



Mekong River Commission

For Sustainable Development

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. CONSULTANCY SUMMARY:

Title:	Search Engine Optimisation, Database Platform Development, and Information System Integration Expert (International Consultant)
Consultancy Type:	Framework Contract
Division/OC:	Office of the CEO, Planning Division and Technical Support Division
Duration:	100 days from February to December 2021
Duty Station:	Home-based and, and if required, at the MRC Secretariat, Vientiane
Reporting to:	Chief Strategy and Partnership Officer at OCEO, Technical Support Division Director, and Planning Division Director
Expected Deliverables:	All MRC's technical publications are assigned with a proper DOI system and indexed with Google Scholar; MRC website has a proper add-in, enabling easy monitoring of user activity and security update.

Various MRC's sites and related data are integrated and made available on the current Data Portal. More sectorial, time-series, and spatial data are integrated with the MRC-Information System (MRC-IS) and an Aquarius Web Portal cloud and visualised attractively on the Data Portal

A new socio-economic database technical platform is also developed in its full form for consultation with the Member Countries, and then finalised as a modern, user-friendly and compatible web-based tool. User manuals and technical guidelines are produced as well.

2. GENERAL BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES OF THE CONSULTANCY

The Mekong River Commission (MRC) was established by the 1995 Agreement on Co-operation for the Sustainable Development of the Mekong River Basin, between the governments of Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Viet Nam. The role of the MRC is to coordinate and promote cooperation in all fields of sustainable development, utilisation, management and conservation of the water and related resources of the Mekong River Basin.

The MRC Secretariat is the operational arm of the MRC. It renders technical and administrative services to the Joint Committee and the Council to achieve the MRC's mission in promoting and coordinating sustainable management and development of water and related resources for the countries' mutual benefit and the people's well-being.

The Office of the Chief Executive Officer (OCEO) is tasked to lead and support cross-cutting activities of the MRC including strategic organisational planning, stakeholder engagement and communication, partnerships, monitoring and evaluation, and gender mainstreaming.

Within the communication part of the OCEO, the Office is charged with increasing knowledge of the MRC and its functions among stakeholders and the public; increasing public awareness on the social, economic and environmental state of the Basin, and the need for transboundary approaches in planning and development; and developing mechanisms for awareness raising in all the Divisions within the Secretariat. Producing public information materials as a tool to disseminate MRC's knowledge products and expertise to a wider public in various forms and languages, as well as measuring the impact of our technical publications has on the user community is one of the key areas.

In this context, there is a need to broaden the reach of our publication and measure its impact in a more systematic fashion. Specifically, the assignment aims to ensure that the MRC's publications – be they technical or policy paper – include a proper digital object identifier (DOI) system and are appropriately indexed with Google Scholar so that they are easily searchable and traceable. It also aims that Google Analytics is added to our website to allow for a seamless monitoring of user activities and that the site itself is constantly monitored and timely updated.

The Technical Support Division (TD) takes lead in monitoring water and climate, including sediment flow monitoring. It manages data, datasets and information systems of the MRC and makes them available to the public. It provides water resources modelling and tools to support the MRC Member Countries in their development in the basin and evaluation on how the physical character of the Mekong River will change as a result of modifications to flow or development activities. The TD has been reinvigorating the MRC's data and information systems, aiming to improve the flow and access of information by the public. It is within this context that more work needs to be done and more technical assistance is required.

The Planning Division (PD) is tasked with the development of the Basin Development Strategy and sector planning, including hydropower, irrigation, navigation and climate change and adaptation. The Division has built a socio-economic database covering a wide-ranging set of indicators of social and economic aspects, from water resource related livelihoods and economic values to broader social welfare and economic status of the Lower Mekong River Basin. Secondary data are available from national surveys, administrative reports and other sources provided by the Member Countries. Data have included over 60 indicators and 60 more indicators are expected to be added.

The MRC adopted in 2019 an Indicator Framework for the Mekong River Basin on environment, social, economic, climate change and cooperation situations. This Framework will be the guiding document for all MRC monitoring and assessment work. To implement the Framework, one of the activities was the revision of the MRC's socio-economic database to retrofit with this Framework. The MRC made available a final report in June 2020 on the content of the retrofitted MRC's socio-economic database to provide the list of indicators, description of each indicator and the respective source for the required data. Following this, the Organisation also produced another report to outline the structure of the technical platform for the database. An immediate next step will be to develop a fully friendly database platform structure that will house the set of socio-economic data to be collected under the Data Acquisition and Generation Action Plan (DAGAP).

3. EXPECTED RESULTS

It is expected that all the MRC's technical publications are assigned with a proper DOI system and indexed with Google Scholar and that the MRC website has a proper add-in, enabling easy monitoring of user activity and security update.

Various MRC's sites and related data are also integrated and made available on the current Data Portal. More sectorial, time-series, and spatial data are integrated with the MRC-Information System (MRC-IS) and an Aquarius Web Portal cloud and visualised attractively on the Data Portal.

It is also expected that a new socio-economic database technical platform is developed in its full form for consultation with the Member Countries, and then finalised as a modern, user-friendly and compatible web-based tool. User manuals and technical guidelines are produced as well.

4. DELIVERABLES AND CONCRETE TIMELINES

The following shows an indicative timeframe of anticipated tasks. Final products should be delivered in a reasonable time following discussion and mutual agreement.

