



Mekong River Commission
For Sustainable Development

MRC STRATEGIC PLAN 2026-2030





The MRC is funded by contributions from its Member Countries, including Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Viet Nam, and Development Partners, including Australia, Canada, the European Union, Flanders/Belgium, France, Germany, Japan, Republic of Korea, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America

1



Meeting the Needs
Keeping the Balance

2



Basin Development Strategy

2021 - 2030

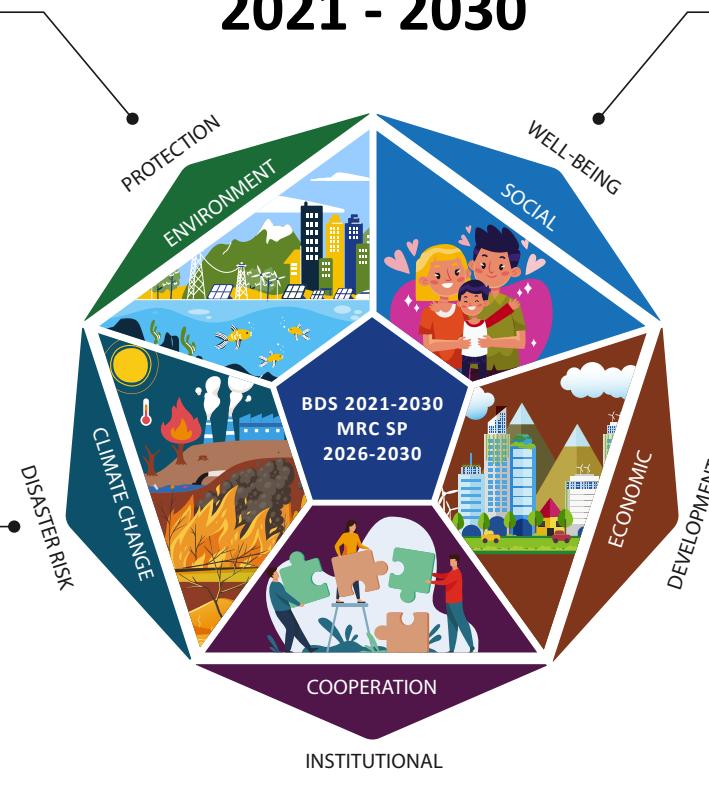
PRIORITY 1: MAINTAIN THE ECOLOGICAL FUNCTION OF THE MEKONG

Water flow & quality	Sediment transport
Guidance for water flow and quality	Basin-wide sediment management plan
Guidance for water infrastructures	Ecosystem services

Limits of change for river and wetland	Basin-wide planning and management framework for watersheds
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PRIORITY 4: STRENGTHEN RESILIENCE AGAINST CLIMATE RISKS, EXTREME FLOODS AND DROUGHTS

Informed & prepared against flood & drought	Disaster management & adaptation
Core monitoring network	Coordinated Water infrastructure operations
Integrated data and information systems	Climate change adaptation, flood & drought management mainstreamed at national levels
Decision Support Systems	
Flood and drought forecasting and early warning	
Joint State of Basin Report	



PRIORITY 2: ENABLE INCLUSIVE ACCESS & UTILISATION OF WATER & RELATED RESOURCES

Community well-being	Poverty reduction
Capture fisheries regulatory frameworks	Alternative livelihood strategies prepared & mainstreamed
Risks to capture fisheries minimised	
Gender and vulnerability addressed	
Access and supply of safe water	

PRIORITY 3: ENHANCE OPTIMAL AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Economic growth & benefits	Inclusive sectoral growth
Basin Development Plan	Irrigated agriculture
	Sustainable hydropower
	Navigation
	Environment
	Changed fisheries future

PRIORITY 5: STRENGTHEN COOPERATION AMONG ALL COUNTRIES AND STAKEHOLDERS

MRC effective implementation of 1995 Mekong agreement	Joint efforts & partnerships
Implementation of the MRC Procedures	Joint Basin Expert Groups
Organisational development of the Mekong River Commission	Mekong water partnerships
	Negotiation of joint projects
	Basin-wide stakeholder platform
	Common understanding on Mekong institutions

Strategic Shift to Impact-Focused



From voluntary cooperation to mutual accountability, we turn cooperation into measurable results—better coordination of flows, open information people can trust, faster warnings, and safer communities. Cooperation not by our words, but by what we deliver together.

Strategic Areas

The Mekong River Commission Strategic Plan (MRC SP) 2026–2030 is a unified corporate plan, fully integrated with the Basin Development Strategy (BDS) 2021–2030. It sets out how the MRC will continue contributing to the achievement of the BDS while further strengthening the organisation over the next five years in preparation for its post-2030 role. Reinforcing institutional foundations and asserting regional leadership are considered imperative to ensuring long-term sustainability and resilience.

Building on the achievements of previous Strategic Plans, the MRC SP 2026–2030 places emphasis on the following strategic areas:



As the MRC moves towards self-financing arrangements, the financial and institutional foundations of the organisation require strengthening to ensure ongoing effectiveness and impact across the whole basin. Financial sustainability with robust governance and greater institutional capacity is needed to support partnerships, leverage new funding sources, work with other parties including MRC Dialogue Partners and the private sector on integrated management arrangements of both the mainstream and tributaries, and facilitate more active joint efforts between countries to address the highest priority concerns in a coordinated way.

The MRC will implement a financial sustainability strategy anchored in Member Country ownership, diversified funding, institutional efficiency and results-driven accountability. It will do this through reaffirming **high-level political commitment** to self-financing of core routine functions by Member Country leaders during the MRC Summit, assessing organisational capacity and needs for greater operational efficiencies, outlining a **roadmap for post-2030 financial arrangements**, and operationalising a unified Mekong Fund with the support of a **Joint Projects Facility** to help accelerate the identification, development and financing of significant joint and transboundary projects and the leveraging of external financing and innovation. These key deliverables will be backed-up by strengthened financial, governance, auditing and results-based reporting systems.



