National counterpart & MRC Technical support, oversight and continuous accompaniment.	MRC, Executing Agencies and Fisheries Directorates
A4.2	National governments integrate MEL Platforms into their capture fishery, biodiversity and critical habitat management effectiveness planning and decision-making.	Competent National & Provincial Authorities
A4.3	National and regional mechanisms for mainstreaming evidence from transformative outcomes and lessons from Components 1, 2 and 3 into improved policies and decision-making.	“ “ “ “ “ “
A4.4	MCs Governments incrementally incorporate captured good practices and lessons from the MEL Platform to improve policies, intersectoral coordination, replicate and upscale transformative outcomes into other priority transboundary sites	“ “ “
A4.5	National governments integrate local gender-inclusive participatory MEL with scientific monitoring of pertinent parameters that address the resilience of Ecosystem services in Focal Demonstration Areas to help ensure addressing transboundary migratory life cycle requirements for capture fisheries and biodiversity as a source of data and information for national M&E systems and the Regional MEL Platform	MRC and MCs

Risks include:

- MC governments fail to invest resources into establishing or strengthening national MEL Platforms
- MCs their results aimed for the MEL platform results with MRC.

- MRC leadership prefers to use the existing monitoring system. However, the proposed MEL platform aims to enhance current MRC and MC platforms – and NOT replace them.

The Baseline or business-as-usual scenario versus incremental value of this GEF project is explained in the table below.

Baseline Scenario (Business as Usual)	GEF Incremental Contribution (what the GEF project will contribute)	Key Outcomes and GEBs expected with the Alternative Scenario
<b>Component 1: Implementation of transboundary fisheries solutions.</b>		
Despite the MC government commitments to develop sustainable food systems, the LMB's transboundary capture fisheries have declined significantly over the past decade, primarily because their ecologically critical wetland reproduction, spawning and nursery habitats are increasingly being fragmented or lost, thereby reducing their resilience for producing new individuals to their biological populations. While the MCs have robust inland fishery management policies, they focus on stie and species-based management rather than on integrated ecosystem-based management. While FCoM has been effective in many areas, a recent study found that around 60% are still not resulting in improved catches or stock enhancement.	GEF provides solutions for building capture fisheries resilience, including building resilience through restoration and protection of critical fish habitats. It will address existing and their root causes by supporting ecosystems-based fisheries co-management in 5 Landscape Demonstration Areas by developing innovative approaches for restoring target capture fishery species and OAAs by strengthening local Fishery Management Committees, governments, and CSOs to of missing sustainable food expand FCoM to protect critical wetland habitats. The evidence from these good practices and transformative outcomes will form the basis for scaling up into other Demonstration areas and critical Landscapes and provide the MCs with evidence to consider additional measures for effective fishery and biodiversity resilience-building.	<p>The expected outcomes/national benefits/GEBs of the project Component 1 are the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustainably managed capture fisheries in Landscape Demonstration Areas using ecosystems-based fisheries co-management that includes restoration and protection of critical wetland habitats.</li> <li>• Improve landscapes, particularly critical wetlands and their ecological functions, through sustainable practices and NbS, with specific attention to FCZs, OECSs and PAs.</li> <li>• Strengthened local capacities to carry out ecosystems-based fisheries co-management, improve enforcement and improve livelihoods in fishing households.</li> <li>• Empowering women by building their capacities to further contribute to sustainable FCoM.</li> </ul>
<b>Component 2: Economic and financial incentives for transforming fisheries-based livelihoods.</b>		
One of the root causes of the LMB's declining capture fisheries is that they are significantly undervalued, both economically and socially ( <i>critical for tens of millions of household livelihoods</i> ). They are also valuable for the large volumes of avoided GHG emissions compared with other food and energy producing sectors which have comparatively enormous carbon footprints. Furthermore, threatened	GEF funding will provide sustainable financing mechanisms to directly support more socially, economically and environmentally sustainable fishery value chains, as well as indirectly related VC such as ecotourism. It will also proactively address this existing valuation of resource gaps and support development of missing standard and practices to increase	<p>The GEF intervention are expected to lead to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fisheries and non-fisheries VCs being strengthened with private and federations/cooperative financing.</li> </ul>

Baseline Scenario (Business as Usual)	GEF Incremental Contribution (what the GEF project will contribute)	Key Outcomes and GEBs expected with the Alternative Scenario
wetlands are also undervalued for their carbon storage capacities, which are attractive investments for the voluntary carbon markets and other PES instruments. Unless the MCs act collectively to restore capture fisheries and their critical wetland habitats, the primary source of protein consumption for millions of people will have to be replaced with GHG-intensive and more costly protein. Finally, the low level economic and financial incentives for sustainable fishery management and attracting private investments remain a barrier for the development of local production.	sustainability of capture fisheries through sustainable value chains where more affluent markets are willing to pay higher prices for better quality freshwater commodities. Capture fisheries also contribute to MC commitments to CC mitigation through GHG avoidance, as well as valuable irreplaceable carbon stored in wetlands, which will contribute to enable conditions to unlock private funds and increase private investments in the long-term.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Securing long-term public financing secured for improved fisheries management.</li> <li>• Increased private sector financial flows and public-private partnerships that allow the MCs to invest in, scale-up and sustainably transform its food systems with conservation and climate co-benefits.</li> <li>• Promoting long-term sustainability of the transformed capture fishery and OAA VCs.</li> <li>• Empowering women by building their capacities to further contribute to sustainable FCoM value chains.</li> <li>• More equitable distribution of benefits from increased values of capture fish VCs.</li> </ul>
<b>Component 3: Mainstream ecosystem-based fisheries into sectoral policies and plans</b>		
While all of the MCs have policies for FCoM to differing degrees, investments are relatively small for restoring enhancing inland fisheries to previous levels by increasing their values and sustainability through sustainable value chains and ecosystems-based fisheries co-management. Furthermore, they risk losing potentially attractive investors to purchase carbon credits to protect rich, irreplaceable carbon stored in submerged wetlands to generate funding to invest in sustainable capture fisheries management and wetlands protection.	The investment aims to harmonize sectoral policies at the Regional and national levels so that ministries responsible for agriculture, forestry, livestock, irrigation and river engineering works incorporate the real value of capture fisheries in future	<p>The GEF input under this Component is expected to lead to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Fisheries management policies and investment plans harmonized to support transboundary fisheries solutions.</li> <li>• Evidence from Components #1 and 2 to mainstream transformative outcomes, good practices and lessons into the update MRC BDS</li> <li>• Mainstream ecosystem-based fisheries into non-fisheries policies that are incongruent with sustainable fishery management and the ensuring the resilience wetlands ecosystems services.</li> </ul>
<b>Component 4: Knowledge-sharing of outcomes and lessons.</b>		
The MRC has a monitoring system that has been used for decades to track changes in fisheries, water quality and land use over time. It has also standardized fish monitoring with the	The investment captures and shares knowledge on good practices, transformative outcomes and lessons from the other three other components, and	<p>The GEF input under this Component is expected to lead to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effective project KM, and lessons learning system that</li> </ul>

Baseline Scenario (Business as Usual)	GEF Incremental Contribution (what the GEF project will contribute)	Key Outcomes and GEBs expected with the Alternative Scenario
MCs, which has led to further improvements in that system by incorporating data from the MCs into that system at specific locations. However, the system is not sufficiently robust to measure the effectiveness of fishery management, systematically capture lessons, drive adaptive management and learning to mainstream them into its policies, plans and strategies, as well as scale up and replicate good practices. Similarly, MCs lack these important elements. The GEF M&E tools are valuable, but they do not lend themselves to adaptive, real-time learning and management.	mainstreams effective, evidence-based fisheries management practices into more robust sectoral policies that they support, rather than weaken, highly undervalued capture fisheries in the LMB. The GEF increment will establish a project knowledge management, capacity building and lessons learning framework to support effective implementation of Components 1 and 2 and scaling-up of practices. Additionally, the project will produce and implement awareness campaign and communication actions on sustainable food systems and healthy food pathways.	<p>can be used by the key stakeholder beyond the project lifetime.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved knowledge-sharing and multi-sector engagement to support transformations.</li> <li>Technical capacities effectively improved and disseminated to conduct real-time M&amp;E at the lowest practical levels and applied learning from the process.</li> <li>Best practices and lessons learned by the project are available for other projects (e.g., IW Learn) for replication.</li> </ul>

**The project builds on existing knowledge**, particularly the Mekong River Commission's (MRC) advanced monitoring systems and previous lessons from GEF-funded initiatives in the Lower Mekong Basin (LMB). By integrating these resources, the project will benefit from established data, nexus assessments, and best practices in fisheries and ecosystem management.

**New knowledge** will be generated through enhanced data collection, focusing on multidimensional aspects such as ecological, social, and economic dynamics. Piloting innovative solutions in transboundary fisheries co-management and ecosystem restoration will provide practical insights, while a strong emphasis on gender inclusion will yield new understanding of socio-economic interactions.

This knowledge will be captured and stored through the transformation of the MRC's State of Basin Monitoring System into an adaptive MEL platform, capable of real-time data analysis and impact tracking. Training and capacity building will ensure stakeholders effectively utilize this system, creating a robust foundation for continuous learning.

Furthermore, the project will disseminate knowledge through comprehensive materials like reports, maps, and guides, alongside outreach via a dedicated webpage, learning videos, and regional meetings. Annual knowledge-sharing events will encourage collaboration, while materials will ensure accessibility to insights and best practices.

Overall, this approach will strengthen institutional capacities, enhance stakeholder engagement, and create a scalable framework that supports both current project goals and future initiatives in similar ecological and social contexts.

The success of the uploaded project will significantly depend on **enhancing human, institutional, and technical capacities at both national and local levels**. This is essential to implement effective transboundary fisheries management, ecosystem restoration, and sustainable development strategies across the Lower Mekong Basin (LMB).

At the national level, the project emphasizes strengthening institutional frameworks and policy coordination to harmonize ecosystem-based fisheries management across member countries. This includes developing legal instruments, improving cross-sectoral collaboration, and aligning national policies with regional priorities. Targeted capacity-building efforts will train government officials and fisheries departments in technical aspects like MEL, policy integration, and data-driven decision-making.

At the local level, the project focuses on empowering communities through the establishment and strengthening of fisheries co-management frameworks. Training programs will be delivered to enhance the skills of local fisheries committees, community organizations, and other stakeholders in sustainable practices, governance, and conflict resolution. Gender-sensitive approaches will ensure inclusive participation and address the specific needs of marginalized groups, particularly women.

Technical capacities will also be improved by upgrading tools and systems, such as the MRC's monitoring platform, to enable adaptive learning and real-time data analysis. Additionally, practical solutions like developing apps for fishers, creating sustainable financing



mechanisms, and providing hands-on training for ecosystem restoration will equip stakeholders with the tools needed for effective implementation.

By combining these capacity-building initiatives at multiple levels, the project aims to establish a robust foundation for long-term sustainability, ensuring that stakeholders are equipped to manage resources effectively, respond to emerging challenges, and scale successful practices across the LMB.

## Institutional Arrangement and Coordination with Ongoing Initiatives and Project.

Please describe the Institutional Arrangements for the execution of this project, including financial management and procurement. If possible, please summarize the flow of funds (diagram), accountabilities for project management and financial reporting (organogram), including audit, and staffing plans. (max. 500 words, approximately 1 page)

IUCN is accountable to the GEF for the implementation of this project. This includes the oversight of the project execution to ensure that the project is being carried out in accordance with agreed standards and provisions. IUCN is responsible for delivering GEF project cycle management services comprising project approval and start-up, project supervision and oversight, and project completion and evaluation and charged to GEF Fee. The project execution will be undertaken by MRCS and national executing agencies and charged to project costs.

The MRCS and, at national level, the MCs will:

- provide technical support and guidance throughout implementation
- overall responsibility for developing, executing and maintaining the MEL platform up to date
- provide capacity development, training and follow up, as required for all of the above

MRCS will work closely with countries to harmonize their biological-ecological and physical-chemical monitoring with the MRC's monitoring system at the provincial levels (Figure 22).

MRCS's major responsibilities are:

- **Management:** Set up Regional Project Management Unit (RPMU) to be based in MRC head office in Vientiane, oversee all project activities, liaise with IUCN and coordinate with other development partners, handle technical and financial reporting, facilitate coordination and cooperation across National Mekong Committee and Executing Agencies. Under the direct supervision of the Director and technical direction of the Chief of ED, the Fisheries Management Specialist will have a major role coordinating and managing the project in the RPMU. Nominate Cross sector technical working group for the project. JC Chair will be chair and MRCS CEO will be the co-chair of the Regional Steering Committee of the project.
- **Technical:** play a lead technical role, liaise with IUCN and Executing Agencies to ensure that these processes and outputs meet GEF standards, integrate the latest knowledge and experience into the MEL platform. The MRC Expert Group on Environmental Management (EGEM) will serve as the regional cross-sector technical working group. Additional experts will be invited by RPMU depending on the topic discussed.
- **Procurement:** recruit RPMU and National PMU positions contract technical partners and individual consultants needed to deliver successful project activities and ensure compliance with IUCN and GEF guidance as well as MRC procurement policy.
- **In addition,** the MRCS shall assign relevant MRCS specialists (some percentage of their time) to support the RPMU, e.g. the Environmental Division to advise on related fisheries and environmental aspect of the project, the Planning Division on fish passage and livelihoods, the Administration Division on financing and procurement, the Technical Division on maps, the Office of CEO on strategic planning, stakeholder engagement, communication and partnership.

National executing agencies including Cambodia Fisheries Administration, Lao National Mekong Committee, Thailand Department of Fisheries, Research Institute for Aquaculture No2 and their major responsibilities are:

- Establishing and supervising the National Project Management Unit (NPMU)
- Acting as Secretariat for the National Steering Committee.
- Overseeing that the project runs according to the agreed work plan, budget and reporting tasks
- Membership in the Regional Steering Committee

National Mekong Committee Secretariats:

- Member of the Regional Steering Committee. The chair position will be rotated between JC Chair on a yearly basic.
- Set up and nominate the membership for the National Cross sector technical working group for the project.
- Chair of National Cross sector technical working group.

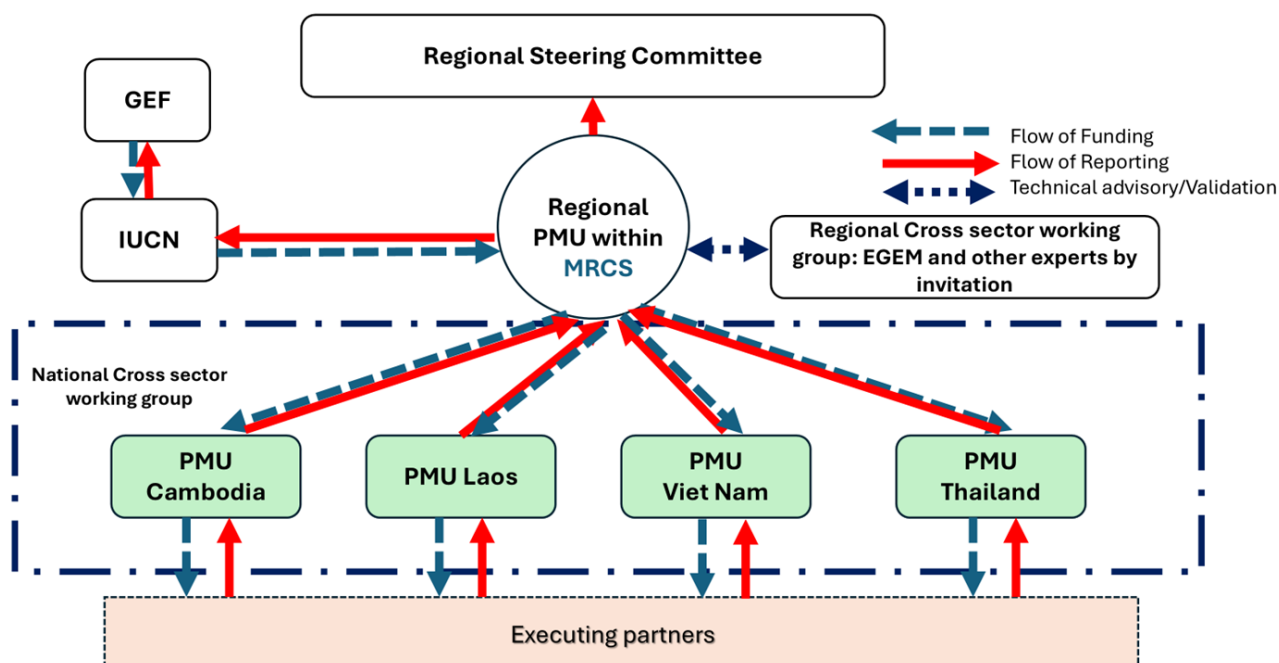


Figure 4. Project organizational chart

Will the GEF Agency play an execution role on this project?

If so, please describe that role here and the justification.

The GEF agency will not play an execution role in this project.

Also, please add a short explanation to describe cooperation with ongoing initiatives and projects, including potential for co-location and/or sharing of expertise/staffing (max. 500 words, approximately 1 page)

The project can build on lessons learned from past and ongoing initiatives across Cambodia, Vietnam, Lao PDR, and Thailand to enhance fisheries management and conservation in the Lower Mekong Basin (LMB). These initiatives highlight critical insights for fostering effective, sustainable outcomes. The CAPFISH project in Cambodia demonstrated the significance of engaging local communities in fisheries management and implementing no-take zones to restore critical fish populations, but it also emphasized the need for robust enforcement mechanisms. Similarly, efforts in the Tonle Sap Biosphere Reserve showcased how inclusive governance and capacity-building between government and stakeholders contribute to ecosystem protection. These lessons are directly applicable to the project's goals of strengthening community-based fisheries co-management and promoting biodiversity conservation.

In Lao PDR, projects such as the WWF Community Fishery Projects highlighted the value of establishing Fish Conservation Zones (FCZs) to protect migratory species while enhancing livelihoods. These efforts underscored the importance of local ownership and long-term engagement to sustain outcomes. Transboundary initiatives, such as the MRC-LNMC project, illustrated the potential of regional cooperation in fostering sustainable fisheries management and governance.

Vietnam's Sustainable Fishery Development Project and the FAO-MONRE-GEF Integrated Landscape Management initiative demonstrated the potential for integrating ecosystem-based approaches into policies and practices, achieving both environmental and socioeconomic benefits. The focus on nature-based solutions and sustainable practices in these projects aligns with the current project's emphasis on leveraging ecosystem services for resilience and productivity. Moreover, Vietnam's initiative for high-quality, low-emission rice cultivation in the Mekong Delta provides a model for sustainable agricultural transformation and innovative financing mechanisms, such as carbon credits.

Thailand's Mekong Integrated Water Resource Management project highlighted the benefits of coordinated wetland conservation and transboundary collaboration. Projects like the WWF Greater Mekong Programme emphasized the role of community-led conservation and traditional knowledge in safeguarding aquatic biodiversity, lessons that can inform the project's strategies for inclusive stakeholder engagement.

Across these initiatives, recurring themes emerge, including the importance of integrating conservation efforts into national policies, fostering community-driven approaches, ensuring financial sustainability, and promoting cross-border collaboration. By applying these lessons, the project can design and implement strategies that strengthen transboundary fisheries management, enhance biodiversity, and secure sustainable livelihoods for communities in the LMB.

The project will adopt a twofold approach aimed at (1) strengthening fisheries and non-fisheries related value chains (VCs) to increase economic return to fisheries communities and (2) securing long-term public financing to conserve and manage key ecosystems protected under Outcome 1. This approach balances economic and ecological priorities to create long-term sustainability for fisheries and their associated ecosystems.

The first aspect focuses on value chain investments for the private sector, with the goal of enhancing the economic viability of fisheries and increasing economic returns to fishers. Partnerships with initiatives like the \$114 million Wetlands-Based Adaptation in South and Southeast Asia (WASSA) GCF Project will be leveraged to secure private sector financing. WASSA will allocate \$10–\$20 million to support small and medium enterprises (SMEs) through equity investments in landscapes that overlap with the LMB.

The second aspect addresses the need for public financing to support the management and restoration of the critical ecosystems. Public investment will focus on securing sustainable habitats for fisheries, such as wetlands, rivers, and floodplains, which play vital roles in maintaining biodiversity and ecosystem health. Despite the high value ecosystem services, the region's governments are reluctant to borrow nature, including capture fisheries, because the return on investment is less clear than for infrastructure. Partnerships with initiatives like the ADB's Nature-based Solution Finance Hub (NSFH) will be leveraged to secure financing. NSFH could complement these efforts by lending \$5 billion by 2030 for NbS, improving cost-benefit analyses to highlight the economic value of healthy ecosystems, and incentivizing governments to invest in capture fisheries. NSFH will incentive investments in nature by combining more grant financing and improve cost-benefit analyses that consider the positive externalities of healthy ecosystems, including the rivers, lakes, and wetlands that sustain the LMB's fisheries. NSFH is looking for opportunities and this project will work with the ADB and like-minded donors to increase both public and private investment in capture fisheries.

## Core Indicators

Indicate expected results in each relevant indicator using methodologies indicated in the GEF-8 Results Measurement Framework Guidelines. There is no need to complete this table for climate adaptation projects financed solely through LDCF and SCCF.