Deliverables and expected quality/quantity	Expected time investment (days)	Deadline
OCEO		
Unique publication details pages, including new publication metadata properties/DOI system, added to facilitate the inclusion of MRC's publications in Google Scholar	3	Apr
Custom Google Analytics events added to enhance tracking and monitoring to be able to gain more detailed insights about how users interact with the site	3	Mar
Security updates and content management system constantly installed and timely updated	3	Year-round
Constant content and format improvement and assets section review provided	3	Year-round
TD		
Aquarius Time-Series data QA/QC automatic workflow process	15	Oct
MRC-IS web component services integrated with National Information Systems for harmonisation and synergy	16	Nov
Flood and Drought Forecasting databases are integrated with MRC-IS Data Portal	20	Dec
Sectorial and other data for their interactive visualisation integrated with MRC-IS Data Portal	15	Dec
PD		
Full version of new socio-economic database platform available	10	Jun
Final version of new socio-economic database platform available	2	Sep
User manuals and technical guidelines produced	10	Aug
Total	100	

5. REQUIRED TASKS AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

The consultant is expected to perform the following tasks assigned under each Division and Office:

Under the OCEO:

- Review the MRC's publications that are hosted under the MRC website in order to provide a plan of how the indexing will work
- Assign metadata properties, including DOI system, to both old and new publications to enable the inclusion of the MRC's publications in Google Scholar search engine
- Together with our in-house web designer, provide custom Google Analytics to the events/properties in the MRC website to enhance tracking and monitoring
- Based on the analytics data, provide an analysis on user activities to the website so that we understand how users interact with the site

- Study the MRC's website technical system and install necessary security updates in a timely and constant manner
- Provide assistance in content and format improvement as well as in reviewing assets section as we continue to bring the website into greater access.

Under the TD:

- Work closely with the Division's concerned staff (Database and Information System Specialist), to discuss and agree on work principles all along the process of the developments
- Provide technical input to draft concept notes as well as advise on system design requirements on various activities taking into account common understanding, consistency, accuracy, security, and smooth integrations that will be executed, aligned with the Reinvigoration Concepts
- Provide technical support on data requirements and synchronisations, including current infrastructure assessments
- Devise and customise the platforms and systems for the above services
- Ensure that the overall MRC-Information Systems are well integrated with the Data Portal as well as related National Information Systems in the networks
- Draft system documentation with workflow processes.

Under the PD:

- Review background documents (draft report on the socio-economic database content revision, the draft report on the socio-economic database platform outline, the MRB Indicator Framework, the DAGAP, and the currently socio-economic database) and discuss with MRCS team about the assignment requirements, and the overall context for MRC data and information management
- Develop a socio-economic database platform, in line with relevant technical requirements, and a corresponding power point presentation
- Discuss with the MRCS team and undertake changes to the platform as required and present the platform to a regional meeting with the MRC Member Countries
- Revise the socio-economic database platform, taking into account comments from the regional meeting, in discussion with the MRCS team
- Develop a user manual covering the needs of different stakeholders with regards to the socio-economic database and consult with the MRCS team
- Revise and finalise the socio-economic database platform and the related technical documents.

6. PAYMENT MODALITY

This position is paid on the basis of daily rates upon satisfactory submission of work delivered. The consultant is required to submit an invoice with supporting documents for each payment. DSA and relevant travelling expenses, if incurred, will be provided in accordance with the MRC guidelines.

Note: Consultancy rate is defined by the MRCS consultancy rate policy and the level of consultancy. MRC is a tax-exempted agency for the work done for the MRC. Consultant, in case mission is required, will be covered with a return ticket to and from the assigned duty stations with a daily related subsistence allowance of 75% of the UN for the mission days.

7. INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS

Intellectual property rights - IPR: Information, data, database, knowledge resources in the forms of briefings, reports, proceedings, articles, essays, etc. issued by and for the MRCS will be the MRCS property.

Any utility, announcement and disclosure that are without MRCS highest levels of authority' permission is considered illegal and will be charged by relevant local and international legal procedures.

8. DECLARATION OF NON-FRAUDULENCE AND PROTECTION OF PERSONAL DATA

The Subscriber shall adhere to the MRC's relevant rules and regulations of the MRC on personal data protection, business exclusion, and fraud prevention and anti-corruption principles, and shall be under strict disciplinary measures should any violation occurs.

9. WORKING ARRANGEMENT

The assignment will require the consultant to work remotely from his/her home country, and some time at the MRC Secretariat or its Member Countries, with frequent communication with personnel of the OCEO, TD and PD.

- 9.1. Director supervisor: Chief Strategy and Partnership Officer (OCEO), TD Director and PD Director
- 9.2. Communication line: Communication personnel of the OCEO, Database and Information System Specialist, Chief Hydrologist, Socio-Economic Specialist, and Chief River Basin Planner

10. QUALIFICATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS

The following are minimum requirements for a successful consultant for the position:

- A postgraduate degree (or a bachelor's degree with two additional years of practical working experience) in computer science or a related field
- Proven work experience in developing websites for international organisations, with specific reference to river basin or knowledge-based organisations preferable
- Proven knowledge of socio-economic data and information management, demonstrated through database design, and information system building and management
- Solid technical skills in web development frameworks (MVC)/platforms
- A solid work experience in indexing with a concrete understanding on how Google Scholar works and how publications should be organised in a way Google Scholar can recognise
- A minimum of 7 years' professional experience in the website development and management
- Proven work experience within Southeast Asia, and/or a solid knowledge of the region's social, economic, cultural and political structures an asset
- Knowledge of natural resources management/environmental awareness in the communication context is desirable
- Excellent interpersonal and cross-cultural communication skills.
- Good sense of initiative and sound judgment
- Excellent command of the English language is required

12. SIGNATURE BLOCK

MRC Secretariat

Division and Office: Office of the CEO
Name: Sopheak Meas, Officer-in-Charge

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Division and Office: Technical Support Division
Name: Soukaseum Phichit, Officer-in-Charge

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Division and Office: Planning Division
Name: Bountieng Sanaxonh, Director

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Consultant: _____

Date: _____