Securing Financial Sustainability and Strengthening the Foundation for Post 2030



Reaffirming High-level Commitment to Self-Financing

The MRC will obtain formal endorsement from Member Country leaders during the MRC Summit



Organisational Assessment for Efficient Operations

The MRC Secretariat will conduct an institutional and financial review



Operationalisation of the Mekong Fund and Joint Project Facility

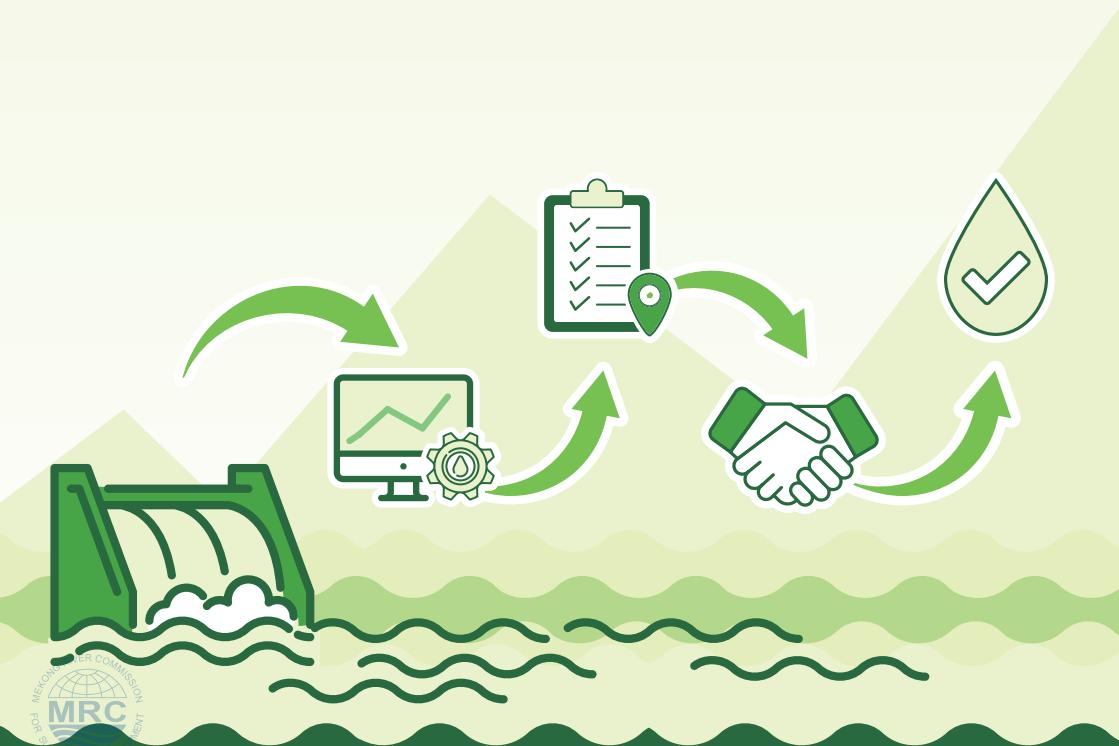
The MRC will scale up the Mekong Fund as a mechanism for financing joint and transboundary initiatives. By linking JPF to transboundary cooperation and measurable results



Leveraging External Financing and Innovation

The MRC will position itself as a regional partner for global financing windows (e.g GCF & GEF)

The MRC will move toward a more **active coordination** of the whole river network that considers the hydrological interactions between selected tributaries and the mainstream by better utilising the MRC Procedures to support harmonised reservoir coordination and active management. This includes enhanced **near real-time data systems and operational collaboration** linked to the upgraded Decision Support Framework, upgrading Joint Action Plan implementation **with results-based tracking of mitigation measures**, formalising pre-PNPCA processes and actions to help identify and address transboundary risks early and undertaking **strategic joint pilot projects** on flood forecasting, response to water quality emergencies and reservoir coordination.



Reinforcing Implementation of the MRC Procedures

1

Active Coordination on Water Releases

Coordinate near real-time water flow with harmonized reservoir coordination



2

Integration with Near Real-time Data Systems

Link DSF Models to dynamic data for early warnings & integrated models such as (Hydrology, Meteorology, Hydraulic, Reservoir & Consequences)



3

Results-Based Implementation Framework

Transform Joint Action Plan into a live project tracking tool



4

Formalise Pre-PNPCA Phase

Early engaged to Co-Implement Transboundary Environmental Impact Assessment (TbEIAs)

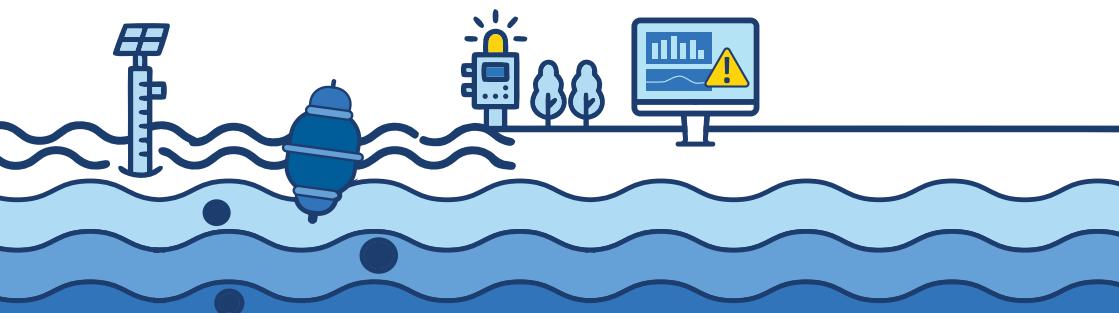


5

Strategic Pilots

Pilot applications like joint flood forecasting





The MRC will continue to modernise its river monitoring activities by integrating the Core River Monitoring Network (CRMN) with a **near real-time data** visualisation system to support early warning and rapid operational responses. The **unified data visualisation and analytics platform, based on the current water status dashboard**, will support more integrated cross-disciplinary analysis and be underpinned by improvements in **advanced monitoring technologies** that address key risks including from water infrastructure, climate change, and land-use in the basin. The enhanced data and information system will improve decision-support for hydropower coordination, fisheries management, transboundary water pollution, and navigation.

Modernising River Monitoring and Integrating Disciplines in the Core River Monitoring Network

To modernise decision-making and strengthen resilience in the Mekong Basin, the MRC will integrate its **Core River Monitoring Network (CRMN)** with a near **real-time data visualisation system** that supports early warning and rapid operational responses. This includes integrating all thematic data—water quality, flow, sediment, ecology—into a **unified data visualisation analytics platform**. The enhanced CRMN will also include near real-time alerts delivered to communities and decision-makers.