### Indicator 1 Terrestrial protected areas created or under improved management

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
10000	101509	0	0

### Indicator 1.1 Terrestrial Protected Areas Newly created

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
0	74092	0	0



Name of the Protected Area	WDPA ID	IUCN Category	Total Ha (Expected at PIF)	Total Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Total Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Total Ha (Achieved at TE)
Siphandone fish habitat		Protected Landscape/Seascape		74,092.00		

#### Indicator 1.2 Terrestrial Protected Areas Under improved Management effectiveness

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Total Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Total Ha (Achieved at TE)
10000	27417	0	0

Name of the Protected Area	WDP A ID	IUCN Category	Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Total Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Total Ha (Achieved at TE)	METT score (Baseline at CEO Endorsement)	METT score (Achieved at MTR)	METT score (Achieved at TE)
Lower Songkhram River (Ramsar Site)	2420	Others		5,504.00					
Siphandone Ramsar Site		Others	10,000.00						
Steung Treng (Ramsar site)	198316	Others		14,600.00					
Tram Chim (Ramsar site)	303026	Others		7,313.00					

#### Indicator 4 Area of landscapes under improved practices (hectares; excluding protected areas)

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
347785	795416	0	0

#### Indicator 4.1 Area of landscapes under improved management to benefit biodiversity (hectares, qualitative assessment, non-certified)

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
347,785.00	795,416.00		

#### Indicator 4.2 Area of landscapes under third-party certification incorporating biodiversity considerations

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)

## Type/Name of Third Party Certification

### Indicator 4.3 Area of landscapes under sustainable land management in production systems

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)

### Indicator 4.4 Area of High Conservation Value or other forest loss avoided

Disaggregation Type	Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)

### Indicator 4.5 Terrestrial OECMs supported

Name of the OECMs	WDPA-ID	Total Ha (Expected at PIF)	Total Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Total Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Total Ha (Achieved at TE)

### Documents (Document(s) that justifies the HCVF)

Title

### Indicator 7 Shared water ecosystems under new or improved cooperative management

	Number (Expected at PIF)	Number (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Number (Achieved at MTR)	Number (Achieved at TE)
Shared water Ecosystem	Mekong	Mekong		
Count	1	1	0	0

### Indicator 7.1 Level of Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis and Strategic Action Program (TDA/SAP) formulation and implementation (scale of 1 to 4; see Guidance)

Shared Water Ecosystem	Rating (Expected at PIF)	Rating (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Rating (Achieved at MTR)	Rating (Achieved at TE)
Mekong	4	1		

### Indicator 7.2 Level of Regional Legal Agreements and Regional management institution(s) (RMI) to support its implementation (scale of 1 to 4; see Guidance)

Shared Water Ecosystem	Rating (Expected at PIF)	Rating (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Rating (Achieved at MTR)	Rating (Achieved at TE)
Mekong	4	3		

### Indicator 7.3 Level of National/Local reforms and active participation of Inter-Ministerial Committees (IMC; scale 1 to 4; See Guidance)

Shared Water Ecosystem	Rating (Expected at PIF)	Rating (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Rating (Achieved at MTR)	Rating (Achieved at TE)
Mekong	4	2		

#### Indicator 7.4 Level of engagement in IWLEARN through participation and delivery of key products(scale 1 to 4; see Guidance)

Shared Water Ecosystem	Rating (Expected at PIF)	Rating (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Rating (Achieved at MTR)	Rating (Achieved at TE)
Mekong	1	3		

#### Indicator 8 Globally over-exploited fisheries moved to more sustainable levels

Metric Tons (Expected at PIF)	Metric Tons (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Metric Tons (Achieved at MTR)	Metric Tons (Achieved at TE)
500,000.00	78,000.00		

#### Fishery Details

The indicator for fisheries moved to more sustainable levels come from MRC Fisheries Yield Assessment 2020. The indicator was the total annual yield from rainfed habitat type which cover 70% of about 18 million hectares of 4 major habitat types, Major flood zone, Rainfed, Water bodies and Brackish-estuarine zones, in the CLV. This fishery is impacted due to intensive rice field practice in the MCs in the last 2 decades. Component 2 targets designing low head swimming way is expected to improve this fishery substantially.

#### Indicator 11 People benefiting from GEF-financed investments

	Number (Expected at PIF)	Number (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Number (Achieved at MTR)	Number (Achieved at TE)
<b>Female</b>	10,000	70,000		
<b>Male</b>	10,000	130,000		
<b>Total</b>	<b>20,000</b>	<b>200,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

Explain the methodological approach and underlying logic to justify target levels for Core and Sub-Indicators (max. 250 words, approximately 1/2 page)

[1] The total area of the protected area under improved management is 27,417 ha:

Country	Name	Area (ha)	Note	WDPA ID
Thailand	Lower Songkhram River	5,504	Ramsar	2420
Cambodia	Stung Treng	14,600	Ramsar	198316
Viet Nam	Tram Chim	7,313	Ramsar	303026
<b>Total</b>		<b>27,417</b>		

Then, the project aims at creating a new protected area in the Siphandone landscape (74,092 ha).

[2] Total area of fish habitats in the focal landscapes (896,832 ha), excluding protected areas under Indicator 1 (101,509 ha), is targeted to improve sustainable fishing practices (795,416 ha).

[3] About 200 families are member of Fisheries co-management (average for 1 community) x 100 communities (for whole project) x 4 people each family = 160,000 people. In addition, the project will have 16 value chains communities that could bring up to the total direct beneficiaries of the project to at least 200,000 people.

## Key Risks

	Rating	Explanation of risk and mitigation measures
CONTEXT		
Climate	Moderate	<p>The Lower Mekong Basin faces severe climate-driven risks, including more intense rainfall and flooding that disrupt agriculture, fisheries, infrastructure, and public health, as well as prolonged droughts that reduce water availability and hinder fish life cycles—especially in Tonle Sap Lake and the Mekong Delta. Climate change also alters fish migration, threatens ecosystems, and increases forced migration and livelihood loss among farmers and fishers. Without effective management, food security, water resources, and regional stability are at risk. The region also has the highest average GHG emissions compared to others, with levels rising, particularly in densely populated, agriculture-heavy areas. To mitigate these risks, the project will incorporate climate risk analysis and mitigation/adaptation plans into the design of all on-the-ground activities. These plans will be validated and implemented under the supervision of the Project Management Unit (PMU) or delegated implementing partners. Awareness-raising and communication activities will also include the option to hold events indoors to minimize disruptions from adverse weather conditions. The project itself is designed to avoid greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, leveraging the fact that capture fisheries have the lowest carbon footprint among food production sectors. By strengthening inland fisheries management and promoting nature-positive, climate-resilient approaches, the project will decrease pressure on natural resources and contribute to sustainable food production. It will also deliver co-benefits, such as protecting wetlands that serve as critical carbon storage sinks. Efforts to minimize land conversion activities, such as agriculture, livestock farming, and unsustainable forestry, will further support national climate mitigation strategies and enhance the resilience of these valuable ecosystems. These measures ensure that the project not only mitigates climate-related risks but actively contributes to climate change adaptation and mitigation.</p>
Environmental and Social	Moderate	<p>The project is designed to deliver positive environmental and social outcomes through holistic fishery co-management that integrates ecological, social, and cultural dimensions while placing people at the center of the ecosystem. It is supported by a Stakeholder Engagement Plan, a Gender Action Plan, and measures to collect relevant data on environmental and social risks, such as access restrictions in demonstration areas. However, the project triggers certain risks, categorized as moderate by the preliminary ESMS screening, requiring</p>

		<p>additional management through the Environmental and Social Management Plan (ESMP). From an environmental perspective, while the project promotes sustainable resource use, it operates in ecologically sensitive contexts where impacts on biodiversity may not be fully predictable. Risks such as deforestation, wetland burning, and pollution may arise, especially in demonstration areas. To mitigate these, the project will ensure biodiversity risks are addressed through technical assistance, management plans, and co-management frameworks. Guidance will include measures to avoid invasive species, improve fish habitats, and manage pollution risks. Demonstration projects will test and document ecosystem-based solutions (NbS) and fisheries co-management models (FCoM) to inform scalable and policy-relevant practices. Regarding the social dimension, livelihoods and food security in the Mekong region are under threat due to changing water flows, extreme weather, and dam construction, which reduce fish stocks and harm agriculture. The Mekong Delta is especially vulnerable to drought, floods, and saltwater intrusion, affecting fish life cycles. Large infrastructure projects often displace communities and disrupt fish migration, with inadequate compensation. Weak transboundary cooperation hinders sustainable resource management. Social risks include potential exclusion of marginalized groups, gender disparities, food insecurity, loss of traditional knowledge, and inequitable profit distribution. These will be addressed through targeted measures such as inclusive stakeholder engagement strategies, capacity-building programs, and efforts to integrate traditional knowledge. Specific budgets will be allocated to shield low-income households from financial strain caused by market dynamics and taxation. The ESMP will ensure transparent profit-sharing mechanisms and promote equitable economic benefits for local communities, with a focus on women, Indigenous Peoples, and smallholder fishers. By embedding these mitigation measures into project design and execution, the project aims to address risks effectively while maximizing its environmental and social benefits.</p>
Political and Governance	Moderate	<p>Addressing limited coordination and trade-offs across various sectors within and across countries is crucial for the successful implementation of this project. Governance-related risks can arise due to conflicting interests, overlapping responsibilities, and inadequate mechanisms for cooperation. The project will adopt a step-by-step progressive approach to building mutual trust based on joint fact finding and consultative processes. It will build on, and support compliance with the MRA 12/1/2023 and strengthen fisheries focused coordination between the MCs. This will also involve improved cross sector coordination through better management and planning of interconnections between water, fisheries, agriculture, energy, and other sectors. Conflict risk is low as MCs fully support the MRC-led fisheries management strategy.</p>
INNOVATION		
Institutional and Policy	Moderate	<p>The project faces several risks, including potential political and institutional disconnection between national and local governments, undervaluation of capture fisheries compared to other food production sectors, and tensions</p>

		<p>between state and non-state actors over aquatic resource management. Additionally, there is a risk of failing to recognize the high ecological value of critical wetlands as carbon storage and migratory fish habitats, as well as the possibility of weak alignment with national strategies and policies. To address these risks, the project will establish dialogue platforms and working groups with representatives from national, state, and stakeholder entities to foster collaboration. A communication officer will be recruited to facilitate interaction among executing agencies, government bodies, and states, ensuring strong institutional relationships. Furthermore, the project is fully aligned with national policies and strategies on fishery management, as confirmed by the relevant policy review included in the Appendices. These measures will ensure coherence and effective engagement across all levels of governance.</p>
Technological	Low	<p>The Lower Mekong Basin (LMB) faces complex and unpredictable ecological, political, and economic dynamics, which hinder sustainable fisheries and habitat management. Challenges include weak incentives for ecosystem-based fisheries management, limited capacity of local communities to engage in new value chains, and a failure to integrate innovative and viable economic opportunities. Policies often overlook evidence-based solutions, and critical wetlands remain unprotected. To address these risks, the project adopts an adaptive management approach embedded across all activities and supported by a transparent MEL platform. Developed by a specialized consultancy through a competitive IUCN-led process, the project ensures strong stakeholder engagement, technical rigor, and alignment with national priorities. Execution will follow IUCN and GEF standards to strengthen biodiversity, livelihoods, and inland fisheries resilience</p>
Financial and Business Model	Low	<p>Project management by the MRC and oversight by IUCN will ensure adequate financial planning, budgeting, accounting, and reporting to mitigate risks of overspending, fund misallocation, or financial instability. Project governance will include a range of internal controls, such as segregation of duties and oversight mechanisms. Financial transactions will be reported transparently.</p>

#### EXECUTION

Capacity	Low	<p>IUCN and MRC have a long track record of GEF project supported or implemented. Furthermore, MRC, as executing agency, will adopt a comprehensive approach that strengthens institutional, technical, and operational capacity throughout the project lifecycle. A thorough capacity assessment will be carried out at the inception phase to identify gaps in skills, resources, and expertise within the implementing partners. Based on these findings, tailored capacity-building programs will be designed to address identified weaknesses, focusing on project management, technical skills, and compliance with GEF requirements. The PMU will establish clear governance structures, including well-defined roles and responsibilities, to streamline decision-making and coordination among stakeholders. The recruitment of experienced personnel for key positions, particularly in project management, monitoring and evaluation, and financial oversight, will ensure that the project is managed effectively. Regular training sessions for project staff and partners</p>
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		can enhance their understanding of GEF processes, safeguard policies, and reporting requirements. Establishing robust monitoring and evaluation systems will enable the PMU to track progress, identify challenges early, and make informed decisions to address them promptly.
Fiduciary	Low	At the beginning of the implementation, the PMU, executing agency and implementing partners will attend specific training courses on financial management and procurement led by IUCN. A specific working meeting will be held at least once a year for clarification on financial management, monitoring and reporting and procurement. Procurement related risks will be mitigated by applying IUCN's and MRC's strict procurement rules, which will ensure competitive bidding for activities that need to be outsourced, and sound contract management to mitigate conflict risks. IUCN is experienced in implementing and overseeing large regional projects such as this one. The MRC is also experienced in managing large budgets.
Stakeholder	Low	A potential risk for the project is low interest in its implementation from private operators, local communities, and other stakeholders. However, this is considered highly unlikely, as most of these groups are already familiar with the project, having actively participated in the PPG Inception Workshop and contributed valuable ideas during its development. To further mitigate this risk and ensure active stakeholder involvement, the project includes a comprehensive Stakeholder Engagement Plan and adopts a fully participatory approach to implementation, fostering collaboration and sustained interest throughout the project's lifecycle.
Other		
Overall Risk Rating	Moderate	Ref. IUCN-GEF Project Document, section 4.5 for details on the risks

## C. ALIGNMENT WITH GEF-8 PROGRAMMING STRATEGIES AND COUNTRY/REGIONAL PRIORITIES

Explain how the proposed interventions are aligned with GEF- 8 programming strategies and country and regional priorities, including how these country strategies and plans relate to the multilateral environmental agreements.

For projects aiming to generate biodiversity benefits (regardless of what the source of the resources is - i.e., BD, CC or LD), please identify which of the 23 targets of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework the project contributes to and explain how.

Confirm if any country policies that might contradict with intended outcomes of the project have been identified, and how the project will address this. (max. 500 words, approximately 1 page)

The Project will promote transboundary inland fisheries and biodiversity management under International Waters (IW) and will also respond to nature-positive, carbon-neutral, and avoid GHG emissions through this significantly undervalued economic and livelihood subsector to provide an important co-benefit by developing innovative actions to restore, adding value and create more equitable sharing of improved economic benefits to low-income families in the Landscape Demonstration Areas. Outcomes will deliver benefits in alignment with, and complementary to, targeted GEF-8 investments along focal areas by virtue of their focus on:

- Ecosystem Service Valuation (ESV) and Nexus analyses economic development sectors whose policies and plans may be incompatible with sustainable capture fisheries and ecosystem-based management, and directly affecting

massive volumes of irreplaceable carbon stored in wetlands. It will help align them with sustainable capture fisheries management by producing policy briefs and mainstreaming good practices into the MRC's next BDS.

- Integrated ecosystems-based fisheries co-management planning for improved policy coherence and collaboration at national and sub-regional levels across relevant public administrations at national and state level.
- Implementation of NbS where possible across food systems (e.g., rice paddy).
- Financing options from the Public and Local Private Sector to support domestic resource mobilization in support of NbS and sustainable fishery value chains.
- Knowledge Management, awareness and collaborative engagement to capture and utilize knowledge to mainstream good practices into improved policies with stakeholders implementing project activities at the lowest practical levels.

The Project's integrated approach will also address global environmental challenges by complementing multiple GEF-8 IPs including Biodiversity, Climate Mitigation and Ecosystem Restoration in International Waters. This ultimately creates opportunities for projects to harness synergies and avoid negative tradeoffs and leakage. The Project will contribute to the following targets of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework:

2030 Targets of the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework		Core Indicators
<b>Reducing threats to biodiversity (Targets 1-8)</b>		
TARGET 1: Ensure that all areas are under participatory integrated biodiversity inclusive spatial planning and/or effective management processes addressing land and sea use change, to bring the loss of areas of high biodiversity importance, including ecosystems of high ecological integrity, close to zero by 2030, while respecting the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities.		4 and 5
TARGET 2: Ensure that by 2030 at least 30 per cent of areas of degraded terrestrial, inland water, and coastal and marine ecosystems are under effective restoration, in order to enhance biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services, ecological integrity and connectivity.		3, 4 and 6
TARGET 3: Ensure and enable that by 2030 at least 30 per cent of terrestrial, inland water, and of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services, are effectively conserved and managed through ecologically representative, well-connected and equitably governed systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, recognizing indigenous and traditional territories, where applicable, and integrated into wider landscapes, seascapes and the ocean, while ensuring that any sustainable use, where appropriate in such areas, is fully consistent with conservation outcomes, recognizing and respecting the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities, including over their traditional territories.		1 and 2
TARGET 7: Reduce pollution risks and the negative impact of pollution from all sources, by 2030, to levels that are not harmful to biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services, considering cumulative effects, including: reducing excess nutrients lost to the environment by at least half including through more efficient nutrient cycling and use; reducing the overall risk from pesticides and highly hazardous chemicals by at least half including through integrated pest management, based on science, taking into account food security and livelihoods; and also preventing, reducing, and working towards eliminating plastic pollution.		9 and 5
<b>Meeting people's needs through sustainable use and benefit-sharing (Targets 9-13)</b>		
TARGET 10: Ensure that areas under agriculture, aquaculture, fisheries and forestry are managed sustainably, in particular through the sustainable use of biodiversity, including through a substantial increase of the application of biodiversity friendly practices, such as sustainable intensification, agroecological and other innovative approaches contributing to the resilience and long-term efficiency		4 and 5

and productivity of these production systems and to food security, conserving and restoring biodiversity and maintaining nature's contributions to people, including ecosystem functions and services.	
TARGET 11: <i>Restore, maintain and enhance nature's contributions to people, including ecosystem functions and services</i> , such as regulation of air, water, and climate, soil health, pollination and reduction of disease risk, <i>as well as protection from natural hazards and disasters</i> , through nature-based solutions and/or ecosystem-based approaches for the benefit of all people and nature.	3
<b>Tools and solutions for implementation and mainstreaming (Targets 14-23)</b>	
TARGET 19: <i>Substantially and progressively increase the level of financial resources from all sources</i> , in an effective, timely and easily accessible manner, including domestic, international, public and private resources, in accordance with Article 20 of the Convention, to implement national biodiversity strategies and action plans, by 2030 mobilizing at least 200 billion United States dollars per year.	No core indicators
TARGET 20: <i>Strengthen capacity-building and development, access to and transfer of technology, and promote development of and access to innovation and technical and scientific cooperation, including through South-South, North-South and triangular cooperation</i> , to meet the needs for effective implementation, particularly in developing countries, fostering joint technology development and joint scientific research programmes for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and strengthening scientific research and monitoring capacities, commensurate with the ambition of the goals and targets of the framework.	No core indicators
TARGET 21: <i>Ensure equitable and effective participation in decision-making related to biodiversity by indigenous peoples and local communities, and respect their rights over lands, territories and resources, as well as by women and girls, and youth</i> . Reaching the 2050 Vision for Biodiversity will require a whole-of-society approach. It is important that the views, perspectives and experiences of all groups are considered in decision-making processes related to biodiversity. This will require equitable participation in decision-making processes, with a view to ensure that indigenous peoples and local communities, women and girls, and youth can effectively shape these decisions and that their rights are respected. Indigenous peoples and local communities, women and youth should be recognized and empowered in their crucial role as leaders and key actors in action towards biodiversity conservation and sustainable use. <i>Additionally, it will entail active participatory monitoring and evaluation of outcomes and activities by local stakeholders as well as integrated Local Environmental Knowledge (LEK).</i>	No core indicators

The proposed interventions in the project are well-aligned with both country-level and regional priorities, particularly those outlined by the Mekong River Commission (MRC). The project's focus on enhancing transboundary fisheries management, conserving aquatic biodiversity, and improving ecosystem services resonates strongly with the shared objectives of Cambodia, Vietnam, Lao PDR, and Thailand in managing the Lower Mekong Basin (LMB). These countries aim to balance economic development with environmental sustainability, ensuring the long-term health of the Mekong's ecosystems and the well-being of the millions of people who depend on them.

The project is fully aligned with the MRC's Basin Development Strategy (BDS) 2021–2030 and its Fisheries Management and Development Strategy (2018–2022). The BDS emphasizes transboundary cooperation, ecosystem-based approaches, and sustainable development to address the LMB's challenges. Key areas of alignment include:

- 1. Sustainable Fisheries Management:** The project's ecosystem-based fisheries co-management (FCoM) aligns with the MRC's focus on protecting migratory fish species, conserving critical habitats, and maintaining the productivity of the basin's fisheries. This supports the MRC's goal of enhancing food security and economic resilience for communities in the LMB.
- 2. Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM):** The project's emphasis on reconnecting habitats, restoring degraded ecosystems, and improving water governance aligns with the MRC's IWRM framework, which aims to balance water use across sectors while preserving the Mekong's ecological functions.

3. **Climate Adaptation and Mitigation:** By integrating NbS and promoting the conservation of wetlands as carbon sinks, the project supports the MRC's climate resilience objectives. It also contributes to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and enhancing the adaptive capacity of local communities.
4. **Regional Cooperation and Policy Harmonization:** The project emphasizes collaboration among the four MRC member countries, fostering joint management plans and harmonizing policies. This directly supports the MRC's strategic priority of strengthening transboundary governance and cooperation.
5. **Knowledge Sharing and Capacity Building:** The project includes a robust knowledge-sharing component, which aligns with the MRC's focus on improving data systems, monitoring, and adaptive management. It aims to enhance regional understanding of fisheries and biodiversity, providing insights for future policy and strategy development.

#### Alignment with the GEF-8 International Waters Objective

The project is directly aligned with the **GEF-8 International Waters Focal Area Objective 1: Strengthening Blue and Green Circular Economies**, particularly the strategic direction focused on **Advancing Sustainable Fisheries Management in Freshwater Ecosystems**.

This objective aims to enhance cooperation and governance for shared water systems and to sustain ecosystem services that underpin food, water, and livelihood security across boundaries. The project contributes to this goal by strengthening transboundary ecosystem-based management of one of the world's most biodiverse and economically critical freshwater systems — the Lower Mekong Basin (LMB).

Specifically, the project supports the GEF-8 IW strategic programming by:

- **Promoting integrated and ecosystem-based fisheries management** in six focal landscapes across Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Viet Nam, thereby addressing threats to migratory fish stocks and freshwater biodiversity from dam construction, habitat fragmentation, and overfishing.
- **Restoring connectivity and resilience of critical fish habitats**, including migratory swimways, through co-management solutions that balance conservation and community livelihoods.
- **Mainstreaming capture fisheries into national and regional policy and investment frameworks**, in line with GEF-8's emphasis on upstream policy integration and institutional capacity building.
- **Facilitating knowledge-sharing and transboundary cooperation** via the Mekong River Commission and participation in the IW:LEARN platform, as encouraged under GEF-8 IW knowledge exchange and scaling objectives.
- **Developing sustainable financing mechanisms** that support nature-based livelihoods, while reducing pressure on inland fisheries, consistent with the blue economy approach.

The project's design reflects the GEF-8 IW priority to "recover and sustain fisheries and freshwater ecosystems through enhanced governance, cooperation, and investments". It integrates environmental, economic, and social dimensions of freshwater governance and advances transboundary solutions that can be replicated elsewhere. The use of the MRC as the Executing Agency further ensures that regional cooperation and institutional ownership are embedded at the core of implementation — a critical factor in delivering long-term sustainability and Global Environmental Benefits under the GEF-8 IW framework. It is emphasized that an IW Senior Advisor will support the PMU throughout the duration of the project.

## D. POLICY REQUIREMENTS

### Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

We confirm that gender dimensions relevant to the project have been addressed during Project Preparation as per GEF Policy and are clearly articulated in the Project Description (Section B).

Yes

**1) Does the project expect to include any gender-responsive-measures to address gender gaps or promote gender equality and women's empowerment?**

Yes

If the project expects to include any gender-responsive measures to address gender gaps or promote gender equality and women empowerment, please indicate in which results area(s) the project is expected to contribute to gender equality:

**Closing gender gaps in access to and control over natural resources;**

Yes

**Improving women's participation and decision-making; and/or**

Yes

**Generating socio-economic benefits or services for women.**

Yes

**2) Does the project's results framework or logical framework include gender-sensitive indicators?**

Yes

### Stakeholder Engagement

We confirm that key stakeholders were consulted during Project Preparation as required per GEF policy, their relevant roles to project outcomes has been clearly articulated in the Project Description (Section B) and that a Stakeholder Engagement Plan has been developed before CEO endorsement.

Yes

**Select what role civil society will play in the Project**

Consulted only; Yes

Member of Advisory Body; Contractor;

Co-financier;

Member of project steering committee or equivalent decision-making body ;

Executor or co-executor; Yes

Other (Please explain)

### Private Sector

Will there be private sector engagement in the project?

Yes

And if so, has its role been described and justified in section B project description?

Yes

## Environmental and Social Safeguards

We confirm that we have provided information regarding Environmental and Social risks associated with the proposed project or program, including risk screenings/ assessments and, if applicable, management plans or other measures to address identified risks and impacts (this information should be presented in Annex E).

Yes

Please provide overall Project/Program Risk Classification

### Overall Project/Program Risk Classification

PIF	CEO Endorsement/Approval	MTR	TE
Medium/Moderate	Medium/Moderate		

## E. OTHER REQUIREMENTS

### Knowledge management

We confirm that an approach to Knowledge Management and Learning has been clearly described during Project Preparation in the Project Description and that these activities have been budgeted and an anticipated timeline for delivery of relevant outputs has been provided.

Yes

### Socio-economic Benefits

We confirm that the project design has considered socio-economic benefits to be delivered by the project and these have been clearly described in the Project Description and will be monitored and reported on during project implementation (at MTR and TER).

The project 'Enhancing Transboundary Fisheries Management in the Lower Mekong Basin' aims to generate significant **socio-economic benefits** by improving fisheries management, strengthening local livelihoods, and promoting sustainable economic development.

Fisheries in the Lower Mekong Basin (LMB) contribute substantially to food security, income generation, and employment, particularly for rural and vulnerable communities. The project enhances **livelihood resilience** by supporting sustainable capture fisheries, improving fishery-based value chains, and providing alternative economic opportunities for local populations. By increasing fish stocks and ecosystem health, the project ensures that communities reliant on fisheries can maintain stable incomes and food supplies.

Additionally, the project promotes **economic diversification** by developing financial incentives, supporting ecotourism, and fostering sustainable aquaculture and fisheries-related enterprises. This includes creating community cooperatives, improving market access for fisheries products, and implementing financial mechanisms like mini-trust funds and rotating credit schemes.

Another key socio-economic benefit is **gender inclusion**, ensuring that women, who play a crucial role in fisheries and household economies, have equal access to training, decision-making, and financial opportunities. The project also strengthens **governance and policy frameworks**, enabling better integration of fisheries management into national and regional economic plans, which supports long-term economic stability.



## ANNEX A: FINANCING TABLES

### GEF Financing Table

#### Trust Fund Resources Requested by Agency(ies), Country(ies), Focal Area and the Programming of Funds

GEF Agency	Trust Fund	Country/ Regional/ Global	Focal Area	Programming of Funds	Grant / Non- Grant	GEF Project Grant(\$)	Agency Fee(\$)	Total GEF Financing (\$)
IUCN	GET	Cambodia	Land Degradation	LD STAR Allocation: LD- 1	Grant	446,216.00	40,159.00	486,375.00
IUCN	GET	Lao PDR	Biodiversity	BD STAR Allocation: BD- 1	Grant	446,216.00	40,159.00	486,375.00
IUCN	GET	Viet Nam	Biodiversity	BD STAR Allocation: BD- 1	Grant	446,216.00	40,159.00	486,375.00
IUCN	GET	Regional	International Waters	International Waters: IW-3	Grant	9,370,528.00	843,347.00	10,213,875.00
<b>Total GEF Resources (\$)</b>						<b>10,709,176.00</b>	<b>963,824.00</b>	<b>11,673,000.00</b>

### Project Preparation Grant (PPG)

Was a Project Preparation Grant requested?

true

PPG Amount (\$)

300000

PPG Agency Fee (\$)

27000

GEF Agency	Trust Fund	Country/ Regional/ Global	Focal Area	Programming of Funds	PPG(\$)	Agency Fee(\$)	Total PPG Funding(\$)
IUCN	GET	Cambodia	Land Degradation	LD STAR Allocation: LD-1	12,500.00	1,125.00	13,625.00
IUCN	GET	Lao PDR	Biodiversity	BD STAR Allocation: BD-1	12,500.00	1,125.00	13,625.00

IUCN	GET	Viet Nam	Biodiversity	BD STAR Allocation: BD-1	12,500.00	1,125.00	13,625.00
IUCN	GET	Regional	International Waters	International Waters: IW-3	262,500.00	23,625.00	286,125.00
<b>Total PPG Amount (\$)</b>					<b>300,000.00</b>	<b>27,000.00</b>	<b>327,000.00</b>

Please provide Justification

### Sources of Funds for Country Star Allocation

GEF Agency	Trust Fund	Country/ Regional/ Global	Focal Area	Sources of Funds	Total(\$)
IUCN	GET	Cambodia	Land Degradation	LD STAR Allocation	500,000.00
IUCN	GET	Lao PDR	Biodiversity	BD STAR Allocation	500,000.00
IUCN	GET	Viet Nam	Biodiversity	BD STAR Allocation	500,000.00
<b>Total GEF Resources</b>					<b>1,500,000.00</b>

### Focal Area Elements

Programming Directions	Trust Fund	GEF Project Financing(\$)	Co-financing(\$)
BD-1-2	GET	892,432.00	3835662
LD-1	GET	446,216.00	1917831
IW-3	GET	9,370,528.00	40274419
<b>Total Project Cost</b>		<b>10,709,176.00</b>	<b>46,027,912.00</b>

### Confirmed Co-financing for the project, by name and type

Please include evidence for each co-financing source for this project in the tab of the portal

Sources of Co-financing	Name of Co-financier	Type of Co-financing	Investment Mobilized	Amount(\$)
GEF Agency	IUCN - GCF WASSA	Grant	Investment mobilized	20000000

Others	Mekong River Commission	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	4576300
Others	Ecosystem Window of the Mekong Fund Trial (Mekong Fund)	Grant	Investment mobilized	16194000
Recipient Country Government	Thailand Department of Fisheries	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	2438000
GEF Agency	IUCN - UK DEFRA Biodiverse Landscapes Fund (BLF) Lower Mekong (project lead: FFI) 2023-2028	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	500000
GEF Agency	IUCN - SDC Building River Dialogue and Governance (BRIDGE) Mekong 2023-2026	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	300000
GEF Agency	IUCN - Australia DFAT Protected Areas and Development (PAD) (project lead: ICEM) 2025-2029	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	700000
GEF Agency	IUCN - Adaptation Fund: Mekong EbA South: Enhancing Climate Resilience in the Greater Mekong Sub-region through Ecosystem-based Adaptation in the Context of South-South Cooperation (Thailand, Viet Nam)	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	1319612
<b>Total Co-financing</b>				<b>46,027,912.00</b>

Please describe the investment mobilized portion of the co-financing

1. IUCN: The co-financing through investment mobilized refers to the GCF funded Wetland based Adaptation and Mitigation in the Indo Burma Regional Project. Currently the project proposal is under review by GCF Secretariat and has been tentatively included for the GCF Board 42 meeting which will be held in Q4 2025. The cofinancing in this case assumes a period of three years from 2027-2030 and the project total budget is USD 118mn
2. Mekong River Commission: The investment mobilized here refers to the Mekong River Commission managed 'Ecosystem Window of the Mekong Fund Trial (Mekong Fund)'

## ANNEX B: ENDORSEMENTS

### GEF Agency(ies) Certification

GEF Agency Type	Date	Project Contact Person	Phone	Email
GEF Agency Coordinator	2/6/2025	Janie Rioux		janie.rioux@iucn.org

Record of Endorsement of GEF Operational Focal Point (s) on Behalf of the Government(s):

Please attach the Operational Focal Point endorsement letter(s) with this template.

Name of GEF OFF	Position	Ministry	Date (MM/DD/YYYY)
Tin Ponlok	GEF Operational Focal Point	Ministry of Environment, Royal Cambodian Government	
Jatuporn Buruspat	Permanent Secretary	Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, Royal Thai Government	
Thuan Duc Nguyen	Director	Viet Nam Environment Protection Fund, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, Government of Viet Nam	
Phakkavanh Phissamay	Director General	Department of Planning and Finance, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, Government of Lao PDR	

## ANNEX C: PROJECT RESULTS FRAMEWORK

Please indicate the page number in the Project Document where the project results and M&E frameworks can be found. Please also paste below the Project Results Framework from the Agency document.

Monitoring Activity. Track results progress						
Results Monitoring	Indicators	Targets	Description of indicators and targets	Frequency	Responsible for data collection	Means of verification
<b>Overall Objective:</b> <i>To increase the connectivity, productivity and resilience of transboundary capture fisheries, aquatic biodiversity and other ecosystem services that provide benefits for the LMB's people.</i>						
Project objective	<b>Core Indicator 1</b>  Terrestrial protected areas created or under improved management (hectare)	101,509	Lower Songkhram River Ramsar site (5,504 ha) + Stung treng Ramsar site (14,600 ha) + Tram Chim Ramsar site (7,313 ha) + fish habitats in Siphandone Landscape (74,092 ha)	Annual	National PMUs (MCs), regional PMU (MRC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ MEL Platform</li> <li>▪ PIR/MTE/TE</li> </ul>
	<b>Core Indicator 4</b>  Area of landscapes under improved practices (hectare)	795,416	Fish habitants in the six focal landscape (896,832 ha) that will be under improved practices less existing or to be created PAs under Core Indicator 1	Annual	National PMUs (MCs), regional PMU (MRC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ MEL Platform</li> <li>▪ PIR/MTE/TE</li> </ul>

Monitoring Activity. Track results progress						
Results Monitoring	Indicators	Targets	Description of indicators and targets	Frequency	Responsible for data collection	Means of verification
	Core Indicator 7.1  Level of Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis and Strategic Action Program (TDA/SAP) formulation and implementation	1	<p>[*] This indicator is based on a rating for the level of TDA or SAP formulation and implementation.</p> <p>1 = No TDA/SAP developed</p> <p>2 = TDA finalized</p> <p>3 = SAP ministerially endorsed</p> <p>4 = SAP under implementation.</p>	End of project	Regional PMU (MRC)	▪ PIR/TE
	Core Indicator 7.2  Level of Regional Legal Agreements and Regional Management Institutions to support its implementation	3	<p>[*] This indicator is based on a rating for the level of Regional Legal Agreements or Regional Management Institution(s) (RMI) formulation and implementation</p> <p>1 = No regional legal agreement, or neither institutional framework nor RMI in place</p> <p>2 = Regional legal agreement under development</p> <p>3 = Regional legal agreement signed and RMI in place</p> <p>4 = Regional legal agreement ratified and RMI functional</p>	End of project	Regional PMU (MRC)	▪ PIR/TE
	Core Indicator 7.3  Level of National/Local reforms and active participation of Inter-Ministerial Committees	2	<p>[*] This indicator is based on a rating for the level of national or local reforms and participation in inter-ministerial committees (IMC).</p> <p>1 = Neither national/local reforms nor IMCs</p> <p>2 = National/local reforms in preparation, IMCs functional</p> <p>3 = National/local reforms and IMCs in place</p> <p>4 = National/local reforms/policies implemented, supported by IMCs.</p>	End of project	Regional PMU (MRC)	▪ PIR/TE
	Core Indicator 7.4  Level of engagement in IW: LEARN through participation	Midterm: 2 website + 1 project experience note	<p>[*] This indicator is based on a rating for the level of engagement in International Waters Learning Exchange and Resource Network (IW:LEARN).</p> <p>1 = No participation</p> <p>2 = Website in line with IW:LEARN guidance active</p>	Midterm / End of project	Regional PMU (MRC)	▪ PIR/TE

Monitoring Activity. Track results progress						
Results Monitoring	Indicators	Targets	Description of indicators and targets	Frequency	Responsible for data collection	Means of verification
	and delivery of key products	<b>End of project: 3</b>  (website + at least 3 experience notes)	3 = As above, plus strong participation in training/twinning events and production of at least one experience note and one results note  4 = As above, plus active participation of project staff and country representatives at International Waters conferences and the provision of spatial data and other data points via project website.			
	<b>Core Indicator 8</b>  Globally over-exploited marine fisheries moved to more sustainable levels (metric ton)	78,000	[*] This indicator refers to globally over-exploited fisheries having been moved to more sustainable levels (FAO, 2012).	End of project	Regional PMU (MRC)	▪ PIR/TE
	<b>Core Indicator 11</b>  People benefiting from GEF-financed investments disaggregated by sex (count)	200,000  (130,000 male - 70,000 female)	Number of persons that participate in activities and meetings (e.g., training, technical assistance) of the project (disaggregated by sex). Appendix 11 details the expected direct beneficiaries from the project.	Quarterly	National PMUs (MCs), regional PMU (MRC)	▪ MEL Platform  ▪ PIR/MTE/TE  ▪ Minutes of meetings  ▪ Training Reports
Component 1: Implementation of transboundary fisheries solutions.						
<b>Outcome 1.1</b> Fisheries management improved in target landscapes	<b>1.1.a</b> Fish catch weight and size in the target landscapes	<u>End of project:</u>  15 % of increase in fish catch weight  (Baseline and target value to be validated through the first assessment)	The target value will be calculated through a specific study on fish catch, to be carried out during the first and the last year, led by the project with contributions from fishermen	Twice (first and the last year)	National PMUs (MCs), regional PMU (MRC), Provincial and District Governments and villages, fishermen	▪ Fisheries surveys forms and assessment report  ▪ MEL Platform  ▪ PIR/TE
	<b>1.1.b</b> Fish catch diversity and value in the target landscapes	<u>End of project:</u>  15 % increase in diversity (Baseline and target value to be				



Monitoring Activity. Track results progress						
Results Monitoring	Indicators	Targets	Description of indicators and targets	Frequency	Responsible for data collection	Means of verification
		validated through the first assessment)				
	(Output) <b>1.1.1</b> Number of focal landscapes conducted baseline assessments and cost-benefits analysis	<u>Midterm:</u> Baseline assessment and cost-benefit analyses prepared and validated for 6 focal landscapes	The baseline assessments will identify specific threats (e.g., habitat degradation, pollution) and opportunities to improve habitat connectivity and fish stock sustainability. They will be developed using a comprehensive, evidence-based approach that integrates existing scientific knowledge, Local Ecological Knowledge (LEK), and new data collection efforts	Annual	National PMUs (MCs), regional PMU (MRC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ MEL Platform</li> <li>▪ Reports of annual audits</li> <li>▪ PIR/MTE</li> </ul>
	(Output) <b>1.1.2</b> Number of digital or paper copies of the fisheries management best practices guidelines distributed	<u>Midterm:</u> At least 1,000 digital or paper copies of the fisheries management best practices guidelines distributed	<p>The guidelines will provide a comprehensive set of best practices, including measures for protecting and enhancing critical areas such as reproduction and spawning sites. They will also address participatory decision-making processes, adaptive learning, and governance mechanisms that are linked to project-specific Theories of Change for ecosystem-based FCoM. Additionally, the guidelines will propose SMART outcome indicators tailored to the specific needs of each Focal Landscape, ensuring that progress can be measured effectively.</p> <p>Furthermore, the guidelines will include specific actions to develop conflict resolution mechanisms, drawing on MRC's established conditions for FCoM and Ostrom's eight design principles for collective resource management</p>	Annual	National PMUs (MCs), regional PMU (MRC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ MEL Platform</li> <li>▪ Reports of annual audits</li> <li>▪ PIR/MTE</li> </ul>
	(Output) <b>1.1.3</b> Critical fish habitat protected with improved management and/or restoration	<u>End of Project:</u> At least 50,000 hectares of critical fish habitat protected with improved management and/or restoration by end of the project	The target value will be achieved through a combination of new site-based protections and the development of tailored management plans that address the specific needs and contexts of each site.	Annual	National PMUs (MCs), regional PMU (MRC), FLSGs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ MEL Platform</li> <li>▪ PIR/MTE/TE</li> <li>▪ Management plans</li> </ul>
	(Output) <b>1.1.4</b> Number of FCoM	<u>End of Project:</u>	FCoM frameworks will be identified and trained with the support of multi-stakeholder Focal Landscape Support Groups (FLSGs), that will contribute to the M&E related activities (minutes	Annual	National PMUs (MCs), regional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ MEL Platform</li> </ul>

Monitoring Activity. Track results progress						
Results Monitoring	Indicators	Targets	Description of indicators and targets	Frequency	Responsible for data collection	Means of verification
	frameworks established, with management plans and financial mechanisms effectively implemented	At least 100 FCoM frameworks established, with management plans and financial mechanisms effectively implemented across all the focal landscapes	of meetings, training reports). The frameworks will lay the foundation for expanding managed fishery focal demonstration areas and connecting critical habitats that facilitate the free passage of fish and Other Aquatic Animals (OAAs), essential for completing their life cycles and sustaining annual fisheries recruitment.		PMU (MRC), FLSGs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minutes of FLSGs meetings</li> <li>Training Reports</li> <li>Training satisfaction questionnaires</li> <li>Training evaluation questionnaires</li> <li>Reports of annual audits</li> <li>PIR/MTE/TE</li> </ul>
Component 2: Economic and financial incentives for transforming fisheries-based livelihoods.						
<b>Outcome 2.1.</b> Fisheries and non-fisheries VCs improved	<b>2.1.a</b> Increased community fishing household income and subjective well-being based on contributions from new/improved VCs	<p><u>Mid-term:</u></p> <p>15% increase of household income and self-perception on how and to what extent the project will have increased the quality of life (samples from project sites) (baseline and target values to be validated through the first assessment)</p> <p><u>End of Project:</u></p> <p>30% increase of household income and self-perception on how and to what extent the project will</p>	The indicators measure changes in fishing household social and economic well-being and aims to incrementally improve a standard well-being index used by each MC. The targets represent an incremental increase that will have to be confirmed at inception prior to implementation.	Twice (first and the last year)	National PMUs (MCs), regional PMU (MRC), District and Provincial Government, FCoM communities, Fisher Associations and private sector	Specific study under M&E activities to be carried out during the first and the last year, led by the project with contributions from communities

Monitoring Activity. Track results progress						
Results Monitoring	Indicators	Targets	Description of indicators and targets	Frequency	Responsible for data collection	Means of verification
		have increased the quality of life (samples from project sites) (baseline and target values to be validated through the first assessment)				
	<b>2.1.b</b> Economic and financial well-being: % annual income contributed to focal landscapes from sustainable inland aquatic resource value chains.	<p><u>Midterm:</u></p> <p>20% increase in annual incomes linked to sustainable inland aquatic value chains in at least 2 focal landscapes</p> <p>At least 10% increase in annual incomes linked to sustainable inland aquatic value chains in the focal landscapes</p> <p>(baseline and target values to be validated through the first assessment)</p> <p><u>End of project:</u></p> <p>50 % increase in annual incomes linked to sustainable inland aquatic value chains</p>		Twice (first and the last year)	National PMUs (MCs), regional PMU (MRC), District and Provincial Governments, FCoM communities, Fisheries Associations and private sector	

Monitoring Activity. Track results progress						
Results Monitoring	Indicators	Targets	Description of indicators and targets	Frequency	Responsible for data collection	Means of verification
		<p>in at least 4 focal landscapes</p> <p>At least 20% increase in annual incomes linked to sustainable inland aquatic value chains in the focal landscapes</p> <p>(baseline and target values to be validated through the first assessment)</p>				
	<p>(Output) <b>2.1.1</b> Number of fishing communities (e.g., FCoM communities ) that benefit from new or improved VCs</p>	<p><u>End of Project:</u></p> <p>At least 16 additional communities with new or improved value chains developed by the project across all the focal landscapes</p>	The indicator measures the number of communities that have been benefitted by the project through the development / improvement of value chains	Annual	National PMUs (MCs), regional PMU (MRC), District and Provincial Governments, FCoM communities, Fisher Associations and private sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ MEL Platform</li> <li>▪ Reports of annual audits</li> <li>▪ PIR/MTE/TE</li> </ul>
<b>Outcome 2.2</b> Long-term public financing secured for improved fisheries management	<b>2.2.a</b> Long-term public or public-private financing mechanisms to improve ecosystems-based capture fisheries management and stock protection identified and effectively	<p><u>Midterm:</u></p> <p>At least 1 long-term financing mechanism identified and initiated</p> <p><u>End of Project:</u></p> <p>At least 1 long-term financing mechanism implemented with</p>	Presently, there are no loans or rotating funds. The indicator aims to measure the increase in funds available to communities to implement EBFM, sustainable value chains and ecotourism.	Annual	National PMUs (MCs), regional PMU (MRC), District and Provincial Governments, Fisher Associations, financial institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ MEL Platform</li> <li>▪ Financial and other reports from entities promoting financing mechanisms</li> <li>▪ PIR/MTE/TE</li> </ul>

Monitoring Activity. Track results progress						
Results Monitoring	Indicators	Targets	Description of indicators and targets	Frequency	Responsible for data collection	Means of verification
	implemented	effective financial results				
	<b>2.2.b</b> Investments mobilized (USD) from public entities, banks, privates and others to improve ecosystems-based capture fisheries management and stock protection	<u>Midterm:</u> Sources from public funds, banks, privates and others identified for at least 10,000,000 USD  <u>End of Project:</u> At least 20,000,000 USD mobilized from public funds, banks, privates and others in the focal landscapes	The indicator measures the total amount of investments mobilized from public entities, banks, privates and others	Annual	National PMUs (MCs), regional PMU (MRC), District and Provincial Governments, Fisheries Associations, financial institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ MEL Platform</li> <li>▪ Financial and other reports from entities promoting financing mechanisms</li> <li>▪ PIR/MTE/TE</li> </ul>
	(Output) <b>2.2.1</b> Number of financial needs assessments for improved fisheries management	<u>Midterm:</u> 6 financial needs assessments for improved fisheries management (one for each focal landscape)	Mapping of state and non-state stakeholders in each landscape to assess their financing needs and investment opportunities.  In terms of the costs that communities incur in managing FCZs, these are already well documented in Cambodia. But these data are needed for the other 3 countries	Annual	National PMUs (MCs), regional PMU (MRC), District and Provincial Governments, Fisheries Associations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ MEL Platform</li> <li>▪ Assessment Reports</li> <li>▪ PIR/MTE</li> </ul>
	(Output) <b>2.2.2</b> Number of public entities, banks and potential private	<u>End of Project:</u> At least 40 public entities, banks and potential	The indicator measures the number of public entities, banks and potential private partners involved in the identification and mobilization of additional sources for ecosystems-based capture fisheries management and stock protection	Annual	National PMUs (MCs), regional PMU (MRC), District and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ MEL Platform</li> <li>▪ Financial and other reports from entities promoting</li> </ul>