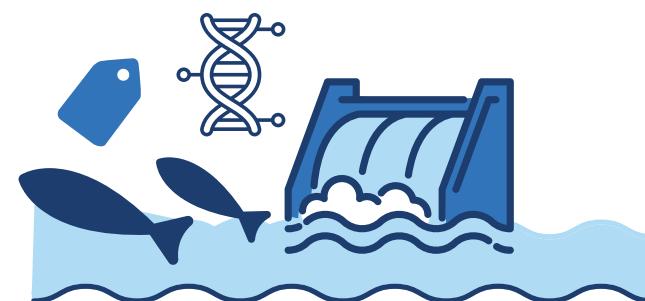
Real Time Data Visualisation System that Supports Early Warning and Policy Formulation



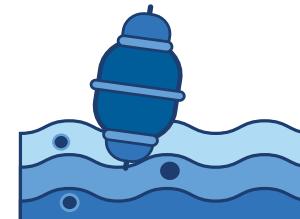
Linked to Reservoir Coordination with Flood and Drought Forecasting and Early Warning Systems



MRC Data Portal is enhanced to become a one-stop service (Data Analytics) rather than having multiple webpages



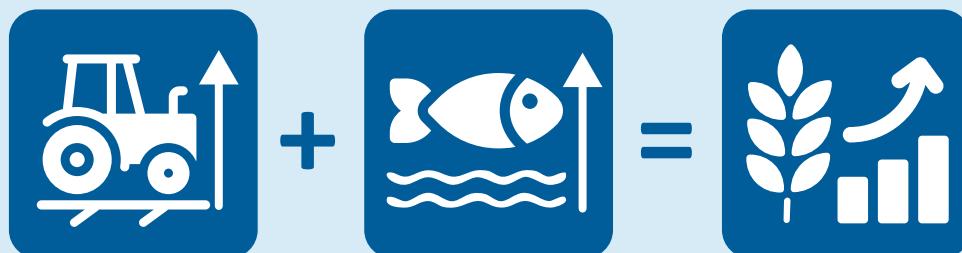
Using Modern Technology (eDNA and Tagging) to track real-time movement of fishery migration, spawning hotspots, and hydropower fish passage/ladder effectiveness



Expand Sediment Monitoring Services to tackle basin-wide sediment management

Boosting Economic Growth through Better Water Quality

Improved Water Quality = Higher Yields = Stronger Economy



Agriculture

Aquaculture

Economic Growth

Improved Water Quality Management Leads To:



Higher Aquaculture Yields



Increased Agricultural Productivity



Stronger Contribution to National GDP



Sustainable Use of Water Resources

Investing in Water Quality = Investing in National Prosperity

Tackling Transboundary Water Pollution

1 Conduct Field Surveys



Map land use, water inputs, and potential pollutant sources

2 Engage with Communities



Consult Locals about pollution sources and river flow

3 Test Water Quality



Collect water samples for laboratory analysis

4 Observe Flow Patterns



Examine the convergence point of the rivers

5 Assess Rainfall Data



Analyze rainfall and runoff characteristics

6 Model Pollutant Transport



Simulate the movement of contaminants via runoff

7 Validate Model Predictions



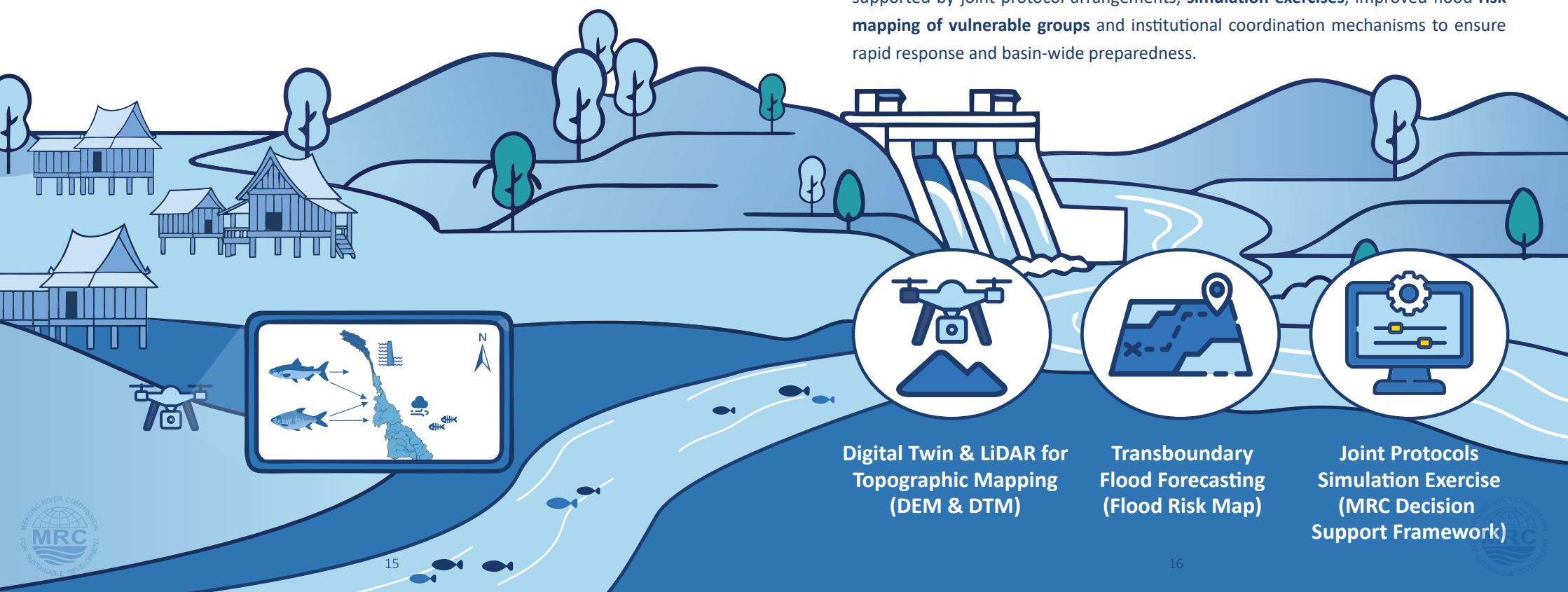
Compare model results of field data

8 Create a Pollution Map



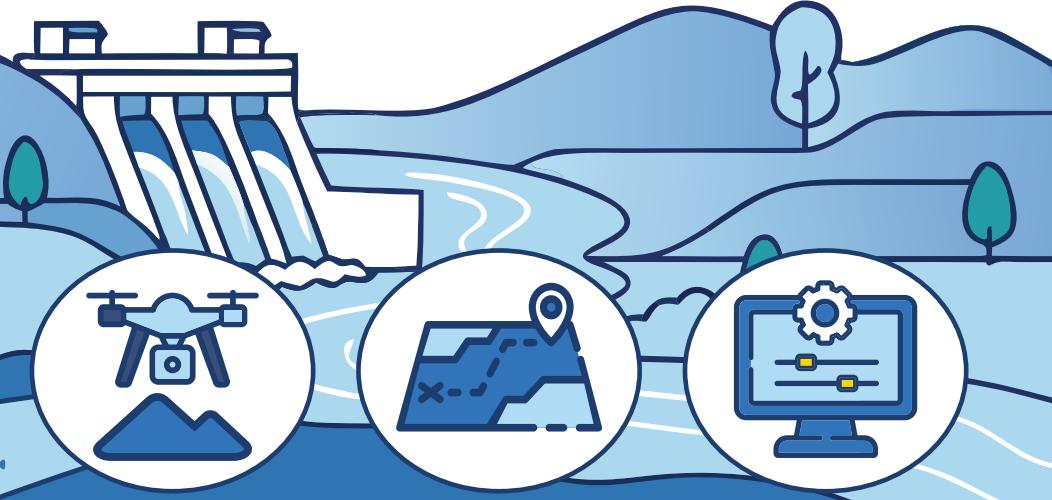
Integrate all data into a GIS - based risk map

The MRC will continue to strengthen data integration for flood and drought forecasting using the upgraded MRC DSF, taking into account reservoir coordination and near real-time hydrometeorological data. **Selected tributary flood forecasting** will also be implemented.



Enhancing Flood and Drought Forecasting and Regional Preparedness

The MRC will strengthen data integration across the river network, linking upstream reservoirs, near real-time hydrometeorological data, and advanced modelling tools. This includes expanding the use of spatial technologies and **Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR) for Digital Twin and topographic mapping**, upgrading forecasting systems with MRC Decision Support Framework (DSF) and AI-supported simulations, and coordinating with national agencies for synchronised early warning dissemination. **Transboundary flood forecasting** pilots will be launched in **shared flood-prone zones**, supported by joint protocol arrangements, **simulation exercises**, improved flood risk mapping of vulnerable groups and institutional coordination mechanisms to ensure rapid response and basin-wide preparedness.

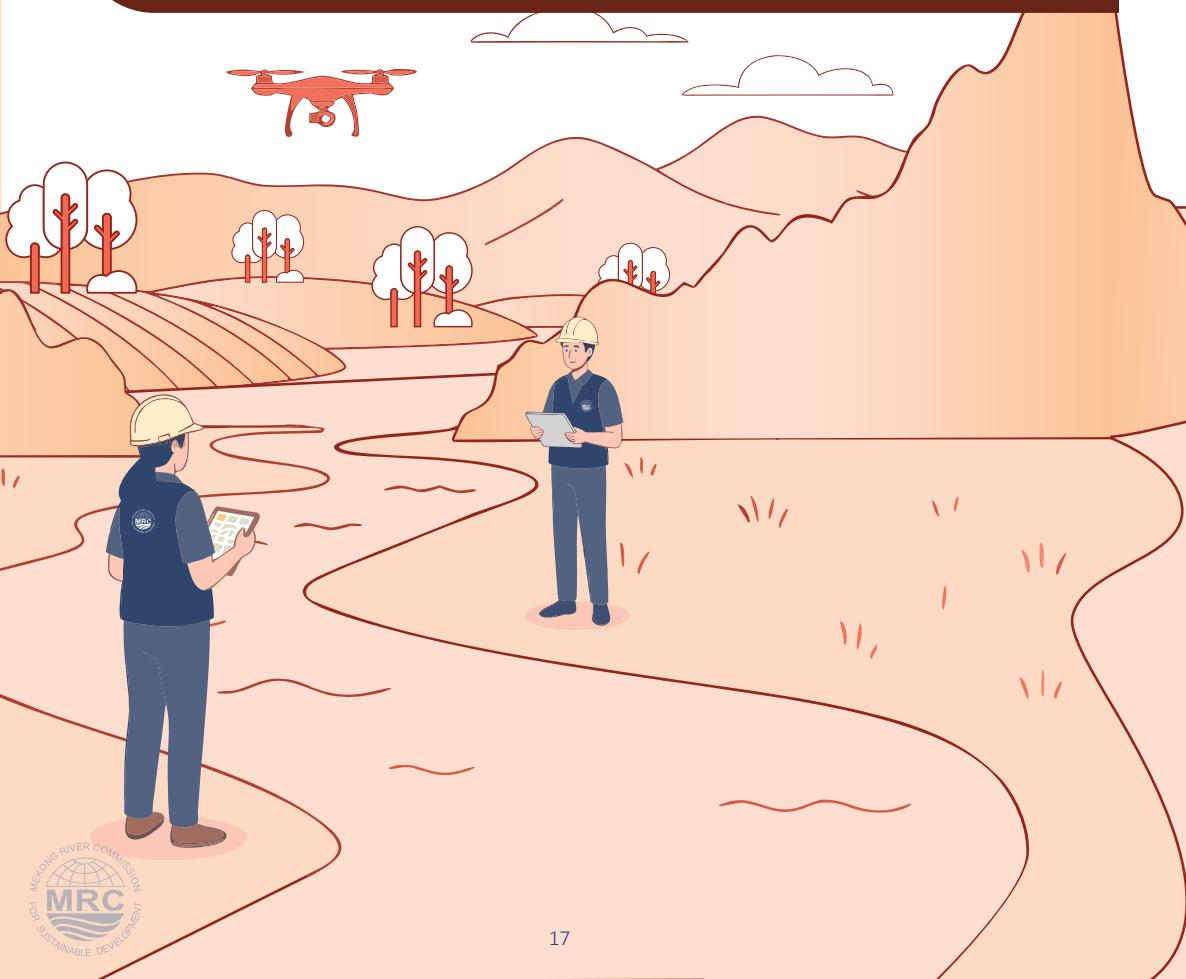


Digital Twin & LiDAR for Topographic Mapping (DEM & DTM)

Transboundary Flood Forecasting (Flood Risk Map)

Joint Protocols Simulation Exercise (MRC Decision Support Framework)

The MRC will work with Member Countries to enhance the coordination of water releases and flow regulation across hydropower cascades to improve flood and drought resilience, energy-environment-water optimisation and transboundary impact management. Guidelines will be developed for operational **flow coordination and real-time dialogue** including with information support through a **Hydropower Flow Coordination System**. **Pilot projects** will be implemented to evaluate opportunities for integrating water security objectives in reservoir coordination aimed at optimising energy-water use while reducing transboundary risks.