Monitoring Activity. Track results progress						
Results Monitoring	Indicators	Targets	Description of indicators and targets	Frequency	Responsible for data collection	Means of verification
	partners involved in the identification and mobilization of additional sources for ecosystems-based capture fisheries management and stock protection	private partners involved in the identification and mobilization of additional sources for ecosystems-based capture fisheries management and stock protection			Provincial Governments, Fisheries Associations, financial institutions	financing mechanisms ▪ PIR/MTE/TE
Component 3: Mainstream ecosystem-based fisheries into sectoral policies and plans						
<b>Outcome 3.1:</b> National fisheries management policies and plans harmonized to support transboundary fisheries solutions.	<b>3.1</b> Drafted framework for harmonization of cross sectors to support transboundary fisheries solutions	<u>Midterm:</u>  At least two national frameworks drafted for harmonization of cross sectors to support transboundary fisheries solutions.  <u>End of project:</u>  4 national frameworks drafted for harmonization of cross sectors to support transboundary fisheries solutions	It is expected to carry out a comprehensive review of institutional mechanisms for fisheries decision-making, identify gaps in policy-relevant information, and develop a harmonized framework to align cross-sectoral policies. The framework will recognize the economic and ecological value of capture fisheries and wetlands, integrating these insights into broader development goals.	National PMUs (MCs), regional PMU (MRC), Fisheries Associations	National PMUs (MCs), regional PMU (MRC)	▪ MEL Platform ▪ Reports ▪ PIR/MTE/TE
	(Output) <b>3.1.1</b> Number of legal instruments drafted to support prioritization of fishery investment in fisheries management	<u>End of project:</u>  At least four legal instruments drafted to support prioritization of fishery investment in fisheries management (1 for each country)	National workshops will be organized to define what kind of legal instruments are needed for improving transboundary fisheries management. The legal instruments may include developing strategies and instruments for ensuring national consensus on transboundary swimways and conservation of critical aquatic species	National PMUs (MCs), regional PMU (MRC), Fisheries Associations	National PMUs (MCs), regional PMU (MRC)	▪ MEL Platform ▪ Legal instruments drafted ▪ PIR/MTE/TE



Monitoring Activity. Track results progress						
Results Monitoring	Indicators	Targets	Description of indicators and targets	Frequency	Responsible for data collection	Means of verification
<b>Outcome 3.2</b> Mainstream ecosystem-based fisheries into regional non-fisheries strategies, plans and policies	<b>3.2</b> Updated MRC BDS (2031-2040) and SP (2031-2036) with transformative outcomes and lessons approved by MRC Council	<u>End of project:</u>  BDS (2031-2040) and (2031-2036) documents updated and approved by MRC Council	BDS and SP are up for revision with a new input. The indicator measures the degree to which lessons, good practices and transformative outcomes are mainstreamed into the new instruments and formally approved by MCs and MRC Secretariat.	Annual	Regional PMU (MRC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ PIR/TE</li> <li>▪ BDS and SP Documents (reviews and approvals)</li> </ul>
	(Output) <b>3.2.1</b> Number of focal landscapes targeted by existing updated or new nexus assessments with new fisheries related knowledge and recommendations to optimize water-food-environment-energy synergies, including ESV studies	<u>End of project:</u>  Existing updated or new nexus assessments with new fisheries related knowledge and recommendations to optimize water-food-environment-energy synergies, including ESV studies, in at least 3 focal landscapes	<p>Update of existing nexus assessments with new fisheries-related knowledge and recommendations to optimize synergies between water, food, environment, and energy sectors.</p> <p>Furthermore, an economic valuation study of ecosystem service values (ESV) will be conducted in at least three of the six Focal Landscapes, assessing the trade-offs between water-food-environment-energy policies and plans.</p>	Annual	Regional PMU (MRC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ PIR/TE</li> <li>▪ MEL Platform</li> <li>▪ Nexus assessments including ESV studies</li> </ul>
<b>Component 4: Knowledge management and communication</b>						
<b>Outcome 4.1:</b> Improved knowledge-sharing and multi-sector engagement to support transformations.	<b>4.1.a</b> Number of updates or upgrades of the existing MRC State of Basin Monitoring and Reporting System to incorporate adaptive learning, and capture projects results and lessons learned	<u>Midterm:</u>  At least 1 update or upgrade per year  <u>End of Project:</u>  At least 1 update or upgrade per year	The indicator measures the number of updates or upgrades of the existing MRC State of Basin Monitoring and Reporting System to incorporate adaptive learning, and capture projects results and lessons learned	Annual	National PMUs (MCs), regional PMU (MRC), Associations, District and Provincial Governments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ PIR/MTE/TE</li> <li>▪ Verification of the MRC State of Basin Monitoring and Reporting System</li> </ul>

Monitoring Activity. Track results progress						
Results Monitoring	Indicators	Targets	Description of indicators and targets	Frequency	Responsible for data collection	Means of verification
	<b>4.1.b</b> Number of visitors of the MEL platform website(s)	<u>Midterm:</u>  At least 1,000 visits  At least 600 unique visitors  <u>End of Project</u> (cumulative targets):  At least 1,500 visits  At least 1,000 unique visitors	The indicator measures the number of visitors per month (annual average) recorded in the Platform.	Quarterly	National PMUs (MCs), regional PMU (MRC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ MEL Platform</li> <li>▪ Website visits' counters</li> <li>▪ Quarterly reports/PIR/MTE/TE</li> </ul>
	(Output) <b>4.1.1</b> Number of technical staff members and co-managers trained on MEL	<u>End of project:</u> at least 40 technical staff members and co-managers trained on MEL	Fishery Department technical staff and comanagers will receive applied training in their appropriate workspaces, assess the capacities of existing systems, identify gaps that could improve their monitoring systems.	Quarterly	National PMUs (MCs), regional PMU (MRC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Training Reports</li> <li>▪ Training satisfaction questionnaires</li> <li>▪ Training evaluation questionnaires</li> <li>▪ MEL Platform</li> <li>▪ Website visits' counters</li> <li>▪ Quarterly reports/PIR/MTE/TE</li> </ul>
	(Output) <b>4.1.2</b> Number of meetings and workshops to identify IWRM innovations and best practice	<u>Midterm:</u> at least 8  <u>End of project</u> (cumulative target): At least 28 meetings / workshops realized	The project will support regular meetings throughout the basin, which will help identify IWRM innovations and best practices in the basin. These will be collected through restitutive workshops.	Quarterly	Regional PMU (MRC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Minutes of meetings</li> <li>▪ Quarterly reports/PIR/MTE/TE</li> </ul>
	(Output) <b>4.1.3</b> Number of gender-responsive knowledge management products developed	<u>Midterm:</u> at least 3  <u>End of project</u> (cumulative target): at least 10	The indicator measures the number of gender-responsive knowledge management products developed	Quarterly	National PMUs (MCs), regional PMU (MRC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Products</li> <li>▪ Quarterly reports/PIR/MTE/TE</li> </ul>



Monitoring Activity. Track results progress						
Results Monitoring	Indicators	Targets	Description of indicators and targets	Frequency	Responsible for data collection	Means of verification
	(Output) <b>4.1.4</b> Number of international and national knowledge sharing and outreach meetings with MCs, NGOs, academia, DPs and other key-players, including the International Waters Conferences (IWC) and the regional meetings and workshops organized by the IW: LEARN Network	<u>Midterm: 3</u>  <u>End of project</u> (cumulative target): 8	Annual knowledge sharing events will be organized starting from the 2nd year (thus, end of project target value: 4).  Main stakeholders will meet each year in a different Country in one of the focal landscapes to discuss about the project main achievements and implementation effectiveness, exchange information, insights, experiences, and best practices regarding specific topics	Quarterly	National PMUs (MCs), regional PMU (MRC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minutes of meetings</li> <li>Quarterly reports/PIR/MT/TE</li> </ul>
<b>Outcome 4.2</b> Project stakeholders are informed and engaged	<b>4.2</b> Number of persons involved in communication activities or made aware of the project's activities and results	<u>Mid-term:</u>  At least 200 persons involved in communication activities  At least 2000 project website visits  At least 1,500 project website unique visits  <u>End of Project</u> (cumulative targets):  At least 350 persons involved in communication activities	The indicator measures the number of participants to meetings/workshops/visits organized throughout the project implementation to develop the communication strategy and action plans  Number of visits and unique visits to the project's network of electronic platforms.  Keep track of document downloads. Persons downloading project documents must fill a form providing basic information: name, country, organization, organisation type (public, private, NGO, CSO).	Quarterly	National PMUs (MCs), regional PMU (MRC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Website counter</li> <li>Minutes of meetings</li> <li>Quarterly reports/PIR/MT/TE</li> </ul>

Monitoring Activity. Track results progress						
Results Monitoring	Indicators	Targets	Description of indicators and targets	Frequency	Responsible for data collection	Means of verification
		At least 3000 project website visits  At least 2,200 project website unique visits				
	(Output) 4.2.1 Communication and KM strategy and action plan developed	<u>Mid-term:</u> The communication strategy and communication plan is developed	A communication strategy and action plan will be designed through a participatory process.  Every year, starting from the 2 <sup>nd</sup> year, stakeholders will be engaged in meetings to discuss the communication strategy and action plan effectiveness and assess the needs for its update, as a measure of adaptive management).	Annual	National PMUs (MCs), regional PMU (MRC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communication strategy and action plan developed / updated</li> <li>Minutes of meetings</li> <li>Quarterly reports/PIR/MTE/TE</li> </ul>
	(Output) 4.2.2 Targeted gender-responsive communication materials (web site, podcasts, learning videos, flyers, etc.) are developed and disseminated online and across the focal landscapes	<u>End of Project:</u> All the communication materials (to be defined through the Communication strategy and action plan) are gender-responsive, uploaded in the project website and distributed in the focal landscapes		Quarterly	National PMUs (MCs), regional PMU (MRC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Materials</li> <li>Quarterly reports/PIR/MTE/TE</li> </ul>

#### ANNEX D: STATUS OF UTILIZATION OF PROJECT PREPARATION GRANT (PPG)

Provide detailed funding amount of the PPG activities financing status in the table below:

Project Preparation Activities Implemented	GETF/LDCF/SCCF Amount (\$)
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	Budgeted Amount	Amount Spent To date	Amount Committed
Consultancy contract for firm for preparation of CER, ProDoc and annexes	170,000.00	69,333.00	100,667.00
PPG - Inception workshop, technical design workshop, validation workshop and other consultation workshop costs Workshop costs related to supporting costs of stakeholders	100,000.00	65,518.00	34,482.00
Preparatory costs of inception workshop	30,000.00	0.00	30,000.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>300,000.00</b>	<b>134,851.00</b>	<b>165,149.00</b>

## ANNEX E: PROJECT MAP AND COORDINATES

Please provide geo-referenced information and map where the project interventions will take place

Location Name	Latitude	Longitude	GeoName ID
Khong Island	14.201	105.965	

Location Description:

Activity Description:

Location Name	Latitude	Longitude	GeoName ID
Moonlapamok	14.302	105.565	

Location Description:

Activity Description:

Location Name	Latitude	Longitude	GeoName ID
Kracheh	12.490	106.040	

Location Description:

Activity Description:

Location Name	Latitude	Longitude	GeoName ID
Preaek Prasab	12.475	105.874	

Location Description:

Activity Description:

Location Name	Latitude	Longitude	GeoName ID
Sambour	12.985	106.089	

Location Description:

Activity Description:

Location Name	Latitude	Longitude	GeoName ID
Siem Bouk	13.307	105.814	

Location Description:

Activity Description:

Location Name	Latitude	Longitude	GeoName ID
Stueng Traeng	13.683	106.067	

Location Description:

Activity Description:

Location Name	Latitude	Longitude	GeoName ID
Thala Barivat	13.675	105.787	

Location Description:

Activity Description:

Location Name	Latitude	Longitude	GeoName ID
Kampong Chhnang	12.167	104.558	

Location Description:

Activity Description:

Location Name	Latitude	Longitude	GeoName ID
An Phú	10.846	105.099	



Location Description:

Activity Description:

Location Name	Latitude	Longitude	GeoName ID
Hồng Ngự	10.815	105.283	

Location Description:

Activity Description:

Location Name	Latitude	Longitude	GeoName ID
Hồng Ngự (Thị xã)	10.818	105.379	

Location Description:

Activity Description:

Location Name	Latitude	Longitude	GeoName ID
Phú Tân	10.655	105.275	

Location Description:

Activity Description:

Location Name	Latitude	Longitude	GeoName ID
Tam Nông	10.729	105.524	

Location Description:

Activity Description:

Location Name	Latitude	Longitude	GeoName ID
Tân Châu	10.805	105.185	

Location Description:

Activity Description:

Location Name	Latitude	Longitude	GeoName ID
Thanh Binh	10.609	105.474	

Location Description:

Activity Description:

Location Name	Latitude	Longitude	GeoName ID
Chiang Khong	20.151	100.344	

Location Description:

Activity Description:

Location Name	Latitude	Longitude	GeoName ID
Kham Ta Kla	17.829	103.786	

Location Description:

Activity Description:

Location Name	Latitude	Longitude	GeoName ID
Akat Amnuai	17.642	103.972	

Location Description:

Activity Description:

Location Name	Latitude	Longitude	GeoName ID
Tha Uthen	17.604	104.498	

Location Description:

Activity Description:

Location Name	Latitude	Longitude	GeoName ID
Ban Paeng	17.873	104.217	

Location Description:

Activity Description:

Location Name	Latitude	Longitude	GeoName ID
Si Songkhram	17.638	104.235	

Location Description:

Activity Description:

Location Name	Latitude	Longitude	GeoName ID
Na Wa	17.501	104.098	

Location Description:

Activity Description:

Location Name	Latitude	Longitude	GeoName ID
Nathom	17.841	104.098	

Location Description:

Activity Description:

**Please provide any further geo-referenced information and map where project interventions are taking place as appropriate.**

As we were not able to upload the focal landscape maps in this section, they have been uploaded in the Roadmap section with the file names being as follows:

1. GEF ID 11304\_Map 1 Ing River Mouth Landscape - Focal Districts
2. GEF ID 11304\_Map 2 Lower Songkhram Basin Landscape - Focal Districts
3. GEF ID 11304\_Map 3 Siphandone and Steung Treng - Kratie Landscapes
4. GEF ID 11304\_Map 4 Eastern Tonle Sap Landscape\_Kampong Chnang
5. GEF ID 11304\_Vietnam Mekong Delta Landscape - Focal Districts

## ANNEX F: ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL SAFEGUARDS SCREEN AND RATING

Attach agency safeguard datasheet/assessment report(s), including ratings of risk types and overall project/program risk classification as well as any management plans or measures to address identified risks and impacts (as applicable).

Title

GEF ID 11304\_CER\_Annex F\_ESMF\_Annexes\_16  
 GEF ID 11304\_CER\_Annex F\_ESMF\_Annexes\_16  
 GEF ID 11304\_CER\_Annex F\_ESMF\_Master document\_16  
 GEF ID 11304\_CER\_Annex F\_ESMF\_Master document\_16  
 GEF ID 11304\_ESMS Screening and Clearance Form\_signed  
 GEF ID 11304\_Appendix 12\_ESMF\_31  
 GEF ID 11304\_Appendix 10\_ESMS Screening Form\_31  
 GEF ID 11304\_ESMS Screening Questionnaire

## ANNEX G: BUDGET TABLE

Please upload the budget table here.

Annex G: GEF Project Budget Template													
Expenditure Category	Detailed description	Component (USDeq.)										Total (US Deq.)	Responsible Entity
		Component 1	Component 2		Component 3		Component 4		Sub - Total	M&E	PMC		
		Outcome 1.1	Outcome 2.1	Outcome 2.2	Outcome 3.1	Outcome 3.2	Outcome 4.1	Outcome 4.2					

<b>Work s</b>	Activity 1.1.3.3_W orks - Implement ation of low-cost solutions to enhance fish habitats and connectivit y (Thailand will use their own national budget)	480,0 00							480, 000			480, 000	MRC
	Activity 1.1.4.2_W orks related to demarcatin g FCZ and other manageme nt zones under the manageme nt plan	50,00 0							50,0 00			50,0 00	MRC
	Activity 2.1.1.2_W orks to establish or strengthen POs to implement priority fisheries related VC: equipment s, marketing, etc (4 POs for CLV and 2 POs for Thailand funded by project and another 2 by national budget)		1,12 0,00 0						1,12 0,00 0			1,12 0,00 0	MRC
<b>Total Work s</b>		530,0 00	1,12 0,00 0	0	0	0	0	0	1,65 0,00 0	0	0	<b>1,65 0,00 0</b>	

<b>Good s</b>	Activity 1.1.4.3_Inv estments in essential equipment for local Fisheries Communiti es	100,0 00							100, 000			100, 000	MRC
<b>Total Good s</b>		100,0 00	0	0	0	0	0	0	100, 000	0	0	<b>100, 000</b>	
<b>Vehic les</b>													
<b>Total Vehic les</b>		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>	
<b>Grant s/ Sub- grant s</b>													
<b>Total Grant s/ Sub- grant s</b>		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>	
<b>Revol ving funds / Seed funds / Equit y</b>	Activity 1.1.4.3_Im plementati on of the small-scale sustainable financing mechanis ms ( mini trust funds)	500,0 00							500, 000			500, 000	MRC
	Activity 1.1.4.3_Im plementati on of the small-scale rotating credit Funds (rotating fund for Thailand will come from national budget)	180,0 00							180, 000			180, 000	MRC

	Activity 2.1.1.3_Fin ancial support for the improvement of food served health standards		800, 000						800, 000			800, 000	MRC
<b>Total Revol ving funds / Seed funds / Equit y</b>		680,0 00	800, 000	0	0	0	0	0	1,48 0,00 0	0	0	<b>1,48 0,00 0</b>	
<b>Sub- contr act to execu ting partn er/ entity</b>													
<b>Total sub- contr act to execu ting partn er/ entity</b>		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>	
<b>Contr actual Servi ces- Indivi dual</b>	IW Senior Advisor (6 months)				27,0 00	27,0 00	13,5 00	13,5 00	81,0 00			81,0 00	MRC
	Fisheries manageme nt specialist (7 months)	67,50 0	33,7 50	33,7 50	11,2 50	11,2 50			157, 500			157, 500	MRC
	ESS and gender specialist (full-time)	62,10 0	31,0 50	31,0 50	20,7 00	20,7 00	41,4 00	41,4 00	248, 400		21, 600	270, 000	MRC
	KM and communic ation specialist (6 months)	21,37 5	10,6 88	10,6 88	10,6 88	10,6 88	32,0 63	32,0 63	128, 250		6,7 50	135, 000	MRC



	Sustainable financing and biodiversity specialist (8 months)	67,500	33,750	33,750	11,250	11,250	11,250	11,250	180,000			180,000	MRC
	(4) National Technical Specialists	80,000	40,000	40,000	40,000	40,000	100,000	100,000	440,000	40,000		480,000	MRC
	Graphic designer	0	0	0	0	0	0	42,500	42,500			42,500	MRC
	M&E Regional Officer	0	0	0	0	0	90,000	0	90,000	45,000		135,000	MRC
<b>Total Contractual Services – Individual</b>		298,475	149,238	149,238	120,888	120,888	288,213	240,713	1,367,650	85,000	28,350	<b>1,481,000</b>	
<b>Contractual Services – Company</b>	Activity 1.1.2.1_Consultancy services to 1) develop Standard Assessment tools and 2) carry out a training-the-trainers program on assessing effectiveness of existing best practices (reports in 5 languages)	100,000							100,000			100,000	MRC
	Activity 1.1.3.3_Consultancy services to do complete assessment of the low cost solutions to	80,000							80,000			80,000	MRC

	reconnect the critical habitats identified under A. 1.1.1.1 (reports in 5 languages)												
	Activity 1.1.3.3_Consultancy service to undertake two fish catch assessments to calculate the Outcome 1.1 target values (1st year - end of project)	100,000							100,000			100,000	MRC
	Activity 1.1.3.3_Consultancy services: eDNA sampling along the Mekong	100,000							100,000			100,000	MRC
	Activity 2.2.2.2_(4) Consultancy services (one for each Country) to prepare feasibility studies for national and international project funding (report in English and in the languages of the target Countries)			120,000					120,000			120,000	MRC

Activity 4.1.1.1_Co nsultancy service to upgrade the MRC M&E platforms and prepare MEL system user manuals and guidelines in english and languages of the four Countries						50,0 00		50,0 00			50,0 00	MRC
Activity 4.1.1.2_Co nsultancy service to train the regional and national users						28,0 00		28,0 00			28,0 00	MRC
Activity 4.1.3.4_Co nsultancy services for the creation of audio- visual products						70,0 00		70,0 00			70,0 00	MRC
Activity 4.1.4.3_Co nsultancy services for the production of video stories on lessons learned and project results for the GEF IW LEARN						34,0 00		34,0 00			34,0 00	MRC

Activity 4.1.4.3_M RV website pages linked to IW:LEARN platform (creation and manageme nt)							15,0 00		15,0 00			15,0 00	MRC
Activity 4.2.2.2_Co nsultancy services for the creation of a project website page under MRC (No additional costs for updating the website contents - included in the KM and communic ation consultant cost)								20,0 00	20,0 00			20,0 00	MRC
Activity 4.2.2.3_Pr oduction of communic ation materials – such as posters, flyers, etc								30,0 00	30,0 00			30,0 00	MRC
Translation services in 4 language x 10.000 pages = 4.000 pages	10,00 0	5,00 0	5,00 0	5,00 0	5,00 0	5,00 0	5,00 0	5,00 0	40,0 00			40,0 00	MRC
Mid-Term Evaluation									0	35, 000		35,0 00	MRC
Terminal Evaluation									0	45, 000		45,0 00	MRC

<b>Total Contr actual Servi ces – Comp any</b>		390,0 00	5,00 0	125, 000	5,00 0	5,00 0	202, 000	55,0 00	787, 000	80, 000	0	<b>867, 000</b>	
<b>Intern ation al Cons ultant s</b>	Activity 1.1.1.1_(1) Lead Internation al consultant to collect and synthesize scientific data and local knowledge to produce maps of vulnerabilit y and opportuniti es	21,00 0							21,0 00			21,0 00	MRC
	Activity 1.1.1.1_(1) Internation al consultant to compile and produce interactive maps of vulnerable fish habitats and opportunity to protect and reconnent habitats	14,00 0							14,0 00			14,0 00	MRC
	Activity 1.1.2.2_(1) Lead Internation al consultant to revise and synthesize existing national	14,00 0							14,0 00			14,0 00	MRC

	and regional guidelines based on results of A 1.1.2.1												
	Activity 1.1.3.2_(1) Lead International consultant to support preparing endorse management plan	14,000							14,000			14,000	MRC
	Activity 2.1.1.1_(1) Lead International consultant to support compiling information from national consultants and produce regional baseline and strategies for LMB		21,000						21,000			21,000	MRC
	Activity 2.1.1.2_(1) Lead International consultant to support compiling information from national consultants and produce regional report		21,000						21,000			21,000	MRC

Activity 2.2.1.1_(1) Lead International consultant to support financial need assessment in 5 focal landscape under improved management			21,000					21,000			21,000	MRC
Activity 2.2.2.2_(1) Lead International consultant to prepare feasibility study			21,000					21,000			21,000	MRC
Activity 3.1.1.1_(1) Lead International consultant to preparation of a proposal of harmonization of the policy briefs and draft legal instruments at regional level, in collaboration with the (4) national consultants				21,000				21,000			21,000	MRC
Activity 3.2.1.1_(3) International consultants to produce three					84,000			84,000			84,000	MRC



	technical studies												
	Activity 3.2.1.2_Support implementation of MRC BDS 2026-2030 for fisheries monitoring and fisheries management at the focal landscapes					70,000			70,000			70,000	MRC
	Activity 3.2.1.2_Support the preparation of MRC BDS 2031-2040 and SP 2031-2035 that harmonize cross sector collaboration and coordination					126,000			126,000			126,000	MRC
<b>Total International Consultants</b>		63,000	42,000	42,000	21,000	280,000	0	0	448,000	0	0	<b>448,000</b>	
<b>Local Consultants</b>	Activity 1.1.1.1_(4) National consultants (1 for each Country) to collect and synthesize scientific data and local knowledge	40,000							40,000			40,000	MRC

	to produce maps of opportunities												
	Activity 1.1.1.1_Expenses for field mission of the (4) consultants in the focal landscapes to collect and synthesize scientific data and local knowledge to produce maps of opportunities (travels for consultants , DSA, field visits, etc.)	8,000							8,000			8,000	MRC
	Activity 1.1.2.2_(4) National consultants (one for each country) to revise and synthesize existing national and regional guidelines based on results of A 1.1.2.1 (reports to be both in local languages and english)	40,000							40,000			40,000	MRC

	Activity 1.1.3.1_(4) National consultants /NGOs (one for each Country) for the preparation of technical proposals for new fisheries sanctuary and conserved areas in key freshwater ecosystem s based on existing documents and the results of the meetings	60,00 0							60,0 00			60,0 00	MRC
	Activity 1.1.3.2_(4) National consultants (one for each Country) to prepare manageme nt plans (reports to be delivered in english and languages of the four Countries)	80,00 0							80,0 00			80,0 00	MRC
	Activity 1.1.3.3_(4) National Consultant (one for each country) to identify priority sites and	80,00 0							80,0 00			80,0 00	MRC

	design low-cost solutions and prepare regulatory instruments to enhance fish habitats and connectivity (reports in 5 languages)												
	Activity 1.1.4.2_(4) National consultant to carry out assessment of the effectiveness in 100 target communities and develop management plan for each community (reports to be delivered in English and in the languages of the target Countries)	100,000							100,000			100,000	MRC
	Activity 1.1.4.3_(4) National consultants to undertake local fisheries communities needs assessment, develop mini trust fund and	30,000							30,000			30,000	MRC

	rotating credit funds mechanisms and conduct the field training program (including user manual in English/local language)											
	Activity 2.1.1.1_(4) National consultants to 1) undertake baseline surveys of the market analysis 2) develop a strategy for implementing priority VCs in each landscape 3) assess the Outcome indicators (report both in English and local languages)		120,000						120,000			120,000 MRC
	Activity 2.1.1.1_Expenses for (4) National consultants (one for each country) for data collection surveys for baseline surveys of the market analysis		32,000						32,000			32,000 MRC

	and Outcome targets' value assessment (travels costs, DSA, materials, etc.)												
	Activity 2.1.1.1_(4) National consultants (one for each Country) to review of current national legislation and regulations regarding fish processing and marketing, including sanitary health certifications		40,000						40,000			40,000	MRC
	Activity 2.1.1.2_(4) National consultants (one for each Country) to develop investment and business plans for fisheries related value chains for 4 community in each country (including training material		80,000						80,000			80,000	MRC

	and reports in english and local languages)												
	Activity 2.1.1.2_(4) National consultants (one for each Country) to train local communities on fisheries related value chains (e.g., ecotourism ) and implement business plans for 4 community in each country (including training material)		40,000						40,000			40,000	MRC
	Activity 2.2.1.1_(4) National consultants (one for each Country) to undertake financing needs gap analysis, stakeholder analysis and identifying feasible financial sources to fill the gaps in focal landscapes			70,000					70,000			70,000	MRC



	under improved management												
	Activity 3.1.1.1_(4) National consultants (one for each Country) to review and assessment of institutional challenges in prioritizing capture fisheries management in each MCs and prepared identified legal instrument				80,000				80,000			80,000	MRC
	Activity 3.1.1.2_(4) National consultants (one for each Country) to undertake a comprehensive review in each MC of the current institutional mechanisms for decision making regarding fisheries and strategies for cross sector				40,000				40,000			40,000	MRC

	collaborati on and coordination												
	Activity 4.1.3.3_Na tional consultants to develop at least (3) IWRM guides for the LMB						15,0 00		15,0 00			15,0 00	MRC
<b>Total Local Cons ultant s</b>		438,0 00	312, 000	70,0 00	120, 000	0	15,0 00	0	955, 000	0	0	<b>955, 000</b>	
<b>Staff costs</b>	Regional Project Manager (12 months)								0		316 ,50 0	316, 500	MRC
	Financial and Administrat ion Assistant (5 months)								0		112 ,50 0	112, 500	MRC
<b>Total Salar y and benef its / Staff costs</b>		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	429 ,00 0	<b>429, 000</b>	
<b>Traini ngs, Work shop s, Meeti ngs</b>	Activity 1.1.1.1_Me etings at local level to capture LEK and discuss on opportunit ies (catering, reimburse ment for participant s)	70,00 0							70,0 00			70,0 00	MRC

Activity 1.1.1.1_W orkshops at national level to validate the results of the landscape vulnerabiliti es, threats and opportuniti es assessmen ts (travel costs, catering, reimburse ment for participant s, technical services)	28,00 0							28,0 00			28,0 00	MRC
Activity 1.1.1.1_Me eting at regional level of Cross sector technical working group to review, comment and validate the results	15,00 0							15,0 00			15,0 00	MRC
Activity 1.1.2.1_Ex penses for training 100 community on fisheries co- manageme nt best practices (travel costs, catering, reimburs. for participant	70,00 0							70,0 00			70,0 00	MRC

	s, technical services). Training provided by National PMU with support from Regional PMU without added cost												
	Activity 1.1.2.2_W orkshops at national level to validate the result of the consultanc y on existing national and regional guidelines based on results of Activity 1.1.2.1 (travel costs, catering, reimburse ment for participant s, technical services)	28,00 0							28,0 00			28,0 00	MRC
	Activity 1.1.2.2_W orkshop at regional level to validate the result of the consultanc y on existing national and regional guidelines based on results of	15,00 0							15,0 00			15,0 00	MRC

	Activity 1.1.2.1 (Travel costs, catering, reimbursement for participants, technical services)												
	Activity 1.1.3.1_Meetings of national, provincial and local stakeholders to discuss on new fisheries sanctuary and conserved areas in key freshwater ecosystems (travel costs, catering, reimbursement for participants)	160,000							160,000			160,000	MRC
	Activity 1.1.3.1_Meeting at regional level of Cross sector technical working group to review, comment on the technical and financial proposal for new fisheries sanctuary and	15,000							15,000			15,000	MRC

	conserved areas												
	Activity 1.1.3.2_W workshops at landscape level for local stakeholders and national experts to provide inputs to the management plans (provincial institution members travel costs, catering, reimbursement for participants, technical services)	80,000							80,000			80,000	MRC
	Activity 1.1.3.2_W workshops to validate at national level the management plans (national and provincial institution members travel costs, catering, reimbursement for participant	20,000							20,000			20,000	MRC

	s, technical services)												
	Activity 1.1.3.2_Meeting at regional level of Cross sector technical working group to review, comment on the management plan	15,000							15,000			15,000	MRC
	Activity 1.1.3.2_PS C meeting to provide inputs and strategy direction to get government endorsed plans	15,000							15,000			15,000	MRC
	Activity 1.1.4.1_Meetings of national, provincial and local stakeholders to disclose information on project proposal, ESMF and GCM, create FLSGs, identify the target	48,000							48,000			48,000	MRC



	fisheries communities and plan activities (travel costs, reimbursement for participants)												
	Activity 1.1.4.1_Meetings with IPs to disclose information on project proposal, ESMF and GCM, carry out a SH's engagement assessment to identify IPs needs and expectations and obtain the needed FPIC (mission costs included in previous budget line)	8,000							8,000			8,000	MRC
	Activity 1.1.4.1_Meetings of the FLSSGs members with the local communities to disclose information on project proposal, ESMF and GCM and establish /	140,000							140,000			140,000	MRC

	strengthen the local fisheries community frameworks (FLSGs members travel costs, catering)												
	Activity 1.1.4.2_Meetings with LCs and fisheries communities for demarcating and developing management plans for FCZs and other management units in each focal landscape (travel costs, DSA, catering, reimburs. for participants). Combined with A.1.1.2.1	70,000							70,000			70,000	MRC
	Activity 1.1.4.2_Workshops at landscape level to support the FCZs and other management units planning process (provincial institution members travel	40,000							40,000			40,000	MRC

	costs, catering, reimbursement for participants, technical services)												
	Activity 1.1.4.3_Expenses for training 100 community on mini-trust fund and rotating fund. Training provided by National PMU with support from Regional PMU and consultants .	70,000							70,000			70,000	MRC
	Activity 1.1.4.3_Expenses for (4) National consultants (one for each country) for field mission and local communities members' trainings (travels costs, DSA, materials, etc.)	16,000							16,000			16,000	MRC
	Activity 1.1.4.4_Implementation of	150,000							150,000			150,000	MRC

	Community management plan including fisheries management measures built on the best practices												
	Activity 1.1.4.4_Meetings of national and focal landscape stakeholders at national level (Travel costs, DSA, catering, reimbursement for participants) (3 days)	80,000							80,000			80,000	MRC
	Activity 1.1.4.4_Meetings of MRC, national executing partner, LWGs, FiCs representatives at regional levels in the focal landscapes (Travel costs, DSA, catering, reimbursement for participants) (4 days)	140,000							140,000			140,000	MRC

	Activity 2.1.1.1_Meeting at regional level of Cross sector technical working group to review, comment on the studies' results		15,000						15,000			15,000	MRC
	Activity 2.1.1.2_Technical training to improve priority VC including harvest (e.g., fishing gear, patrols) and post-harvest processing marketing (e.g., cold storage, certifications) and transportation to the market		320,000						320,000			320,000	MRC
	Activity 2.1.1.2_Meetings with the local communities to raise awareness about the importance of sustainably captured freshwater commodities (with production of radio		44,800						44,800			44,800	MRC

	and TV spots)												
	Activity 2.2.1.1_W orkshops at landscape level for local stakeholde rs and national experts to present and discuss the results of the assessmen ts (provincial institution members travel costs, catering, reimburse ment for participant s, technical services)			28,0 00					28,0 00			28,0 00	MRC
	Activity 2.2.1.1_Me eting at regional level of Cross sector technical working group to review, comment on the results of the assessmen ts			15,0 00					15,0 00			15,0 00	MRC

	Activity 2.2.2.1_Me etings of national stakeholde rs under 4 multi-actor and governmen t-led dialogue spaces to develop action plans (Travel costs, catering, DSA) (2- day meetings)			120, 000					120, 000			120, 000	MRC
	Activity 2.2.2.1_Me etings of regional stakeholde rs under 4 multi-actor and governmen t-led dialogue spaces to develop action plans (Travel costs, catering, DSA) (2- day meetings)			200, 000					200, 000			200, 000	MRC
	Activity 2.2.2.2_Me eting at regional level of Cross sector technical working group to review, comment on the			15,0 00					15,0 00			15,0 00	MRC



	feasibility study												
	Activity 2.2.2.2_PS C meeting to provide inputs and strategy direction to access to national and international project funding			15,000				15,000			15,000	MRC	
	Activity 3.1.1.1_W workshops at national level to validate the results of review and assessment of institutional challenges and recommendation of the legal instrument (travel costs, catering, reimbursement for participants, technical services)				112,000			112,000			112,000	MRC	
	Activity 3.1.1.1_PS C meeting to provide inputs and strategy direction to get government				15,000			15,000			15,000	MRC	

	t endorsed the plan												
	Activity 3.1.1.2_Me etings of national working groups for cross sector collaborati on (Travel costs, catering, DSA) (1- day meetings twice per year starting from Yr 3)				168, 000				168, 000			168, 000	MRC
	Activity 3.1.1.2_Me etings of regional working groups to develop strategic action plans, in dialogue with partner countries and MRC (travel costs, DSA, reimburse ment for participant s) (1-day meetings once per year starting from Yr 3)				45,0 00				45,0 00			45,0 00	MRC
	Activity 3.2.1.1_PS C meeting to provide					15,0 00			15,0 00			15,0 00	MRC

	inputs and strategy direction for optimizing nexus synergies												
	Activity 3.2.1.2_M RC coordination meetings for cross section collaboration and coordination from Yr3					21,000			21,000			21,000	MRC
	Activity 3.2.1.2_PS C meeting to provide inputs and strategy direction for preparing BDS and SP					15,000			15,000			15,000	MRC
	Activity 4.1.2.1_(4) National consultants (one for each Country) to carry out training sessions for community relays and eco-guards (for 3 years)						62,500		62,500			62,500	MRC
	Activity 4.1.2.1_Expenses for (4) National consultants (one for each Country) for local						60,000		60,000			60,000	MRC

	communities members' trainings (travels costs, DSA, materials, etc.) (for 3 years)												
	Activity 4.1.2.1_Meetings to identify IWRM innovations and best practices in the basin (for 3 years)						96,000		96,000			96,000	MRC
	Activity 4.1.2.2_Meetings for decision-makers at national level to develop awareness raising campaigns (national and provincial institution members travel costs, catering, reimbursement for participants, technical services) (for 2 years)						56,000		56,000			56,000	MRC
	Activity 4.1.4.1_Regional knowledge sharing and outreach meetings (Number of						140,000		140,000			140,000	MRC

	days: 4) (Conferenc e hall, catering, technical services)												
	Activity 4.1.4.1_Na tional knowledge sharing and outreach meetings (Number of days: 3) (Conferenc e hall, catering, technical services)						80,0 00		80,0 00			80,0 00	MRC
	Activity 4.2.1.1_W orkshops for developing and finalising the project communic ation strategy and action plan							28,0 00	28,0 00			28,0 00	MRC
	Activity 4.2.1.2_Co nsultation meetings for discussing the communic ation strategy and action plan effectivene ss and assessing the needs for its update							112, 000	112, 000			112, 000	MRC
	Inception regional workshop								0	25, 000		25,0 00	MRC

	(Travel costs, DSA, conference hall, catering, technical services) (Number of days: 2)												
	Evaluation workshops								0	24,000		24,000	MRC
<b>Total Trainings, Workshops, Meetings</b>		1,293,000	379,800	393,000	340,000	51,000	494,500	140,000	3,091,300	49,000	0	<b>3,140,300</b>	
<b>Travel</b>	Activity 4.1.4.3_Travel expenses for participation in IW:LEARN-organized events (International Waters Conferences, regional or thematic workshops organized by the IW:LEARN Network)						80,000		80,000			80,000	MRC
<b>Total Travel</b>		0	0	0	0	0	80,000	0	80,000	0	0	<b>80,000</b>	
<b>Office Supplies</b>													
<b>Total Office Supplies</b>		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>	0	0	<b>0</b>	

Other Opera ting Costs	Activity 4.2.2.4_Exp enses for distribution of audio- visual supports (e.g. national/re gional tv, radio, hosting fees) developed under Output 4.1.3							28,8 76	28,8 76			28,8 76	MRC
	Annual audits								0		40, 000	40,0 00	MRC
	Production of material on the project proposal, ESMF and GCM in local languages to be disclosed to local communiti es								0		10, 000	10,0 00	MRC
Total Other Opera ting Costs		0	0	0	0	0	0	28,8 76	28,8 76	0	50, 000	78,8 76	
Gran d Total		3,792 ,475	2,80 8,03 8	779, 238	606, 888	456, 888	1,07 9,71 3	464, 589	9,98 7,82 6	214 ,00 0	507 ,35 0	10,7 09,1 76	

Please explain any aspects of the budget as needed here

## ANNEX I: RESPONSES TO PROJECT REVIEWS

From GEF Secretariat and GEF Agencies, and Responses to Comments from Council at work program inclusion and the Convention Secretariat and STAP at PIF.

**GEF ID 11304 Enhancing transboundary fisheries management in the Lower Mekong Basin**

**GEF Sec review - CEO Endorsement**

Part I - General Project Information	GEF Sec Comments	Agency response
1. a) Is the Project Information table correctly filled, including specifying adequate executing partners?	<p>(7/2/2025) Addressed.</p> <p>(5/15/2025)</p> <p>1. On the project information: Please remove the value for 'Project Sector' as this is for CCM only and the project is marked as no contribution for CCM.</p> <p>(3/7/25) Yes.</p>	<p>IUCN, June 17, 2025</p> <p>1.Thank you for your comment. As advised we have removed the value for Project Sector</p>
b) Are the Rio Markers for CCM, CCA, BD and LD correctly selected, if applicable?	(3/7/25) Yes.	
<p>2. Project Summary.</p> <p>a) Does the project summary concisely describe the problem to be addressed, the project objective and the strategies to deliver the GEBs or adaptation benefits and other key expected outcomes?</p> <p>b) Does the summary capture the essence of the project and is it within the max. of 250 words?</p> <p>c) [If a child project under a program] Does the project summary include adequate and substantive link with the parent program goal and approach?</p>	<p>(7/2/2025) Thank you for the response and explanation. Agreed. and Cleared !</p> <p>(5/6/2024) The revision is noted. It remains to be seen that the value if capture fisheries is high enough to influence the selection of sites for hydropower (mostly done) and irrigation. Some quantitative comparison of the value of capture fisheries versus irrigated agriculture and hydropower would be useful here and/or more appropriately in the rational section.</p> <p>(3/7/25) The summary is describing the underlying reasons for the decline of the LMB freshwater capture fisheries. It is missing to elaborate clearly that component 3</p>	<p>IUCN, June 17, 2025</p> <p>Thank you for your comment. Kindly note that text is added on page 38 of prodoc explaining that the strategy is not to argue against hydropower solely on basis of reduced fisheries, which has historically failed. Rather, the approach is to question the value for money of hydropower given climate change and advances in technology. The argument is therefore not development vs. conservation but expensive vs. lower cost development. Simply put, countries can achieve energy security faster and cheaper through a more diversified and interconnected power mix. Grid connectivity is becoming increasingly important. According to the ADB, a regional power grid can reduce power supply by 20% to meet a given demand.</p>



	<p>is taking fisheries as an entry point to discuss, inform and possibly contribute to revising the planning of irrigation and hydropower infrastructure which is not only obstruction fish passage to various degrees but also changes the flow regime and sediment transport and that way affecting river morphology, erosion and livelihoods in the Mekong delta.</p> <p>While the lessons learned cited in the project document emphasize that single sector projects have shown little traction, the ToC and summary could make the opportunity more clear to use fisheries and contribution to income and livelihoods in the LMB as an entry point for strengthening cross-sectoral dialogue and basin planning on higher technical and political levels across countries.</p>	<p><b>IUCN, Apr 24, 2025</b></p> <p>Thank you for your comment. Kindly note that the summary has been rewritten and changes are shown in yellow highlights in the online CER template as well as in the uploaded versions of the CER. In specific, text in Summary and Component 3 have been updated to highlight fisheries as an entry point for cross sectoral integration and policy planning under Component 3.</p> <p>TOC and summary have also been updated to emphasize economic benefits to fishers as argument to strengthen need for inter-sectoral coordination.</p> <p>-</p>
<p><b>3. Project Description Overview</b></p> <p>a) Is the project objective statement concise, clear and measurable?</p> <p>b) [If a child project under a program] Is there a project Theory of Change that is aligned and consistent with the overall program goal and approach?</p> <p>c) Are the components, outcomes, and outputs sound, appropriate and sufficiently clear to achieve the project objective and the core indicators per the stated Theory of Change?</p> <p>d) Are gender dimensions, knowledge management, and M&amp;E included within the project components and budgeted for?</p> <p>e) Are the GEF Project Financing and Co-Financing contributions to PMC proportional?</p> <p>f) Is the PMC equal to or below 10% (for MSP) or 5% (for FSP)? If above, is the justification acceptable?</p>	<p>(7/2/2025) Comment addressed.</p> <p><b>(5/15/2025)</b></p> <p>The previous comments have been addressed. As mentioned in the last review sheet GEF policy reviews is adding comments at this point:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For project above \$10 million, the recommended threshold for M&amp;E percentage is 2%. This project's is 3% - please ask the Agency to revise.</li> </ol> <p><b>(3/7/25)</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PMC is within 5% and proportionality PMC to PMC co-finance is in the same proportion as net grant to co-finance.</li> <li>KM: Please include mention of IW:LEARN in the project overview</li> </ol>	<p><b>IUCN, June 17, 2025</b></p> <p>Thank you for the comment. The M&amp;E budget has been revised to 2%.</p> <p><b>IUCN, Apr 24, 2025</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Thank you for your comment.</li> <li>Thank you for your comment. Kindly note that IW:LEARN is now mentioned in the project overview and the activity has been moved from M&amp;E Component to Component 4, providing further details on activities that will be implemented (Please refer to Activity 4.1.4.3). A 1% budget allocation has been foreseen to cover the costs of the above-mentioned activities. The revisions are shown in yellow highlights in the online CER template as well as the uploaded clean version of the CER document.</li> <li>Kindly note that the gender disaggregated indicators are now included in the project overview table.</li> </ol>

	<p>and include a 1 % allocation for participation in IW:LEARN (incl. e.g. attending IWCs and regional or thematic meetings as relevant; experience notes/videos; project website)</p> <p>3. Gender: Please indicate that indicators will be gender disaggregated.</p>	
<p><b>4. Project Outline</b>  <b>A. Project Rationale</b>  a) Is the current situation (including global environmental problems, key drivers of environmental degradation, climate vulnerability) clearly and adequately described from a systems perspective and adequately addressed by the project design?  b) Have the role of stakeholders, incl. the private sector and local actors in the system been described and how they will contribute to GEBs and/or adaptation benefits and other project outcomes? Is the private sector seen mainly as a stakeholder or as financier?  c) If this is an NGI project, is there a description of how the project and its financial structure are addressing financial barriers?</p>	<p>Cleared.</p> <p>(5/6/2024)</p> <p>1. Response noted. Addressed.</p> <p>2. Addressed.</p> <p>3. Thank you for the response and example form Laos. Addressed.</p> <p>4. Addressed.</p> <p>5. Agree with revisions and reads much clearer, Addressed.</p> <p>(Please note that the comments are based on the prodoc and ER)</p> <p>(3/7/25)</p> <p>1. If the connection between sustaining and strengthening capture fisheries and influencing infrastructure operations and/or planning (e.g. for irrigation,</p>	<p><b>IUCN, Apr 24, 2025</b></p> <p>1. Thank you for your comment. Please note that the 6 landscapes are the most important fisheries habitats in the LMB. The 6 landscapes scale approach has been considered to work with areas that are big enough to use the visible results/benefits to leverage discussions on cross-sectoral integration. MRC could lead a regional dialogue, but the target impacts must be cross sector discussion within each country. MRC's support to MCs in Fish passage and fisheries statistic is evidence that MRC interventions are eventually adopted by MCs gradually. That is why the project results are designed to be integrated with MRC SP 2026-2031 and then the MRC BDS 2031-2040. By embedding project results into BDS/SP, activities will be financially and technically supported by MRC beyond the life of project.</p> <p>While the 6 landscapes are big, actual investment is limited to 100 fishing communities with the results scaled up across the landscapes.</p> <p>2. Kindly note that 3 recommendations from GEF IEO Strategic Evaluation were incorporated into the design. The design also builds on IUCN's</p>