Advancing Water Flow and Hydropower Coordination For Multiple Benefits



Hydropower Flow Coordination System



Rule Curves & Emergency Rules

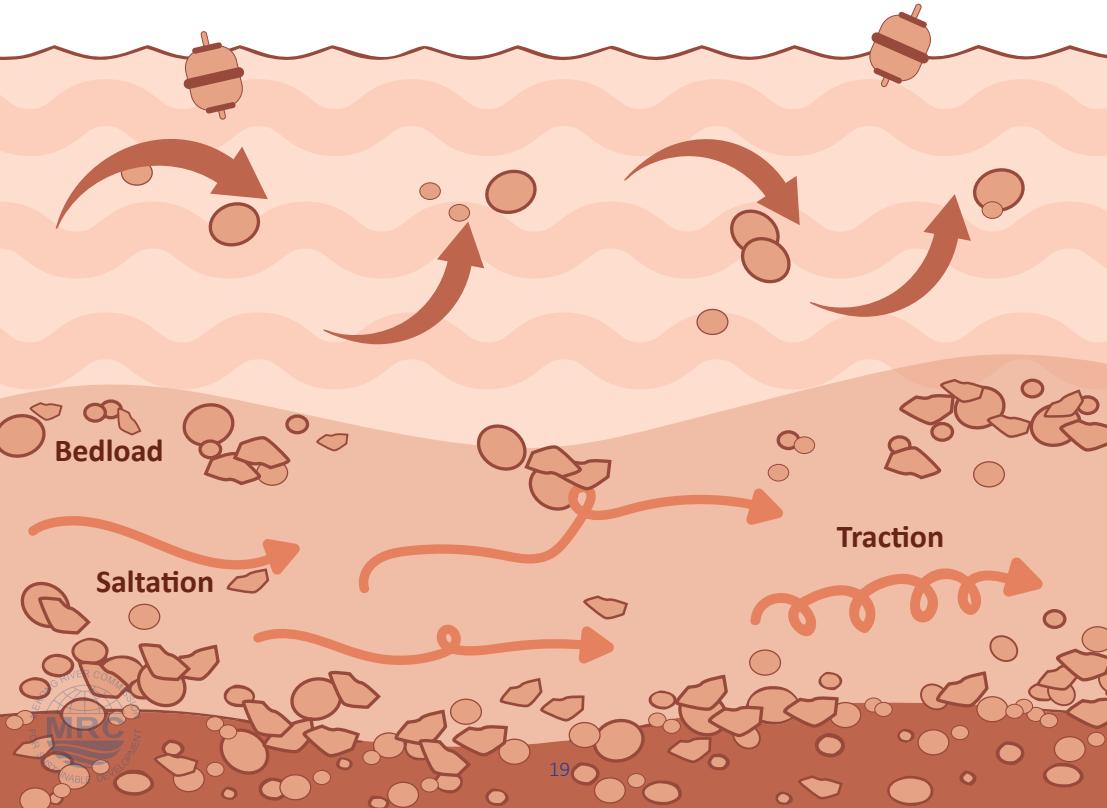


Active Flow Coordination (PMFM)

To address the growing challenges posed by cascade hydropower development, the MRC will advance flow and hydropower coordination through a basin-wide, data-driven approach. This includes establishing and supporting implementation of **guidelines for operational coordination and real-time dialogue**, harmonising **hydropower rule curves** and **joint protocols for emergency situations**, and enhancing **data sharing** and **near real-time monitoring** across Member Countries. A **Hydropower Flow Coordination System** will include an **Operational Mekong River Flow Dashboard and Database**, improved **flood forecasting and emergency coordination system**, documented **environmental flow targets and pilot releases**, and trained personnel and **engaged communities** across borders and will be supported by **bilateral protocols** and **aligned with national energy-water planning**. The ultimate goal is to optimise water-energy use while reducing transboundary risks and strengthening basin resilience.

Operationalising Basin-Wide Sediment Management

The MRC will integrate sediment management into basin planning and coordination including **harmonising monitoring methodologies** as part of the CRMN, implementing **sediment-flushing pilots** with reservoir operators and identifying and implementing **transboundary projects to mitigate further sediment loss**. Technical guidelines will support coordinated actions while upstream and downstream countries will be engaged in dialogue and implementation of joint solutions. The development of a **basin sediment budget** with **sediment flow targets** will help track progress and support adaptive management.



To sustain river health and delta resilience, the MRC will develop and implement a basin-wide Sediment Management Plan.

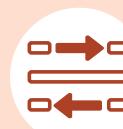
SEDIMENT MANAGEMENT PLAN



Coordinated Monitoring



Sediment Flushing



Data Harmonisation



Assessment & Cooperation

Strategic Approach:

The MRC will integrate sediment management into basin planning and coordination. This includes promoting near real-time data sharing, harmonising monitoring methodologies, and implementing **transboundary projects to mitigate further sediment loss**. Technical guidelines will be developed to support **coordinated actions**, while upstream and downstream countries will be engaged in dialogue and implementation of **joint solutions**.