	<p>hydropower and other) are key, which we understood that the project wanted to address per the PIF, then that takes not only engagement with the fisheries actors at local level but intersectoral engagement up- and downstream from these sensitive fish breeding and fisheries grounds. Have you considered to <b>focus on less sites</b> or why do you think it is essential and also feasible to engage in all six areas?</p>	<p>experience advocating for multiple economic and environmental benefits.</p>
	<p>2. The extensive section on lessons learned is appreciated, yet to some degree needs to be clearer how key lessons were taken up on in project design.</p>	<p>3. An arrow in the Fig 3 was added (accidentally omitted in the submitted version). C1 and C2 address the root causes of the fisheries decline, which undervalues fisheries leading to lower priority/consideration in economic development plans. The findings from the C1 and C2 (economic incentives) are to leverage cross sectoral discussions and coordination in policies and plans in the LMB under C3. Addressing root causes will not eliminate threats but fisheries will be considered as important sector in policy and planning in the LMB and rebut the myth that fisheries cannot recover. For example, Lao has requested construction of a fish passage under an irrigation project funded by ADB. This request came from the government and not ADB. By building the fish passage potential rice production might be reduced but for the benefits of fisheries.</p> <p>4. We agree with this comment. Text has now been added in section 3.2.2 (p 29) to highlight the policy incoherent in supporting sustainable capture fisheries which lead to Policy dialogue under C3.</p>
	<p>3. Project intervention logic (Figure 3/pg. 15 in prodoc): Component 3 dropped the link to other sectors which deemphasizes the link to cooperation and sustainable basin</p>	<p>5. We agree with this specific comment. Section 3 (section 3 and 4 of previous version now merged) has been revised and tightened to clearly explain the intervention logic and highlight that the root causes are the undervaluing of fisheries and the lack of coordination among policy areas for sustainable fisheries management.</p> <p>Intervention strategy has been tightened to link to challenges and root causes. Text also added in</p>

	<p>management. This also does not align with the threats to the Mekong basin as described in the following sections of the prodoc (incl. threats of altered flows, sediment trapping and pollution not only on fish and fisheries but also agricultural production). Please elaborate.</p>	<p>Section 3.7 to highlight the role of MRC in coordinating regional cooperation and provide technical and financial support to MCs after the project finishes</p>
	<p>4. The same pertains to the ToC/Design diagram (Figure 4 in the prodoc). There is a 'hint' of mentioning inconsistent policies and planning included in 3.4 but the text leaves it very vague. There is therefore a risk for the project to too narrowly focus on improved capture fisheries and associated livelihoods without linking this to decline to underlying threats and to inconsistent policies and strategies across sectors in basin management and planning. Transboundary dialogue facilitated and based in the existing MRC mechanisms will need to feed project findings into basin strategies of the LMB.</p>	
	<p>5. Please tighten the description of the intervention strategy which links to the ToC but is somewhat hard to piece together (across sections 3 and 4. of the prodoc). It would aid a great deal to condense the text and tighten this up. Section 4.2 is explicit in highlighting the need for cooperation among the countries but this lacks to run through the</p>	

	project rationale beyond the fisheries sector.	
<p><b>5 B. Project Description</b></p> <p><b>5.1 a) Is there a concise theory of change (narrative and an optional schematic) that describes the project logic, including how the project design elements are contributing to the objective, the identified causal pathways, the focus and basis (including scientific) of the proposed solutions, how they provide a robust approach? Are underlying key assumptions listed?</b></p> <p><b>b) [If a child project under a program] Is the Theory of change aligned with and consistent with the overall program goal and approach?</b></p> <p><b>c) Is there a description of how the GEF alternative will build on ongoing/previous investments (GEF and non-GEF), lessons and experiences in the country/region? [If a child project under a program] Does the description include how the alternative aligns with and contributes to the overall program goal and approach?</b></p> <p><b>d) Are the project components (interventions and activities) described and proposed solutions and critical assumptions and risks properly justified? Is there an indication of why the project approach has been selected over other potential options?</b></p> <p><b>e) Incremental/additional cost reasoning: Is the incremental/additional cost reasoning properly described as per the Guidelines provided in GEF/C.31/12? Has the baseline scenario and/or associated baseline projects been described? Is the project incremental reasoning provisioned (including the role of the GEF)? Are the global environmental benefits and/or adaptation benefits identified?</b></p> <p><b>f) Other Benefits: Are the socioeconomic benefits resulting from the project at the national and local levels sufficiently described?</b></p> <p><b>g) Is the financing presented in the annexed financing table adequate and demonstrate a cost-</b></p>	<p>(7/2/2025)</p> <p>X. eDNA. The addition of this activity is very much appreciated and is an investment in the future of BD monitoring in the Mekong River. Addressed.</p> <p>Cleared.</p> <p>(5/6/2024)</p> <p>1. Thanks for response. Addressed.</p> <p>2. - 6. Component 1 comments addressed.</p> <p><b>X. eDNA</b> - given the IUCN leadership in this and future prospects, it could indeed be instrumental to run a pilot comparing traditional sampling and eDNA as a pilot in one location. The comment that significant more funds would be needed to address this on wider scale is noted.</p> <p>7. - 8. Component 2.1 comments addressed.</p> <p>9. Comment on 2.2. Thank you for the explanation and the extensive revisions of the component text. Addressed.</p> <p>10. - 12. Comments on component 3: Very good to see this much clearer write-up on cross-sector engagement. Addressed.</p> <p>13. - 16. Comment on component 4: The component description <u>remains very lengthy</u>, but the comments are overall addressed.</p> <p>17. Addressed especially through the revised component 3. Addressed.</p>	<p><b>IUCN, June 17, 2025</b></p> <p>Thank you very much for the comment.</p> <p><b>X. eDNA:</b> an activity has been added under Activity 1.1.3.3 to test the eDNA to in determining the distribution range of the fish species and the fish communities present along the fish swimways in Mekong River. This activity will complement and update the state of art using eDNA for fish monitoring in the Mekong (Jean-Dominique Durand, 2022) and will be conducted in year 3.</p> <p><b>IUCN, Apr 24, 2025</b></p> <p>1. Thank you very much for the comment. Kindly note that C3 is now dedicated to addressing threats from dams and irrigation projects and several paragraphs under section 2 and section 3.6 to 3.8 have been added to explain MRC's experience to date pushing back on high-risk projects. MRC is ideally suited to working with MCs and development partners, especially ADB and AFD, on a regional energy planning and investment strategy that would reduce the probability of high-risk dams being selected. Recent experience with the Sekong A dam (currently suspended) suggests that MCs are increasingly aware of the negative transboundary repercussions of such projects.</p> <p>When it comes to irrigation, Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Viet Nam are reducing investment in paddy. Thailand is the exception because of the powerful role that RID plays. But even RID is considering incorporating nature-based solutions in its \$2.2 billion ADB loan.</p>

<p>effective approach to meet the project objectives? Are items charged to the PMC reasonable according to the GEF guidelines?</p> <p>h) How does the project design ensure resilience to future changes in the drivers and adaptive management needs and options (as applicable for this FSP/MSP)?</p> <p>i) Are the relevant stakeholders (including women, private sector, CSO, e.g.) and their roles adequately described within the components?</p> <p>j) Gender: Does the gender analysis identify any gender differences, gaps or opportunities linked to project/program objectives and activities and have these been taken up in component design and description/s?</p> <p>k) Are the proposed elements to capture and disseminate knowledge and learning outputs and strategic communication adequately described?</p> <p>l) Policy Coherence: Have any policies, regulations or subsidies been identified that could counteract the intended project outcomes and how will that be addressed?</p> <p>m) Transformation and/or innovation: Is the project going to be transformative or innovative? [If a child project under an integrated program] Are the specific levers of transformation identified and described? Does it explain scaling up opportunities?</p>	<p>(3/7/25)</p> <p>1. The link of the Theory of Change to the identified barriers should be strengthened, including policy coherence and planning across sectors such as agriculture and hydropower to take account of the livelihoods and income derived from capture fisheries and related ecosystem services. The ToC seems to rather be fit to predetermined approaches and solutions and be very focused on improved fisheries management and weaker on the threats that derive from operation and planning of structures to benefit other sectors and their impact on fisheries. This aspect and what is listed as 'activities' of updating WEFE- nexus studies and strengthening cross-sector coherence in terms of policy and planning is inconsistently addressed across the project description and its interventions (see comments in the section above).</p> <p>Please also include a narrative on the resilience of the project design to future changes and durability beyond the project timespan.</p> <p>Definitions on what FCoM and EBFM is as well as the Ostrom's rules of common property resources are better left to the background and rationale sections.</p> <p>2. Please provide your definition of 'commodity value chains' (component 2). To our mind a value chain includes all steps from the raw/natural inputs to the consumer, but in that component this is not always clear and sometimes just refers to e.g. an added in country processing step which adds value to</p>	<p>Project durability will be enhanced by integrating project results into MRC strategies.</p> <p>As advised, the relevant text on FCoM and EBFM and Ostrom's rules of common property resources have been moved to the Glossary</p> <p>2. Kindly note that the definition of VC has been added to the prodoc under C2: 'the full lifecycle of a product or process, including material sourcing, production, and consumption.' The starting point in VC development in smallholder-dominated fisheries sector is institutional formation and specifically the formation of fisher producer organizations, legally established cooperatives, and potentially SMEs. Whereas fish drying is a low value-added activity, fish smoking is high value-added with smoked fish reaching \$40/kg at first point of sale. Several NGOs and testing production methods and markets for smoked fish. The project will build on this experience.</p> <p>3. The Ostrom reference has been eliminated, and the remaining references have been eliminated from the text.</p> <p>The description of outcomes and outputs have been reduced and more clearly linked with the Results Framework (see sections 3.8, pages 39-46)</p> <p>4. The description of activities has been updated highlighting who does what and the role of the Focal Landscape Support Groups (FLSGs), which will be financed through the executing agencies to implement field activities. (see section 3.8.3 page 47)</p>
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	<p>a product and income (such as fish processing via smoking etc.).</p>	
	<p>Component 1:</p> <p>3. Please edit the text to not drift off into background (on Elenor Ostrom, the pros and cons of standard measurement tools versus Results based Management, etc.).</p> <p>Component outcomes, outputs and activities could be more much more concise and with that clearer explained and clearly linked to the Results Framework.</p> <p>4. Component 1 leaves it open on 'who' will do most activities, such as mapping, guidelines etc. For example, will the project engage and task locals to provide input to habitat and fishing grounds etc.? What is the institutional set-up envisioned behind activities on the ground and how is the flow of funds to local actors?</p> <p>5. Please strengthen the description of the specifics roles of women in the project description and mainstream the gender action plan into the project, results and budget. For example, formulations such as 'women will play an active part...' are vague. How will this be achieved?</p>	<p>5. The mechanisms that have been considered to ensure women's participation (already identified in the GAP) have been included and specified in the project description. FLSGs will ensure women's active participation in the project implementation at local level. Gender-responsive regional and national guidelines, also based on gender-inclusive baseline assessments, will be carried out. Indicators had been identified in the GAP, that has to be considered part of the project document (being one of its annexes). The project overall budget already includes the needed financial resources. Text added in section C1 and C2 and GAP indicators in the result framework)</p> <p>6. Kindly note that text is now revised under Section 3.1/ Interlinkages Between Biodiversity Conservation and Fisheries Management in the Mekong. Fisheries co-management is recognized in fisheries law in all MCs. The issue with FCoM is not policy per se but weak implementation and specifically the chronic failure of the state (with exception of Thailand) to meet its commitments in helping communities protect their fishing grounds. The use of mini trust funds has been shown to be highly effective in building community capacity to more effectively engage local government.</p> <p>X. A manuscript analyzing eDNA data collected by WWF in the Mekong River showed that it is not appropriate at the current time. The sequence database is inadequate, and it would require huge investment to update the database to make it viable. The results for all species from the WWF sampling were also poor, not just for non-natives. About 50% of sequences could only be identified to genera and many species of marine origin or from other SE Asia rivers were anomalously detected. eDNA sampling is also not cheap given the numbers of samples it would have to take across the basin and the seasonal frequency. If conducting under this project, it is only as formative action to see if it works and how to integrate it in the future but will require to add significant amount of funding.</p> <p>7-8. The project will commission a VC assessment at the start of project that will produce SWOT analysis for each VC. The VCs cited in the prodoc already exist, albeit at a small scale. Based on the VC assessment, the project will select a few VCs to invest in.</p>

	<p>6. Please explain somewhere how the community and fisheries co-management mechanisms align with current formal or informal local governance mechanisms. Strengthening and building on accepted governance will be essential to be able to scale-up successful efforts. Same for the flow of funds.</p> <p>X. The PIF indicated that IUCN as the lead in the field of advancing eDNA and the eBioatlas was supporting the use of eDNA to assess fish biodiversity in the Mekong and with that advancing the tools available to monitor aquatic biodiversity and impacts of developments (positive or negative). We strongly support to reconsider including this in the project implementation.</p>	<p>The drinking water and plastic recycling VCs in the Tonle Sap are operational with operating costs covered by user fees. The capital costs were provided by external investment.</p> <p>The issue of sharing fisheries value among VC actors will be addressed by supporting fisher organizations under C2. These organizations might not be able to do all activities under fisheries VC but will be major added value activities such as processing and marketing.</p> <p>9. IUCN is the lead external partner in the ADB NSFH and ADB is asking us for ideas that could be supported by the NSFH, which has an ambitious financing goal. A costed community fisheries investment plan for the Tonle Sap was presented at the second partners' meeting in March 2025.</p> <p>In our experience, national development banks are extremely reluctant to lend to smallholders because they rarely have the cash flow or collateral that the banks require. That is why the GCF WASSA project focuses on equity investments in wetlands-based businesses, not debt financing.</p> <p>Kindly note that text has been revised throughout the updated prococ.</p> <p>10.i Text added: The framework is as overarching policy and guidance aiming to integrate the economic and ecological value of capture fisheries and wetlands into broader development goals. One example of such national framework is Vietnam Government Resolution No. 120/NQ-CP dated November 17, 2017, on Sustainable and Climate-Resilient Development of the Mekong Delta.</p> <p>10.ii Text revised to indicator: MRC BDS (2031-2040) and SP (2031-2036) integrated project outcomes and lessons and approved by MRC Council</p>
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		<p>11. Text revised to highlight the working groups include cross sectors representatives. The working groups will further support current MRC's effort to improve national assessments and synthesis of capture fisheries-related datasets and information and their incorporation into national basin development policies, plans and investments.</p> <p>12. Text has been added.</p> <p>There is no need to request additional mandate, which could be done under MRC framework for cooperation. Yes, the intention of the update is to inform new BDS and SP.</p> <p>There are several transboundary working groups under MRC such as Environment, River Planning (agriculture, energy). The current expert group on environment management will be expanded to include members from the other groups under Component 3.1.1.2.</p> <p>13. Activities to engage with IW:LEARN had been already included under the M&amp;E Component. Now we moved them from M&amp;E Component to the Component 4, providing further details on activities that will be implemented (See now Activity 4.1.4.3). A 1% budget allocation has been foreseen to cover the costs of the above-mentioned activities (See now ProDoc Appendix 4)</p> <p>14. Output 4.2.1 was mistakenly focused only on communication. Now, we specified that we are referring to KM, too. Please, consider that the communication and KM strategy is expected to be developed during the inception phase as well as through Activity 4.2.1.1 through a participatory process. The PMU, jointly with the project stakeholders, will define the strategy, identify mechanisms and tools, based on identified targets, and define performance indicators. Activity 4.2.1.1 has been scheduled in the first three months (see ProDoc Appendix 2), while Activity 4.2.1.2 ensures that the communication and KM strategy and operational plans will be evaluated as needed, updated, through a participatory process, to guarantee adaptive management.</p>
	<p>Component 2.</p> <p>7. As mentioned in comment 2 above, wording as 'value chains' and 'circular economies' require a clearer definition, e.g. how are circular economies developed by buying sustainably caught fish (see bullet 2 in component 2, pg. 70 of prodoc).</p> <p>8. Component 2.1. Please clarify which 'value chains' (fish to market; etc.) will be targeted and how. The argument that the 'most obvious' value chains 'include dried/smoked fish, fish paste, ecotourism and homestays, drinking water and plastic waste recycling' is not based on a solid analysis nor is it clear HOW and by WHO these will be done. Players to address high-end ecotourism are not likely among the fishing families, nor is it clear who and how there is income from plastic recycling or providing drinking water. Same in fact for post landing processing of fish for drying/smoking: will this be done on household or semi-commercial level?</p> <p>9. Component 2.2. Please explain the thinking behind committing to a feasibility study of a loan package of USD 100 million (for what?). Have their been some initial discussion with ADB?</p>	

	<p>Also, 2.2.2 mentions development banks etc. Is there any engagement with local or national agricultural banks to provide small scale loans directly to communities and fisheries organizations or individuals?</p> <p>Again, there is a lot of text that belongs in the background and distracts from the description of the intervention logic, the planned interventions, and stakeholders and actors involved.</p> <p>Component 3:</p> <p>10. Indicators:</p> <p>i. 'Drafted framework for harmonization of cross sectors to support transboundary fisheries solutions'. Please be clearer on what is meant.</p> <p>ii.- what does ' Updated MRC Basin Development Strategy and Strategic Plan WITH TRANSFORMATIVE OUTCOMES AND LESSONS APPROVED by MRC Council' actually mean and could this be phrased in a more tangible way.</p>	<p>We decided to substitute the description of the Component 4 with a text that better briefly presents both the Outcomes, because the previous description was too much focused on the MEL platform (mainly addressed by Outcome 4.1).</p> <p>15. MEL platform will provide a mechanism to connect a broad range of stakeholders and will be instrumental in driving adaptive learning and inclusive governance across countries and the region. For example, scientific and LEK data and information will be uploaded on the platform, as well be the results of the outcomes from community projects on ecotourism, value chains and fishery co-management results. Decision-makers and higher-level policymakers will also have access to this data and the information provided by activities in Components 1 and 2. We included further explanations to respond to this comment under the description of Outcome 4.1</p> <p>16. No Figure 10 in Project Description Section. We suppose you referred to Figure 16, that effectively needs to be better explained.</p> <p>17. See 4.1 on Incremental Costs</p> <p>The urgency of including the real costs of declining capture fisheries and other ecosystem service assets that are under threat and internalizing those values into more robust transboundary, regional planning and management of the river system cannot be overemphasized. This is considered one of the most important elements of the incremental cost analyses if the project will halt the steady loss of aquatic biodiversity and the closely connected livelihoods and cultural vibrancy in the LMB.</p> <p><u>Expected Outcome:</u> Stronger transboundary basin planning driven mainstreaming today's real values of the LMB's capture fisheries and biodiversity assets and internalizing these values to reverse the losses of aquatic biodiversity, dependent livelihoods and cultural vibrancy.</p>
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11. Component 3.1 (incl. outputs and activities): Can you please rewrite and provide clear bullet points what are the intended activities and outputs of this sub-component It is not easy to follow what is written and what are legal instruments, what are strategies to be developed, and who is to invest.

Also, will national and regional fisheries management groups (3.1.1.2) include or consult sectors from non-fisheries sectors? And is the lack of integration of data the key hurdle?

12. Component 3.2.1: How will the updating of existing nexus studies and assessing the MRC Council Study etc. be institutionally aligned and empowered by the existing MRC institutional transboundary mechanisms and processes? Is there an intent to request a mandate for this work from MRC bodies which include all LMC countries? This seems essential if the work is to inform and be used to update the MRC's BDS and SP.

Are there specific transboundary working groups on agriculture and/or energy that need to be engaged as well?

Component 4:

13. Please include an output/activity to engage with IW:LEARN within component 4 and indicate at least 1% of the GEF project to this in the budget (e.g. incl participation in two IW Conferences and IW:LEARN regional and thematic meetings as relevant; provide regular lessons learned to share with the portfolio and other stakeholders; create a project website;...). IWLEARN

14. . Please move the development of a communications strategy upfront in component 4. This will be essential to clarify the target audience for the communications and learning efforts and to identify the appropriate means and type of

communication for different stakeholder groups. Same for a KM strategy.

15. There is mention of end users (who?) continuously feeding data and information into the regional MRC platform. Please include dialogue with the same actors to identify what benefit they expect to get from the platform in return? How will this improve their work, their livelihoods, or other, i.e. what is the incentive for them to feed data into the systems.