Sediment Flow



Real-time Data Sharing



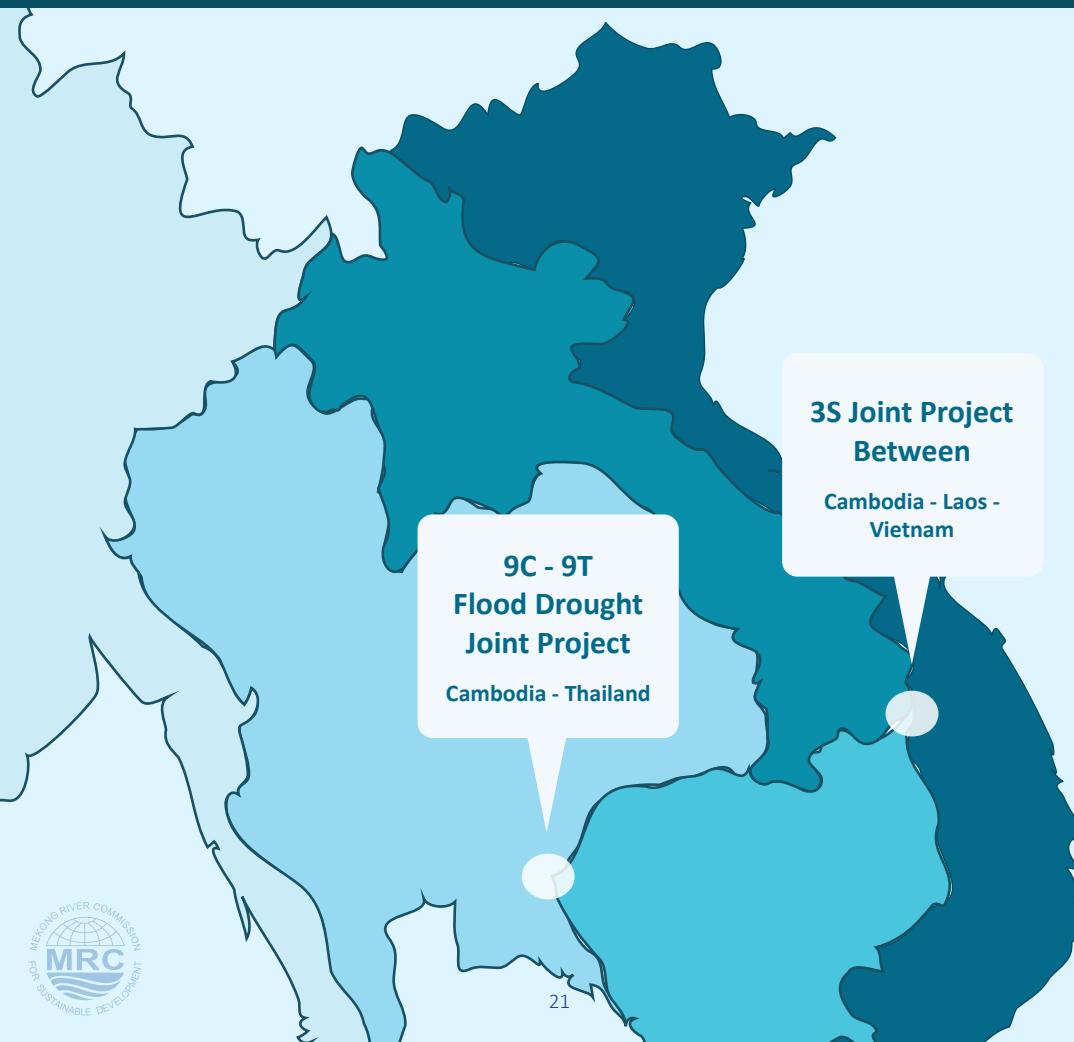
Technical Guidelines



Dialogue & Solutions

Sediment flow targets and accounting of a basin sediment budget will be linked to hydropower operation protocols to help maintain sediment transport and mitigate adverse impacts to the ecological and geomorphological integrity of the river system.

The MRC will expand its role as a platform for cooperative action by **scaling-up its portfolio of joint and transboundary projects** to address shared challenges such as flood and drought management, fisheries decline, the energy transition and increasing transboundary water quality concerns. Joint and transboundary projects will build on those already underway in the 9C-9T and 3S sub-basins and those identified in the **Adaptive Basin Plan** and be incubated and co-developed through **the Joint Projects Facility** which will accelerate the collaborative identification and development of investment-ready proposals to **attract climate and development finance** for shared transboundary challenges including through the Mekong Fund.



Accelerating Joint and Transboundary Projects

To accelerate joint and transboundary projects, the MRC will adopt a strategic approach that accelerates project identification and elaboration, strengthens regional cooperation, mobilises finance from a range of sources, and delivers tangible benefits to Member Countries. Building on the Initial Adaptive Basin Plan (IABP), key actions are to prioritise joint or **transboundary projects** and enabling activities in areas of basin-wide significance (e.g., shared flood zones, fish migration corridors, sediment management zones). The MRC will establish a **Joint Projects Facility** under the Mekong Fund to incubate and co-develop initiatives aimed at attracting climate and development finance for shared challenges. Shift from compilation of National Projects in the National Indicative Plans (NIPs) that are not funded to a more **Joint Projects that have basin-wide significance favourable for financing**. The MRC will also institutionalise joint mechanisms, expand partnership networks, and implement flagship Joint Projects in key areas aligned with regional needs to ensure long-term sustainability and scalability.

Strategic Approach:



1. Identify and Prioritise Joint or Transboundary Challenges



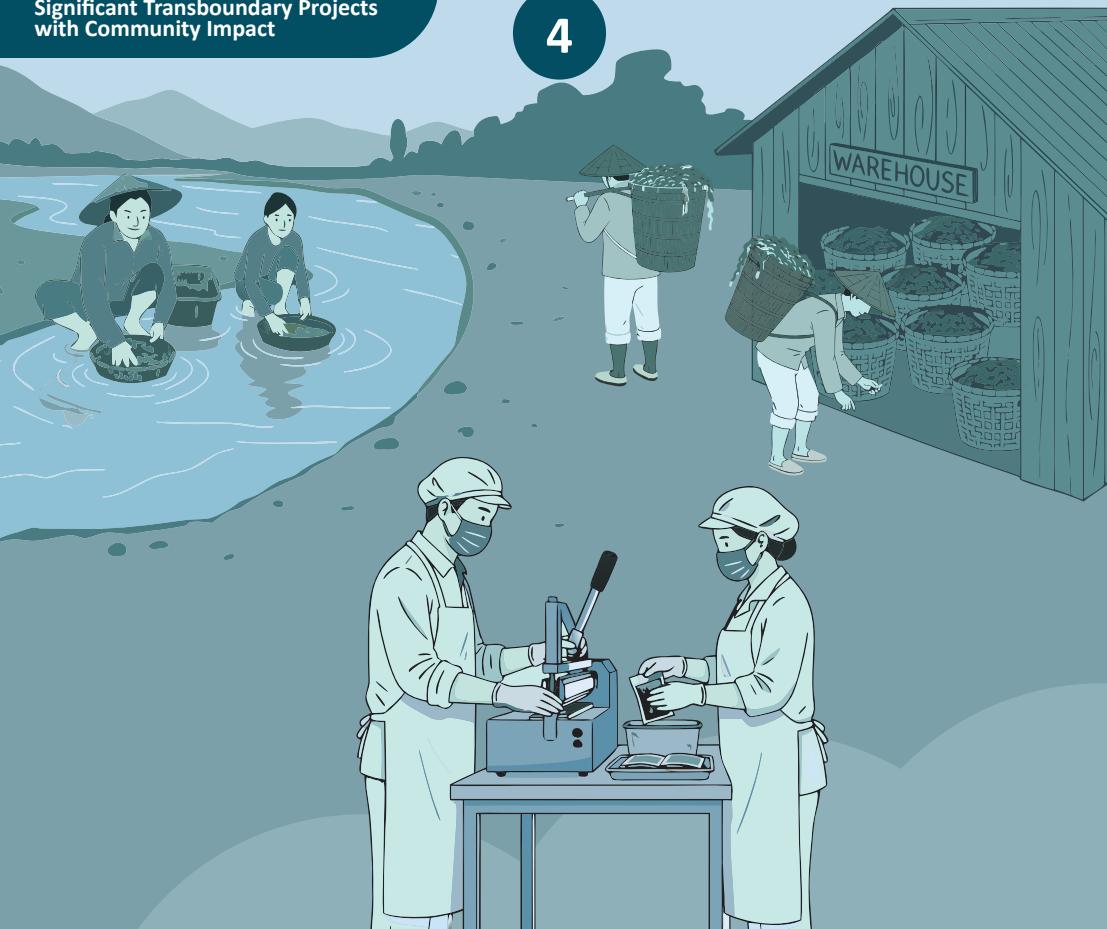
3. Create a Mekong Transboundary Investment Framework



2. Establish Joint Projects Facility under the Mekong Fund



4. Empowering Local and Community Stakeholders to Co-design Solutions



The MRC will strengthen community engagement through co-developed community-based projects including under the inclusive **Community Innovation Projects** mechanism which aims at identifying water-related challenges at the grassroots level and supporting the co-development of solutions (including nature-based solutions) with local communities, providing technical and financial backing for joint implementation. The approach will emphasize alignment with the BDS 2021-2030 and national development priorities to ensure local relevance and basin-wide coherence. The initiative will facilitate collaboration with civil society and others and include **innovation labs, training workshops, and peer exchange programs**, empowering women, youth, and vulnerable groups to lead and replicate successful solutions across the basin. The MRC will implement its **Mekong Youth Strategy 2030** to mobilise a new generation of empowered Mekong youth in support of sustainable water resources management across the region.

Ensuring Community Impact

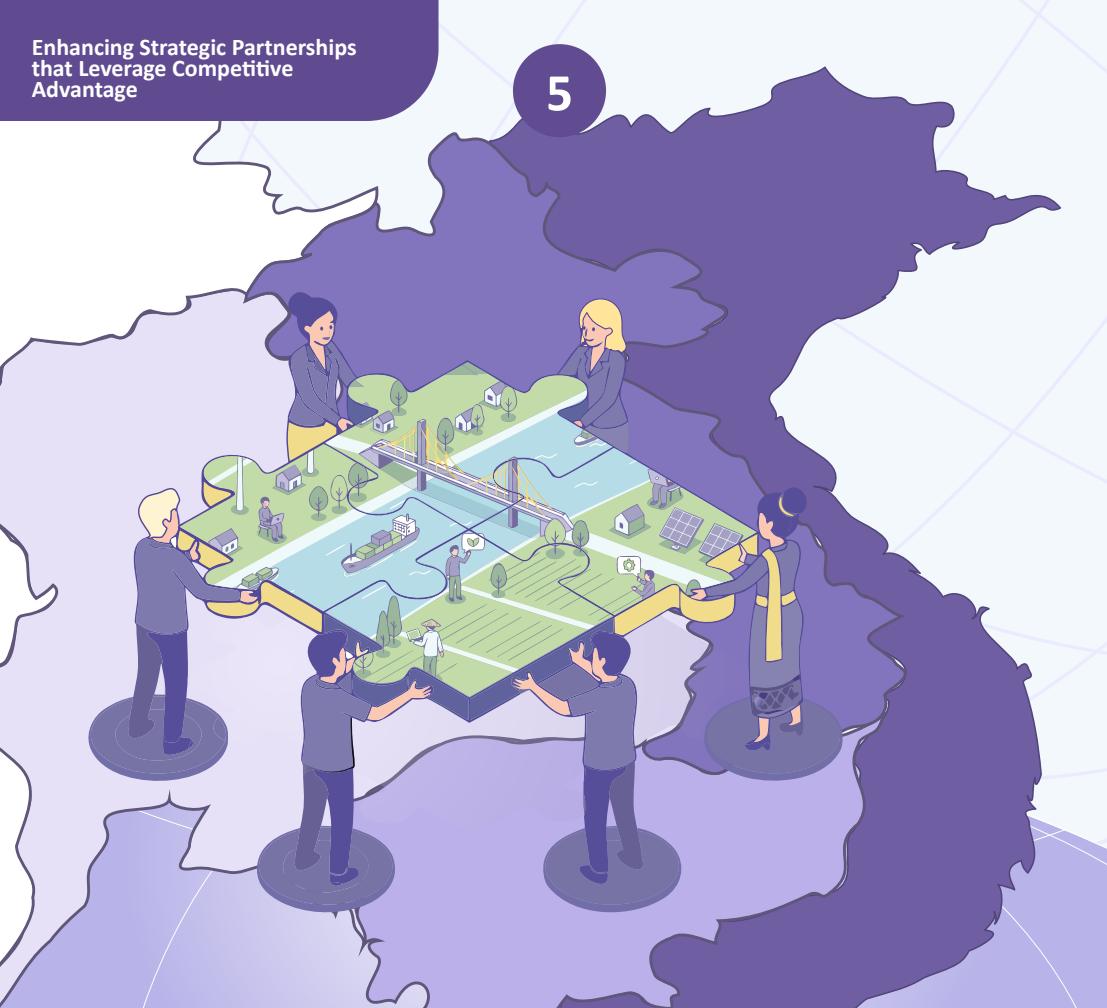
To ensure community-driven solutions are central to Mekong cooperation, the MRC will develop and operationalise a **Community Innovation Projects (CIP)**. Through the CIP, the MRC will actively collaborate with **Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), academic and research institutions, private sector partners, and national line agencies** to design and deliver community-based innovations in areas such as climate-resilient agriculture, flood adaptation, aquaculture, and water quality monitoring.