	<p>16. Please add a longer caption under figure 10 to explain what it tries to show.</p> <p>17. The incremental cost analysis and project logic overall needs to strengthen the aspects of linking capture fisheries sustainability and value to the need to rethink aspects of transboundary, regional planning and management of the river system - including sediment and flow management and alterations - to include the real costs of declining capture fisheries and other ecosystem services that are under threat. Treating these as an asset and internalizing these values stronger in basin planning is an urgent need to not continue to lose aquatic biodiversity and dependent livelihoods and cultural richness associated.</p>	
<p><b>5.2 Institutional Arrangements and Coordination with Ongoing Initiatives and Project</b></p> <p>a) Are the institutional arrangements, including potential executing partners, outlined on regional, national/local levels and a rationale provided? Has an organogram and/or funds flow diagram been included?</p> <p>b) Comment on proposed agency execution support (if agency expects to request exception). Is GEF in support of the request?</p> <p>c) Is there a description of coordination and cooperation with ongoing GEF and non-GEF financed projects/programs (such</p>	<p>Cleared.</p> <p>(5/6/2025)</p> <p>Comments addressed.</p>	<p><b>IUCN, Apr 24, 2025</b></p> <p>Kindly note that IUCN does not intend to have an execution role</p>

<p>as government and/or other bilateral/multilateral supported initiatives in the project area, e.g.).</p> <p>d) [If a child project under an integrated program] Does the framework for coordination and collaboration demonstrate consistency with overall ambition of the program for transformative change?</p>	<p>(3/7/25)</p> <p>The institutional arrangements are outlined on regional and national levels, including both listing seconded versus project hired positions. IUCN will NOT have an executing function.</p> <p>The local institutional arrangements will be adapted to the local situation during project implementation.</p> <p>1. Coordination and cooperation with ongoing projects and initiatives:</p> <p>i. Please update para 6.3 of the prodoc (and corresponding in the ER) as it states that collaboration opportunities and synergies with the projects listed in Annex 17 will be worked out 'in the final PPG'.</p> <p>ii. Annex 17 only refers to GEF funded projects. Please:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Add relevant projects supported outside of GEF finance</li> <li>- Please also add the GEF 8 Indo Malay IP Child projects in the list</li> <li>- Please provide a summary of synergies with specific projects and ways of cooperating with these.</li> </ul>	<p>1.i Thank you for your comment. Kindly note that para 6.3 has been updated accordingly</p> <p>1.ii Thank you for your comment. Annex 17 has now been updated</p>
<p><b>5.3 Core indicators</b></p> <p>a) Are the identified core indicators calculated using the methodology and adhering to the overarching principles included in the corresponding Guidelines (GEF/C.62/Inf.12/Rev.01)? [If a child project under a program] Is the choice of core indicators consistent with those prioritized under the parent program?</p> <p>b) Are the project's targeted contributions to GEBs (measured through core indicators and additional listed outcome indicators) /adaptation benefits reasonable and achievable? Are</p>	<p>(7/2/2025) WPDAs added (with Siphandone landscape to be created in the project timeline) Comments addressed. Cleared.</p> <p>(5/6/2025) and (5/15/2025)</p> <p>1. Noted, yet please explain under core indicator 1.2 why there would not be WDPA IDs for these protected areas or otherwise please include the missing WDPA IDs for the listed protected areas.</p>	<p><b>IUCN, June 17, 2025</b></p> <p>For core indicator 1.2 WDPA ID's are now added in the text as well as in the core indicators sheet and the online CER core indicators section.</p> <p>Tram Chim WDPA ID: 303026</p> <p>Stung Treng WDPA ID: 198316.</p> <p>Lower Songkhram River WDPA ID: 2420 (<i>Ramsar Site n. 2420</i>)</p>

<p>the GEF Climate Change adaptation indicators and sub-indicators for LDCF and SCCF properly documented?</p>	<p>2. That explains the numbers. Noted. Addressed.</p> <p>-(3/7/25)</p> <p>1. Indicator 1: Please WDPA IDs where applicable</p> <p>2. Indicator 8: Please explain the large discrepancy between the number at PIF and endorsement stage.</p>	<p><b>IUCN, Apr 24, 2025</b></p> <p>1. Kindly note that the concerned areas do not have WDPA IDs hence not applicable.</p> <p>2. Thank you for the comment. The figure in PIF was the total catch in Major Flood Zone in 2020 for the whole basin (MRC, 2024, Assessment of fisheries yield in the Lower Mekong River Basin 2020) while the figure in the CER refers to the total catch at 6 focal landscapes of all fish habitat combined</p>
<p><b>5.4 Risks</b> a) Is there a well-articulated assessment of risk to outcomes and identification of mitigation measures under each relevant risk category? Are mitigation measures clearly identified and realistic? Is there any omission? b) Is the rating provided reflecting the residual risk to the likely achievement of intended outcomes after accounting for the expected implementation of mitigation measures? c) Are environmental and social risks, impacts and management measures adequately assessed and rated and consistent with requirements set out in SD/PL/03?</p>	<p><b>(7/1/2025)</b></p> <p>That logic makes sense (incl. given that the moderate ratings are manageable in their sum total).</p> <p>Cleared.</p> <p><b>(5/15/2025)</b></p> <p>Previous comments have been addressed. As indicated before policy review is resulting in additional comments:</p> <p>8. Please explain how the Overall risk rating was identified (<b>without</b> referring to any section of the document).</p>	<p><b>IUCN, June 17, 2025</b></p> <p>Thank you very much for your comment. Overall risk rating is based on rating for each risk category. Since the rating for each risk category is "Low" or "Moderate", the project overall risk can't be higher than "Moderate".</p> <p><b>IUCN, Apr 24, 2025</b></p> <p>Kindly note that we firstly drafted the risk table in the ProDoc and then tried to synthesize the text in the ER, given that we were asked to stay under a defined number of pages. This has now been rationalised</p>

	<p>(3/7/25)</p> <p>Overall comment: Please note that the text for similar fields in the risk table and the ER differ for no apparent reason.</p> <p><b>Comments 1- 6 relate to the prodoc:</b></p> <p>1. Please note that the overall risk in the portal ER is correctly aligned with the ESS rating as moderate. The prodoc though lists the overall risk as 'low/medium'. Please revise in the prodoc.</p> <p>2. Climate risk: Please provide an analysis or risks to the region and the project given increasing climate variability and change (incl. increased amplitude and duration...., impacts on flows based on upstream glacial melt, etc. What measures to maintain or increase resilience will the project adopt to respond to this. What is the residual risk, taking account of these measures.</p> <p>3. Environmental and Social risks; Please summarize risks more concisely. Please also include risk mitigation measures on social risks; e.g. risks listed include the marginalization of women and indigenous groups. Please list mitigating actions to counteract both. The stakeholder engagement strategy is listed but is this enough? How else is this addressed in the project design?</p> <p>4. Macroeconomic risks - please address more distinctly. Same for mitigation measures, e.g. How is the communication officer addressing macro-economic risks?</p>	<p>1. Thank you. The text is now amended.</p> <p>2. Thank you. The text is now revised</p> <p>3. Thank you. The social risks related text is now revised</p> <p>4. Thank you. This has now been amended with reference to communication officer removed</p> <p>5. Thank you. The text is now amended</p>
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	<p>5. Technical risks: Not discussed. This is not about IUCN and GEF guidelines, but about the sounds technical design of the project. The other argument outlined is not to adhere to the project design where sometimes are sometimes needed and beneficial to adapt to local realities not foreseen at project design stage. Which is when adaptive measures should be built in.</p> <p>6. Risks of policies etc to not be adopted: please also consider earlier comment under project design to e.g. be given a mandate to assess and provide recommendations to modify the basin development strategy and Strategic Plan. Same is indeed relevant on national and local levels.</p> <p>Limited budget? The project should be designed within its budget which is arguably not that small.</p> <p><b>Comments 7 onwards related to the ER. The risk table in the ER is overall aligned with requirements:</b></p> <p>7. Climate risk section reads much better in the ER. Please provide some comments on floods, droughts, flow alterations due to CV&amp;C in relation to the project.</p>	<p>6. Thank you. The text is now amended</p> <p>7. Thank you. The climate risk section has now been revised in the CER</p>
5.5 For NGI Only: Is there a justification of the financial structure and of the use of financial instrument with concessionality levels?	NA	
<p>6 C. Alignment with GEF-8 Programming Strategies and Country/Regional Priorities</p> <p>6.1 a) Is the project adequately aligned with Focal Area objectives, and/or the LDCF/SCCF strategy?</p> <p>b) [If a child project under an integrated program] Is the project adequately aligned with the program objective in the GEF-8 programming directions?</p>	<p>(7/1/2025)</p> <p>Comment addressed. Cleared</p> <p>(5/6/2025)</p> <p>1. Please strengthen and refer to the specific GEF-8 IW objective and how the project is aligned with it in section C. of the ER and the</p>	<p><b>IUCN, June 17, 2025</b></p> <p>Thank you very much for the comment. The alignment with GEF-8 IW objective has been described both in the ProDoc (Section 4) and in the CER (Section C).</p>

	<p>respective section in the prodoc (section 4). Addressing this in the project summary is not sufficient.</p> <p>(3/7/25)</p> <p>1. Please strengthen the references and links to the IW strategy with IW focal area providing the majority of finance and is designed to strengthen transboundary cooperation and cross-sector trade-offs.</p>	<p>Kindly consider that the Advisor profile that was missing in Annex 14 refers to a IW Senior Advisor</p> <p><b>IUCN, Apr 24, 2025</b></p> <p>1. The link to IW strategy has been strengthened (Please refer to the Summary)</p>
<b>6.2 Is the project alignment/coherent with country and regional priorities, policies, strategies and plans (including those related to the MEAs and to relevant sectors).</b>	(3/7/25) Yes	
<b>6.3 For projects aiming to generate biodiversity benefits (regardless of what the source of the resources is - i.e., BD, CC or LD), does the project clearly identify which of the 23 targets of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework the project contributes to and how it contributes to the identified target(s)?</b>	(3/7/25) Yes	
<b>7 D. Policy Requirements</b> <b>7.1 Are the Policy Requirement sections completed?</b>	(3/7/25) Yes	
<b>7.2 Is the Gender Action Plan uploaded?</b>	(3/7/25) Yes	
<b>7.3 Is the stakeholder engagement plan uploaded?</b>	<p>(7/1/2025) Comment addressed (incl. budget for local translation)</p> <p>(5/15/2025)</p> <p>We note that the project conducted detailed stakeholder consultation during the project preparation and prepared well elaborate stakeholder engagement plan including local communities. Please provide information on how the project proposal was communicated in local languages and how the project allocates the budget for interpretation and translation of the related materials.</p>	<p><b>IUCN, June 17, 2025</b></p> <p>Thank you very much for the comments.</p> <p>The project proposal was presented and discussed in local languages through national validation workshops (November 2024) and a regional validation workshop (December 2024).</p> <p>Furthermore, for national and local stakeholders, project proposal documentation will be also disseminated through a shared folder that has not yet been set up.</p>

	(3/7/25) Yes	<p>When project sites are finalized and sub-projects set up, project information will be provided in local language concurrent with the stakeholder engagement process with communities. Further details of this process can be found in the ESMF Chapter 7.</p> <p>Specific documentation will be disclosed in local languages during the first round of meetings with the local communities under Activity 1.1.4.1: 16 meetings with the Focal Landscape Support Groups (FLSGs) and 100 first meetings with the 100 targeted fisheries communities. A related budget line has been included in the project budget for the production of the material.</p>
7.4 Have the required applicable safeguards documents been uploaded?	<p>(7/1/2025)</p> <p>1. Signed on last page by Janie Rioux. Addressed.</p> <p>2. Noted that the site selection is not final (and site specific ESMFs, including grievance mechanisms and FPIC - as relevant - will be obtained during the project as outlined in the now final ESMF). Addressed.</p> <p>3. The comment and its subpoints are addressed in the agency response and specific references to the ESMF, prodoc and budget provided where and how the comments are addressed. Cleared.</p> <p>(5/6/2025) AND also (5/15/2025)</p> <p>1. The ESMS Screening &amp; Clearance Form (annex 10) does not list who filled it out and is not signed. Please address.</p> <p>2. The EMSF (Annex 12) is labeled as a working draft (as of March 31, 2025). I e.g. talks about the ESS and gender consultancies and site selection in future tense (see 6.3 as example). Please upload the final, including not guidelines on but a project specific grievance mechanism. Please note the importance to provide such for</p>	<p><b>IUCN, June 17, 2025</b></p> <p>Thank you very much for your comments.</p> <p>1. The completed clearance form is included with the appropriate signature.as part of the re-submission</p> <p>2. Well noted – the ESMF is no longer a working draft with the re-submission.</p> <p>Site selection is not finalized and the ESMF provides details as to the subsequent processes to complete the selection and implement the necessary stakeholder screening and sub-project screening during the inception phase of the project. See in particular Chapters 5 and 7 of the ESMF but also Chapter 6 for related ESS analysis.</p> <p>The GCM is included in the latest submission of the ESMF. The provision of GCM to local communities is well noted. A related budget line has been included in the project budget (see response to the point 7.3).</p> <p>3. The point is acknowledged. Overall, we are confident that significant economic displacement from access restriction will be avoided. Indeed, the project is set up to deliver community livelihoods support in tandem with fisheries</p>

	<p>every site at local level and accessible in locality and language to local community stakeholders.</p> <p>3- On Environmental and Social Safeguards : We note that IUCN attached the ESMS Screening and clearance Form, stakeholder engagement plan and ESMF. The project is classified as Moderate risk. The project may trigger serious economic displacement due to the project.</p> <p>a. Please provide more detail risk assessment of loss of livelihoods and mitigation plans or plan for alternative livelihood plan acceptable for Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities.</p> <p>b. Please also obtain FPIC from Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs) about management plan.</p> <p>c. Please also obtain FPIC from IPLCs about collecting local fishery related information.</p> <p>d. Please provide information of consultation with Indigenous Peoples groups, and local CSOs, not only local communities in all countries.</p> <p>e. Please also make sure that consulted Indigenous Peoples groups and local CSOs are part of stakeholder engagement plan throughout project implementation including monitoring and evaluation.</p> <p>(3/7/25)</p> <p>The ESS Screening is uploaded but not signed.</p> <p>I am missing to find Annex 10 in the documents tab in the portal with the ESMF. Please submit in the next submission.</p>	<p>management and so by default is looking to counter risks of economic displacement, instead enhancing economic opportunities for local stakeholders. Please see the points below, where the avoidance of economic displacement ties closely to the provision of an Access Restriction Mitigation Process Framework and further stakeholder engagement.</p> <p>a. The ESMF now includes an Access Restriction Mitigation Process Framework, which lays out the procedure to screen sub-projects, when sites and activities are known, and set up Action Plans where potential restrictions are identified. The ESS matrix (Chapter 4) carefully analyses which activities might result in access restriction. This action is carefully considered in relation to the screening of sub-projects (Chapter 5) and local stakeholder engagement (Chapter 7), and the triggering of IUCN Standard of Involuntary Displacement and Access Restriction (Chapter 6).</p> <p>b. and c. This is outlined in Chapter 7 of the ESMF, with an FPIC procedure annexed to the document.</p> <p>Meetings will be organized under Activity 1.1.4.1 to reach out to IPs to provide them with specific information on project proposal, ESMF and GCM and obtain the requested FPIC (a specific budget line has been included). These meetings will be scheduled before the 16 meetings that will be organized to create the FLSGs. These groups will play a key role in the project implementation and in the decision-making process. The participation of women (see Results Framework and Gender Action Plan) and IPs is expected. Thus, IPs will be informed about the opportunity to be part of the FLSGs.</p> <p>Then a stakeholder engagement assessment will be carried out by the PMU.</p> <p>d. Indigenous Peoples and marginalized ethnic minorities at project sites will be identified and consulted (see previous comment) as part of the</p>
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		<p>FPIC process instigated at local level during the inception phase of the project. A provisional listing of potential groups to be found is given in the social context section of Chapter 2 in the ESMF, along with some provisional indicators of relevant CSOs. Consultations with relevant groups will be carefully documented and acknowledged through the subsequent ESMPs produced for sub-projects.</p> <p>e. Please see Chapter 7 of the ESMF</p> <p><b>IUCN, Apr 24, 2025</b></p> <p>The signed ESMS screening questionnaire will be uploaded with the next submission</p> <p>Kindly note that the ESMF is now uploaded</p>
<b>8 Annexes</b> <b>Annex A: Financing Tables</b> <b>8.1 GEF Financing Table and Focal Area Elements: Is the proposed GEF financing (including the Agency fee) in line with GEF policies and guidelines? Are they within the resources available from (mark all that apply):</b> <b>STAR allocation?</b>	(3/7/25) Yes.	
<b>Focal Area allocation?</b>	(3/7/25) Yes	
<b>LDCF under the principle of equitable access?</b>	NA	
<b>SCCF A (SIDS)?</b>	NA	
<b>SCCF B (Tech Transfer, Innovation, Private Sector)?</b>	NA	
<b>Focal Area Set Aside?</b>	NA	

<p><b>8.2 Project Preparation Grant (PPG)</b> a) Is the use of PPG attached in Annex: Status of Utilization of Project Preparation Grant (PPG) properly itemized according to the guidelines?</p>	<p>(7/1/2025) Comments 1 and 2 have been addressed. <b>Cleared.</b></p> <p>(5/25/2025)</p> <p>While the previous comments have been addressed, GEFSEC policy review is providing comments at this time:</p> <p>On the status of utilization of PPG:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Per guidelines, "project startup" activities are ineligible expenditures under the Project Preparation Grants. Please request the agency to remove this item from the table or provide a more accurate description of "Consultancy Contract for firm for preparation of CER, ProDoc and Annexes.</li> <li>2. Please also remove "Consultancy costs" from the table as this line is empty.</li> </ol> <p>(3/7/25)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Please itemize the 'miscellaneous' into regular disbursement categories. 'Miscellaneous' is not eligible under GEF rules. The amount of 30 K exceeds what can be seen as minor consumables/sundries.</li> <li>2. Please break up the consultancy line of 170K into separate lines per contract/per consultant.</li> </ol>	<p><b>IUCN, June 17, 2025</b></p> <p>Thank you very much for your comments.</p> <p>1. Kindly note that the project startup has replaced with 'Preparatory costs of inception workshop' which are eligible expenditures.</p> <p>2. As advised we have now removed the consultancy costs line.</p> <p><b>IUCN, Apr 24, 2025</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Kindly note that now miscellaneous is replaced with project start up workshop related expenses</li> <li>2. Kindly note that there is no breakdown as the entire budget is for one consultancy firm and not individual consultants. Hence, it cannot be broken down further.</li> </ol>
<p><b>8.3 Source of Funds</b> Does the sources of funds table match with the amounts in the OFP's LOE? <b>Note: the table only captures</b></p>	<p>yes</p>	

sources of funds from the country's STAR allocation		
<p><b>8.4 Confirmed co-financing for the project, by name and type: Are the amounts, sources, and types of co-financing adequately documented and consistent with the requirements of the Co-Financing Policy and Guidelines? e.g. Have letters of co-finance been submitted, correctly classified as investment mobilized or in-kind/recurring expenditures? If investment mobilized: is there an explanation below the table to describe the nature of co-finance? If letters are not in English, is a translation provided?</b></p>	<p><b>(7/1/2025)</b></p> <p>1. New letters are noted as well as the combined letter for two means of co-finance by MRC. Please note that there is one letter still missing (for the Mekong EbA South Adaptation Fund). Please upload this.</p> <p>2. Noted that this was already scaled to only count for LMC country funds. Addressed.</p> <p>3. Noted. Addressed.</p> <p>4. Noted. Addressed.</p> <p>5. Addressed.</p> <p><b>(5/6/2025) and (5/15/2025)</b></p> <p>1. Please upload the remaining letters of co-finance for the Mekong River Commission (see also 4. below), UNEP and ICEM. Please upload them in the co-financing table.</p> <p>2. Please list the countries covered under the IUCN WASSA grant. <u>If</u> these are beyond the four LMB countries, please reduce the amount counted as co-finance for this project accordingly.</p> <p>3. Please spell out ICEM</p> <p>4. Please upload a reference to (or another copy of) the Mekong Fund co-finance letter under the line for the Mekong River Commission as both the Mekong Fund and the MRC recurring expenditures are in fact covered by one letter of co-finance.</p> <p>5. Please revise the source of Co-financing for UNEP to 'donor agency'. UNEP is not an implementing agency for this project.</p> <p><b>(3/7/25)</b></p>	<p><b>IUCN, 18 July 2025</b></p> <p>1. Thank you for acknowledging the cofinancing letters including the combined letter from the MRC. We apologise for not attaching the Mekong EbA South Adaptation Fund cofinancing letter which is now uploaded in the relevant section of the online CER.</p> <p><b>IUCN, 17 June 2025</b></p> <p>Thank you very much for your comments.</p> <p>1. Mekong Fund is managed by MRC so both expenditures are under single MRC letter. There are now three other letters uploaded replacing the cofinancing from UNEP and ICEM.</p> <p>2. The WASSA project includes the same four Mekong countries and Bangladesh with GCF financing budget being USD118mn. The cofinancing amount shown is quite a reasonable amount and not an inflated amount including the Bangladesh budget.</p> <p>3. International Centre for Environmental Management is no longer a cofinancier (no more among the Co-financers)</p> <p>4. Mekong Fund is managed by MRC so both expenditures are under single MRC letter.</p> <p>5. This has been replaced with the new cofinancing from IUCN for this project</p> <p><b>IUCN, Apr 24, 2025</b></p> <p>1. Thank you for the comment. Kindly note that co-financing amount has been updated and cofinancing letters for three of the five cofinancers</p>



	1. Please link the letters of co-finance to the respective line in the co-finance table to facilitate review.	are uploaded. We are currently working on obtaining the remaining two cofinancing letters
<b>Annex B: Endorsements</b> 8.5 a) If – and only if - this is a global or regional project for which not all country-based interventions were known at PIF stage and, therefore, not all LOEs provided: Has the project been endorsed by the GEF OFP/s of all GEF eligible participating countries and has the OFP name and position been checked against the GEF database at the time of submission?	(3/7/25) Yes	
b) Are the OFP endorsement letters uploaded to the GEF Portal (compiled as a single document, if applicable)?	(3/7/25) Yes	
c) Do the letters follow the correct format and are the endorsed amounts consistent with the amounts included in the Portal?	(3/7/25) Yes	
<b>Annex C: Project Results Framework</b> 8.6 a) Have the GEF core indicators been included? b) Have SMART indicators been used; are means of verification well thought out; do the targets correspond/are appropriate in view of total project financing (too high? Too low?) c) Are all relevant indicators sex disaggregated? d) Is the Project Results Framework included in the Project Document pasted in the Template? e)[If a regional/global coordination child project under an integrated program] Does the results framework reflect the program-wide result framework, inclusive of results from child projects and specific to the regional/global coordination child project? [If a country child project under an integrated program] Is the child project result framework inclusive of program-wide metrics monitored across child project by the Regional/Global Child project?	(7/1/2025) Addressed.  (5/6/2025)  1. Noted - addressed in the ER. Please also do/duplicate in the prodoc to assure tracking and reporting in the MTR and TE.  2. Noted/addressed.  3. Noted and addressed in the project description. Cleared.  4. Addressed.  5. Addressed  6. Addressed.  7. Addressed.  8. addressed  <b>9. IW:LEARN: see GEF Core Sub-Indicator 7.4 - please include a rating to Midterm and End-of project for active participation in IW:LEARN (also: e.g. typical end of project indicators are: participation in 2 IW:LEARN conferences/IWCs; Delivery of at least 2 project experience notes; project website incorporates IW:LEARN functionalities). Please include.</b>	<b>IUCN, June 17, 2025</b>  Thank you very much for your comments.  1. Core Indicators were already included in the M&E workplan of the ProDoc. Now, they have been added to the Results Framework of the ProDoc  9.As advised we have now incorporated ratings for both term of Midterm and End-of project under GEF Core Sub-Indicator 7.4  <b>IUCN, Apr 24, 2025</b>  1. Kindly note that the GEF core indicators and targets are now added.  2. Kindly note that main gender indicators and targets have been included in the overall results framework. Anyway, we consider GAP part of the overall budget design, and the cost of the related measures already included in the overall budget