A key element of this strategy is to promote **citizen science and community-led data generation** by equipping communities with practical tools (e.g., water quality kits, mobile apps, rainfall logbooks) and integrating their observations into MRC's regional monitoring systems. To foster long-term engagement and impact, the MRC will organise **innovation labs, training workshops, and peer exchange programs**, empowering women, youth, and indigenous and vulnerable groups to lead and replicate successful solutions across the basin.

Through this strategic approach, the MRC will transform community engagement from participation to active partnership and co-ownership of sustainable Mekong Development.

Strategic Approach:





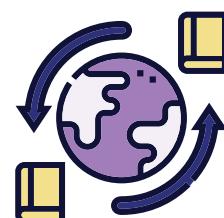
Enhancing Strategic Partnerships that Leverage Competitive Advantage

The MRC will expand the Sister River Mechanism into a dynamic, multi-tiered platform for global cooperation by partnering with leading river basin organizations such as the Nile, Paraná, Yangtze, Han, Murray-Darling River etc; building on existing sister river such as in the Mississippi River; to address shared challenges like climate adaptation, sediment and flood management, and stakeholder engagement. Exchanges will include study tours, twinning projects, workshops, and fellowships. The MRC will co-develop joint knowledge products and pilot solutions with sister basins, research institutions, and think tanks. By engaging in global platforms like UN Water, GEF IW, and ASEAN, the MRC will raise the Mekong's profile, strengthen institutional capacity, and position the Mekong as a global model for transboundary cooperation.

Strategic Approach:



Form Partnerships
with Leading River
Basin Organizations
across continents



Facilitate Exchanges
through Study Tours,
Twinning Projects, Workshops



Co-Develop Joint
Knowledge Products
and Pilot Innovative Solutions



Participate in Global
and Regional Platforms
to raise Mekong Profile

The MRC will continue working with partners within the region and globally to raise the profile of the Mekong River Basin and the MRC, exchange new and innovative river management knowledge, tools and expertise, and leverage the skills and capacities of partner organisations in areas of competitive advantage. This includes coordinating with ASEAN to support sustainable hydropower consistent with relevant initiatives such as the **ASEAN Power Grid Framework**, implementing further **Joint Studies with China and Myanmar**, expanding **Sister River Partnerships** with other River Basin Organisations and collaborating on **streamlined priorities** under existing and updated partnership agreements.

Gender Equity and Vulnerability Inclusion

The Strategic Plan 2026–2030 responds to the need for more inclusive development by integrating targeted actions to improve gender equity, reduce social vulnerability, and address disparities in access to resources and services. This includes operationalizing Gender Equity and Vulnerability Action Plan (GEVAP), strengthening data systems, including sex disaggregation as a minimum requirement for people data report, and prioritizing support to disadvantaged groups and geographies as impacted by water resources development and climate change (flood, drought, and other hazards) through community-based projects/activities.



Gender Equity and Vulnerability



Strategic Approach

Operationalise GEVAP

Assist Vulnerable Populations

Community - Based Projects

Capacity Building & Training

Strengthen Data Collection and Analysis

Policy & Regional Guidelines



Monitoring & Reporting

The MRC is committed to contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030, with particular emphasis on promoting gender equity, reducing social vulnerability, and ensuring equitable access to resources and shared benefits.

Prioritising Inclusive Development

In the current development context, the Mekong River Basin is facing increasing pressures that disproportionately affect vulnerable groups and gender equity. To address these challenges, the MRC Gender Equity and Vulnerability Action Plan (GEVAP), embedded within the MRC Strategic Plan 2026–2030, builds on progress to further strengthen cooperation, fosters trust, and promotes equitable benefits for communities across the Basin.

Key Goals



Advance Gender Equity



Reduce Social Vulnerability



Support at-risk Communities



Inclusive Participation



Gender Disaggregated Data



Support to Vulnerable Groups



Equitable Leadership

MEKONG YOUTH STRATEGY 2030

A new generation of empowered Mekong youth driving innovation, diplomacy, and sustainable solutions for the river basin, transforming the Mekong into a hub of creativity, resilience, and shared prosperity.



Mekong Youth Strategy 2030

Strategic Goals



Youth as River Guardians

Engage young people directly in water, climate, and ecosystem protection through citizen science and volunteerism.



Youth as Innovators & Riverpreneurs

Position youth as entrepreneurs & problem-solvers, creating start-ups and solutions for water related challenges.



Youth as Water Diplomats

Build youth capacities in negotiation, leadership, peace building to shape future transboundary cooperation.



Youth as Global Voices

Elevate Mekong youth to global platforms as advocates for sustainable river management.



Youth as Cultural Ambassadors

Basin-wide youth-art initiative: concerts, films, murals, photography exhibitions around "Living Mekong"

Mekong Youth Volunteers

A 6-12 month volunteer programme where youth join riverine communities to support climate adaptation, eco-tourism, and clean water access.



Mekong River Lab (Innovation Lab)

A youth lab that showcases water technologies and local innovations, co-financed by private sector technology partners.



Mekong Youth Diplomacy Academy

A simulation-based programme where youth role-play and negotiate transboundary water issues. The best teams present their final agreements to the MRC Joint Committee or Council.



Mekong Music & Arts for Youth

An annual creative platform where youth express their connection to the Mekong through arts, including song competitions, concerts, films, murals, and photography exhibitions.



Flagship Initiatives

Mekong Youth Entrepreneur Fund

A new financing window within the Mekong Fund offering seed capital for youth-led start-ups on water, environment, and sustainable livelihoods, supported through public-private partnerships.



Mekong Waterverse for Youth

A virtual reality experience of the Mekong Basin that enables youth to explore the region's geography, simulate water flow management, and host virtual debates on river governance.







Mekong River Commission Secretariat

P. O. Box 6101, 184 Fa Ngoum Road, Unit 18 Ban Sithane Neua,
Sikhottabong District, Vientiane 01000, Lao PDR
Tel: +856 21 263 263. Fax: +856 21 263 264
www.mrcmekong.org

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