	<p>(3/7/25)</p> <p>1. Please add the GEF core indicators and targets.</p> <p>2. Please integrate the main gender indicators and targets from the GAP into the overall results framework. This will assure that the GAP is implemented, reported on and properly budgeted. Also, please overall provide sex disaggregated indicators and targets where applicable.</p> <p>3. Distribution of Fisheries Management Guidelines (1.1.2) - please consider that paper or digital copies may not be the only or the best communication method to reach small scale local fishing communities.</p> <p>4. Output 1.1.3 should have a baseline value.</p> <p>5. Indicator 2.1 a - could one add the tracking of household income in addition to a 'well-being' self-rating.</p> <p>6. Indicator 2.1 b - 20 % increase of annual income of 'who?' Again, as per an earlier comment, the term 'value chain' is confusing here as a value chain involves multiple actors from resource to processing to marketing and use of the derived product.</p>	<p>3. The Results Framework doesn't consider more than one indicator per output. So, we decided to maintain the indicator that we had identified in the master report submitted to the GEF, but we considered in the project description (see Output 1.1.2) a second distribution mechanism (presentation to small scale local fishing communities through meetings)</p> <p>4. Baseline value = 0 (See Results Framework)</p> <p>5. We agree with this comment and text is now revised accordingly (See Results Framework)</p> <p>6. Text added. The increase income will be fishing household (See Results Framework)</p> <p>7. Text added. Number of fishing communities (e.g., FCoM communities) that benefit from new or improved VCs (See Results Framework)</p> <p>8. Yes, text has been revised (See Results Framework)</p> <p>9. Thank you and this is now revised (See Results Framework)</p>
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	<p>7. Indicator 2.1.1. - as above the phrasing of 'communities with new or improved value chains' is unclear.</p> <p>8. Component 3 Indicators need to express not only national consistency of policies and planning across sectors to consider the value of capture fisheries and ecosystems services but also address this in a transboundary context.</p> <p>9. Please provide indicators related to active participation in IW:LEARN.</p>	
<p><b>Annex E: Project map and coordinates</b> 8.7 Have geographic coordinates of project locations been entered in the dedicated table? Are relevant illustrative maps included?</p>	(3/7/25) Yes	
<p><b>Annex F: Environmental and Social Safeguards Documentation and Rating</b> 8.8 Have the relevant safeguard documents been uploaded to the GEF Portal? Has the safeguards rating been provided and filled out in the ER field below the risk table?</p>		
<p><b>Annex G: GEF Budget template</b> 8.9 a) Is the GEF budget template attached and appropriately filled out incl. items such as the executing partner for each budget line? b) Are the activities / expenditures reasonably and accurately charged to the three identified sources (Components, M&amp;E and PMC)? c) Are TORs for key project staff funded by GEF grant and/or co-finance attached?</p>	<p>(7/1/2025)</p> <p>1. (i) and (ii) Comments addressed.</p> <p>2. IW Senior Advisor part-time TORS are provided (Annex 15) and details/justification provided. His engagement is for 6 month per year starting in year 3 (at a rate of USD 4500/month = 225.-/day assuming 20 working days per month). Addressed.</p> <p>3. and 4. Addressed.</p> <p>5. and 6. Agency responses are noted. Annex 21 is outlining experience and the basic mechanism and experience in Cambodia which will be replicated in the project. Addressed.</p> <p>7. The agency response is noted. Local consultations, trainings and meetings across the four countries and in the six sites with also different language needs is adding</p>	<p><b>IUCN July 18, 2025</b></p> <p>Thank you very much for your follow up comments on the budget.</p> <p>(i)We apologise for the error that these positions are not project management related positions but national technical specialists, external consultants supporting leading on implementation of each of the components based in each of the four countries. Please note that the terms of reference for these specialists are included and reflected in track changes mode as well as highlighted in yellow in the updated 'Agency Project Document_Appendix 15_TORs of Key Project Personnel' document.</p> <p>In addition, corresponding changes have been made to the following documents which have been updated and uploaded in the Roadmap section of the online CER: a) Agency Project Document – Revisions on page 110 reflected in track changes mode and highlighted in yellow</p>

	<p>effort and hence costs. Please include reporting on this in PIRs and a specific review of the <u>adequate budgeting for this in the projects MTR</u>. Addressed.</p> <p>8. Agency response noted. Also MRC has a long track record in managing WB, GIZ, and other funds providing confidence of their procurement procedures adhering to international standards. Addressed.</p> <p>9. Addressed.</p> <p>10. As noted in the last comments, the revised budget was reviewed again. Please respond to the following comments on the budget:</p> <p>(i) Four national coordinators and M&amp;E officers have been charged across components for a total of \$480,000. While reviewing the TORs for these positions we noticed that the responsibilities are mainly related to M&amp;E. If this is the case the positions should be charged entirely to the M&amp;E budget.</p> <p>2. Please include TORs for the M&amp;E Regional Officer as this position is also charged to the M&amp;E budget and to component 4.</p> <p><b>(5/6/2025) and (5/15/25)</b></p> <p>1. (i) This has to be shown and comments addressed in <b>Annex G of the endorsement request. The GEF budget template</b> has been standardized to allow consistent reviews across 18 GEF agencies. Please therefore follow this format and e.g. provide</p>	<p>colour; b) Agency Project Document Appendix 4 – The revised rows are highlighted in light green colour; c) Agency Project Document Appendix 5 – The revised row is highlighted in light green colour; d) CER Annex G – The revised row is highlighted in light green colour.</p> <p>ii) If we may kindly clarify that the TORs were already included in the document, 'Agency Project Document Appendix 15 TORs of Key Project Personnel'. Kindly note that in the updated uploaded version of this document the relevant TOR is shaded in blue font colour.</p> <p><b>IUCN, June 17, 2025</b></p> <p>Thank you very much for your comments.</p> <p>1 (i) (ii) We had already provided the requested table as Appendix 5 of the ProDoc, but it is now reflected correctly in the CER attachment with activity related costing provided.</p> <p>2. It was missed out accidentally in the submission. Kindly note that the ToRs for all positions have now been updated.</p> <p>3 and 4. We confirm that the costs of the Project Manager and Project Finance and Administrative Assistance are now 100% charged to PMC</p> <p>5. Kindly note that the Annex 21 to the ProDoc is now uploaded with the requested information</p> <p>6. Fund managements including mini trust fund, rotating fund and other financial support will be explored during the inception phase based on experiences of IUCN and MRC. 100% of funding will be managed by local beneficiaries including 100 fisheries co-management communities, 18 communities for value chain and other 16 for food systems. The funding is all grant related and not in the form of equity or loan financing which are fiduciary standards for which IUCN is not accredited with the GEF.</p>
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	<p>separate budget lines for each key project staff/core project consultant. This then also allows clear tracking of staff and/or percentage of staff time charged to components, PMC, and M&amp;E.</p> <p>(ii) please also add a column indicating the budget holder (i.e. executing agency) for each and every budget line (based on the annexed procurement plan this would be MRC).</p> <p>2. Noted that the Senior Advisory (former CTA) is only budgeted as part-time (alas 8 months per year). No TORs are expanded on and describing the need for his/her position in the Annex 14 (see pg. 6)</p> <p>3. and 4. Please confirm that the Project Manager and Project Finance and Administrative Assistant are then 100% charged to PMC.</p> <p>5. Response noted, but please include an annex outlining the management and responsibilities for these funds for the current project as requested (this can be based on IUCN experience in the Cambodia project)</p> <p>6. Noted. How will IUCN and/or MRC assure that these funds are aligned with min. IUCN fiduciary standards? USD 1.48 is not a trivial amount of money.</p> <p>7. Noted that these are budget figures, yet the costs seem extraordinary high. <b>Yearly work plans to be approved by the PSC should seriously scrutinize where e.g. technical and knowledge exchange meetings can be combined. Please review again and see if some of such synergies can be identified already now/at endorsement stage.</b></p> <p>8. Noted - note thought that there are large lumpsums for many items. No procurement threshold information is provided and such amounts (hundreds of thousands) require RFPs. Please confirm that MRC's procurement procedures have been reviewed by IUCN and conform with IUCN procedures.</p> <p>9. On the budget: the budget table is missing the columns for "Detailed Description" and</p>	<p>7. In this project IUCN and MRC decided to invest more in meetings and trainings with local authorities and communities in the six focal landscapes (44%). In any case some types of activities have to be developed at national (30%) and regional level (27%), considering the need for national and regional dialogue spaces to develop national policies and legal instruments and strengthen cross sector transboundary collaboration and coordination. We got through reducing a little bit the amount of the budget targeting local communities, without affecting significantly the effectiveness of the project development, but we think that the overall budget dedicated to meetings, workshops and trainings is justified for this multi-country project. In any case, as you suggested, the PSC will analyse the opportunity to combine meetings to manage costs.</p> <p>8. IUCN has reviewed MRC procurement procedures as part of the due diligence assessment process.</p> <p>- Any expense more than \$500 need 3 quotations including meeting package and travel.</p> <p>- All works and services to be processed needed to be approved in annual work plan and go through published bidding process.</p> <p>9. Please see response to comment 1</p> <p><b>IUCN, Apr 24, 2025</b></p> <p><i>1. Please provide separate budget lines for each staff or main technical consultants</i></p> <p>This has already been revised. Please see ProDoc Appendix 5 "Procurement Plan"</p> <p><i>Please relate these to the TORs and - where applicable - show transparently what positions/consultant times are allocated to each component and which to PMC. The TORs (or the budget line for each position) has to be structured to make it possible to deduct the monthly or yearly</i></p>
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	<p>"Responsible Entity". We kindly suggest the agency to use the template provided in the Guidelines on the Project Cycle and remove the output columns so that there is more margin for the details on the activities implemented. Additionally, please present the <u>detailed description per item in individual rows</u> (i.e. Salary and Staff costs should be presented per each position listed in the provided TORs, Operating costs, consultants, contractual services, etc.), so one can assess the reasonability of each activity / position being charged to the project components, M&amp;E and PMC.</p> <p><b>Please note: We will review the budget table again upon resubmission and provide comments as appropriate.</b></p> <p>(3/7/25)</p> <p>1. Please provide separate budget lines for each staff or main technical consultants. Please relate these to the TORs and - where applicable - show transparently what positions/consultant times are allocated to each component and which to PMC. The TORs (or the budget line for each position) has to be structured to make it possible to deduct the monthly or yearly salary from this in order to compare with similar positions in the region.</p>	<p><i>salary from this in order to compare with similar positions in the region.</i></p> <p>Following your suggestion, we specified the time allocated for each consultant for each component and as total of all components and PMC in the following documents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ProDoc Appendix 4 "Detailed project budget"</li> <li>• ProDoc Appendix 5 "Procurement Plan"</li> <li>• ProDoc Appendix 15 "ToR of Key Project Personnel"</li> </ul> <p>2. The "chief technical advisor" has been removed, while a "senior advisor" (IW expert) (see amended ProDoc Appendix 15 "ToR of Key Project Personnel")</p> <p>3. A percentage of tasks for 'project management' or 'technical coordination' has been specified in the budget (ProDoc Appendix 4 "Detailed project budget") and in the ToR (ProDoc Appendix 15 "ToR of Key Project Personnel") for the following experts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ESS and gender specialist (PM and Technical coordination)</li> <li>- Sustainable finance and biodiversity specialist (PM and Technical coordination)</li> <li>- KM and communication specialist (PM)</li> </ul> <p>The related budget has been included in the PMC.</p> <p>4. Thank you for the comment and this is now revised accordingly. See ProDoc Appendix 4 "Detailed project budget", ProDoc Appendix 5 "Procurement Plan"</p> <p>5. IUCN has recently assessed how sustainable financing using mini trust funds has strengthened community fisheries in Cambodia. The impact has been strongly positive. These mini trust funds have been established using the same term rules and regulations. In Cambodia, the income is managed by an elected sub-committee of the community fisheries community. See: <a href="https://iucn.org/story/202412/sustainable-financing-community-fisheries-cambodia">https://iucn.org/story/202412/sustainable-financing-community-fisheries-cambodia</a></p> <p>6. The mechanism will be worked out between MRC and National Executing partners during the inception phase. Kindly note that IUCN as GEF Agency does not interfere with processes or mechanisms that are related to inter-governmental organisations or sovereign governments that are executing agencies. Hence, IUCN will not be involved as GEF Agency in reviewing and</p>
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		<p>approving financial and governance arrangements of funds.</p> <p>7. This has already revised. Please refer to ProDoc Appendix 4 "Detailed project budget" and ProDoc Appendix 5 "Procurement Plan". All trainings, workshops and meetings are separately identified, as well their related costs showed.</p> <p>8. This has already been revised. Please refer to ProDoc Appendix 5 "Procurement Plan".</p>
	<p>2. Why is there a need for a project manager and a chief technical advisor? Please aim to combine the positions.</p> <p>3. Please show in the TORs which percentage of tasks are for 'project management' or 'coordination' which has to be charged to PMC.</p>	

4. The project finance and admin assistant should be charged entirely to PMC (and as the other positions be shown as one distinct budget line).

5. USD 1.48 million are dedicated to revolving and seed funds (components 1 and 2) but the project document does not provide detail on the mechanism for managing and allocating these funds. Please point to an annex with at least a concept on the governance and allocation of these funds.

6. No funds should be spent via these mechanisms with MRC and IUCN reviewing and approving the financial and governance arrangements of such funds. Please include this provision at the appropriate sub-component in the prodoc and include the development and approval of these mechanisms as indicators in the Results Framework.

7. Please provide an annex explaining how trainings, workshops

	<p>and meetings are adding up to over USD 3 million.</p> <p>8. Please provide relate the contractual service (international and national consultants, firms) to deliverables of the project. What is provided is not allowing any way to related contracts to outcomes and outputs.</p>	
<p><b>Annex H: NGI Relevant Annexes 8.10 a) Does the project provide sufficient detail (indicative term sheet) to assess the following criteria: co-financing ratios, financial terms and conditions, and financial additionality? If not, please provide comments.</b></p> <p><b>b) Does the project provide a detailed reflow table to assess the project capacity of generating reflows? If not, please provide comments.</b></p> <p><b>c) Is the Agency eligible to administer concessional finance? If not, please provide comments.</b></p>	NA	
<p><b>Additional Annexes</b></p> <p><b>9. GEFSEC DECISION</b></p> <p><b>9.1.GEFSEC Recommendation Is the project recommended for approval</b></p>	<p><i>(7/28/2025) The agency has addressed all comments. However, the new ProDoc only mentions the Appendices, but these are not included in the same document. Considering that the ProDoc is the document that will be posted after Endorsement, for transparency purposes, all the information must be contained in the document. Please, therefore, merge the annexes and the prodoc into one continuous file. Please make sure to double check the PDF version of the document created in the portal to assure that all figures and tables appear and are readable. Thank you.</i></p> <p><i>7/19/2025) Comments have been addressed and the project is recommended for endorsement.</i></p>	<p><b>IUCN, July 31, 2025</b></p> <p>Thank you very much for your comment. Kindly note that a consolidated ProDoc integrating the majority of the appendices is now uploaded in the Roadmap documents section. Please note that specific appendices that are deemed to be confidential by the Mekong River Commission and its member countries have been uploaded separately either in the Roadmap or the relevant section of the CER online form for this project, namely: Appendix 4. Detailed project budget (uploaded in Roadmap section); Appendix 5. Procurement plan (uploaded in Roadmap section); Appendix 6. Detailed costed M&amp;E plan (uploaded in Roadmap section); Appendix 8. Signed cofinancing letters (in the cofinancing letter upload section of the CER online form); Appendix 9. GEF OFP Endorsement Letter (in the LoE upload section of the CER online form). Kindly note that also an email from executing agency referring to Appendices 4, 5 and 6 being confidential has been uploaded in the Roadmap Section.</p>



**(7/1/2025)** Please address the remaining comment/s and resubmit.

*Note: Please check the pdf version of the resubmission again and assure that all figures load as intended.*

**(5/6/2025) and (5/15/2025) Please address the comments provided for both of these two dates and resubmit. Please also note one additional comment right below** (as there is no field in the review sheet to address pdf formatting issues):

1. Some figures in the CEO Endorsement Request Portal view (which is the document web posted once the project is approved – see attached file) are not showing up in the document. Please amend.

***Just for a reminder: Please keep aware of the endorsement deadline (cancelation by August 9, 2025 if not endorsed)***

(3/7/25)

The project cannot yet be recommended for approval and requires e.g. a clearer description of components, better outline the institutional set-up to deliver the activities on the ground and a clearer relation to distinct budget lines.

Additional comments may come up after reviewing the resubmission from technical side. Please also note that no policy review has been included in this first round of comments yet aside from the technical reviewer including quite a number of policy review points. A comprehensive review will be done in the next resubmission.

	Please also note that STAP comments are not fully addressed re. project objective, and comments 4. and 5. Please address these explicitly. Thank you.	
9.2 Additional Comments to be considered by the Agency during the inception and implementation phase		

## Response to the STAP recommendations

The STAP Review of the PIF found that the project's objective is unclear and should be sharpened. The review concluded that it appears from the project rationale and description that the project is focused is on the maintenance of fish populations through various measures to address the drivers of fish population decline. However, the stated objective also includes maintaining river integrity (in very general terms – and *likely not realistically to be achieved*) and the causal pathways are unclear in terms of how the activities envisioned under each component and related outputs and outcomes actually address the problem at stake (and acknowledge those which are outside of the scope of this project). The STAP recommended sharpening the overall objective, improving the intervention logic (IL) and the Theory of Change (ToC). Specific points raised by STAP are summarized in the Table below.

Specific points to be addressed, and suggestions	Comments from the PPG team
1. Revisit the problem description which includes incomplete sentences and factual mistakes (e.g. counting Myanmar to the LMB, etc.), to give it a clearer focus on those problems the project actually intends (and is able) to address, and a justification for why those, and not others have been selected, as well as acknowledgment of the ones fall outside of the project's scope (such as climate change, which is described in detail, but not addressed by the project).	<p>The problem description was modified to make it clearer by revising the project objective and the results framework so that it shifts from a narrow focus on fisheries to a more integrated approach that includes social, economic/ financial and environmental measures to address the root causes of the Mekong's declining populations of fish and other aquatic organism populations. The PPG also corrects editorial mistakes and other issues raised by STAP. It also includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Gender considerations</u> are embedded across all components, acknowledging the importance of inclusivity and equity in environmental co-management. Sustainable capture fisheries value chains (FVC) are one instrument for ensuring more equitable representation and benefits of women.</li> <li>• The emphasis on <u>evidence-based guidelines and policies</u> ensures that interventions are grounded in scientific research and especially Local Environmental Knowledge (LEK), as well as practical, transformative outcomes that will enhance the likelihood of sustaining triple bottom-line impacts.</li> <li>• The intervention logic and theory of change of the project have been adjusted in response to recommendations from the STAP comments. This includes rewording the project's objective to make it clearer and sharper, which was facilitated by incorporating comments from the consultative</li> </ul>

	<p>inception workshops with the MCs and site visits. Consequently, the overall objective has been revised as follows: to increase the connectivity and resilience of transboundary capture fisheries, freshwater biodiversity and other ecosystem services, as well as co-benefits for the people of the LMB who depend on them. This objective is measurable, and it provides an important first step for building triple bottom line transformative changes that begin with the focal landscapes and demonstration area intervention sites in the 4 countries.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The PPG has broadened the PIF's narrow focus on the rationale and description on the maintenance of fish populations through various measures to broaden the approach through the application of ecosystems-based principles and this is reflected in the revised objective, which includes building resilience of those populations and people who depend on them for livelihoods, incomes and food security, as well as for strengthening the resilience of the critical habitats fishery resources and biodiversity require in the priority landscapes.</li> <li>• Expansion of the barriers and root causes that the project must address and present a more cohesive and integrated Results Framework.</li> <li>• The list of drivers of fish population declines stated in the PIF has been expanded. However, the issues that are out of the project's control (e.g., maintaining river integrity, which is unlikely to be achieved not realistically) are minimized and the causal pathways have been reworded to describe how the activities envisioned under each component, their related outputs and outcomes actually address the stated problems.</li> <li>• More comprehensive Components - The ToC includes essential components like the restoration of the connectivity of critical freshwater habitats, co-management, the application of evidence-based guidelines, and the institutionalization of policies. These components are crucial for addressing the complex issues of fisheries co-management in the LMB.</li> <li>• More integrated management approach – The original macro-management approach presented in the PPG has been fine-tuned to include focal Landscapes with Demonstration areas, which increases the likelihood that the project will produce transformative, triple bottom-line impacts by taking a broader ecosystem-based fishery management framework to include management of ecosystem services that are fundamental for meeting the needs of societies whose future depends on sustaining them while simultaneously delivering a range of co-benefits to meet the GEF's requirements.</li> <li>• The emphasis on evidence-based guidelines and policies ensures that interventions are grounded in scientific research and especially Local Environmental Knowledge (LEK), as well as practical, transformative outcomes that will enhance the likelihood of sustaining triple bottom-line impacts</li> <li>• Given the above and incorporating comments from IUCN, MRC and the consultative inception workshops with the MCs, the overall objective has been revised as follows: to increase the connectivity and resilience of transboundary capture fisheries, freshwater biodiversity and other ecosystem services, as well as co-benefits for the people of the LMB who depend on them. This objective is measurable, and it provides an important first step for building triple bottom line transformative changes that begin with the focal landscapes and demonstration area intervention sites in the 4 countries.</li> </ul>
<p>2. Use the scientific information detailed in the project (and from additional outside sources) to further explain the barriers and to justify the project design.</p>	<p>The PPG has cited a broad range of peer-review articles and MRC reports to support the approach and enrich the results-framework by going far beyond the focus on fisheries management that goes beyond the fisheries focus.</p>

<p>3. Revisit the ToC to a) clarify which problems this project intends to address vs. those which are outside of its scope (as mentioned above); b) clearly explain the logic connecting the outcomes and outputs as well as the linkages between the components (e.g., Component 2 on more sustainable management of fisheries through promotion of transboundary measures contributes to harmonized policies and plans, but not the other way around – and how; or the lack of linkages between Component 4 and any of the others). Also provide a clearer explanation of how each outcome contributes to a specific causal pathway and thus ultimately the project objective.</p>	<p>The PPG team's observations coincide with the STAP assessment, particularly the focus on conserving fish populations, rather than broadening the objective to build resilience of those populations and people who depend on them for livelihoods, incomes and food security.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>More comprehensive Components</u> - The ToC includes essential components like the restoration of the connectivity of critical freshwater habitats, co-management, the application of evidence-based guidelines, and the institutionalization of policies. These components are crucial for addressing the complex issues of fisheries co-management in the LMB.</li> <li>• <u>Adaptive learning and management</u> - Component 4 drives Knowledge capture and sharing, including lessons and transformative outcomes, as well as driving adaptive learning and decision-making, while facilitating continuous improvement and responsiveness to changing conditions in the LMB.</li> <li>• <u>More integrated management approach</u> - It also proposed reducing the macro-management approach in the PPG to one of focal Landscapes with Demonstration areas, which increases the likelihood that the project will produce transformative, triple bottom-line impacts by taking a broader ecosystem-based fishery management framework to include management of ecosystem services that are fundamental for meeting the needs of societies whose future depends on sustaining them while simultaneously delivering a range of co-benefits to meet the GEF's requirements.</li> <li>• The PPG expanded the <u>barriers and root causes</u> that the project must address and presents a more cohesive and integrated Results Framework.</li> </ul>
<p>4. Clarify the role of stakeholders and add a separate causal pathway explaining how this project will be effectively scaled.</p>	<p>The range of stakeholders has been expanded considerably to include different links of sustainable freshwater commodity value chains and connecting them with local circular economic strategies linked with ecotourism.</p>
<p>5. Scope GEBs and potential co-benefits using systems thinking. In developing a project's rationale, use systems thinking to identify possible co-benefits that could arise. Categorize co-benefits into prerequisite (i.e., essential for durable GEBs) and incidental (i.e., nice to have but not critical) and establish criteria for their inclusion in the project.</p>	<p>Regarding co-benefits, they are frequently intertwined. Examples include projects in which alternative livelihoods could increase political stability with consequential benefits from reduced resource depletion and land degradation, which could, in turn, improve water quality and ecosystem resilience. There are several good examples presented in the GEF IEO's Strategic Evaluation of its LMB projects that include GEF investments that provided climate and social adaptation co-benefits by improving the resilience of people and ecosystems and by reducing their vulnerability to water shortages and food security. TO the extent possible, the PPG design embedded social, environmental and economic resilience and climate adaptation into the investment to improve the chances of sustaining it.</p>