



Mekong River Commission

For Sustainable Development

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. CONSULTANCY SUMMARY:

Consultancy Title:	International Consultant to support for fisheries assessment, best practice review, and project inception report for GEF Mekong Fisheries Project
Consultancy type:	Special Service Agreement (SSA)
Division:	Environmental Management Division (ED)
Duration:	120 working days (1 May 2026 to 28 February 2027)
Duty station:	Home-based with possibility for travel to Mekong countries.
Reporting to:	The Consultant will work under the overall supervision of the Director of ED and the direct supervision of the Fisheries Management Specialist/Project Manager.
Expected Key Deliverables:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report on fisheries baseline and context assessment in the selected landscapes. • Report on fisheries management best practice in Lower Mekong Basin, implementation guidelines, and training materials. • Project Inception Report.

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND:

2.1. Introduction

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, utilization, management and conservation of the water and related resources of the Mekong River Basin.

The MRC Secretariat (MRCS) is the operational arm of the Mekong River Commission (MRC) and its four Member Countries (MC). It provides technical and administrative services to the Joint Committee and the Council to achieve the MRC's mission.

The Environmental Management Division (ED) is responsible for environmental monitoring, assessment, planning and management to support basin planning management and development for sustainable development of the Mekong River.

The ED is executing "Enhancing Transboundary Fisheries Management in the Lower Mekong Basin" project (hereafter referred to as the Mekong Fisheries Project) from 2026 – 2030, with financial support from the Global Environment Facility (GEF IW-8), in collaboration with the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). The project is implemented under the framework of MRC and contributes directly to the MRC Strategic Priority 2026–2030.

2.2. Project summary

The Lower Mekong Basin (LMB) is home to the most productive inland fisheries on the planet, and one based on the most diverse range of species, 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 provide a major share of national animal protein intake and play 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 acknowledge. Since 2018, fishery harvests and incomes have declined considerably, 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, and impacted nutrient flows. Wetland conversion has reduced fish habitat. Unsustainable agriculture, forestry and urban development practices have diminished water quality, nutrient flows, and wetland recharge.

The “**Enhancing Transboundary Fisheries Management in the Lower Mekong Basin**” project addresses these challenges by increasing the connectivity, productivity, and resilience of transboundary capture fisheries, aquatic biodiversity, and other ecosystem services the LMB provides. The project will strengthen fisheries co-management, fisheries value chain development, and income diversification, and through the Mekong River Commission (MRC) integrate fisheries conservation into sectoral policies, especially hydropower, irrigation and agriculture.

The project supports the GEF's International Waters, Biodiversity, and Land Degradation focal areas, aligns with the GEF IW Advancing Sustainable Fisheries Management objective in the GEF 8 Programming Direction, and makes a major contribution to the MRC Basin Development Strategy (2021-2030) and MRC Mekong Basin-wide Fisheries Management and Development Strategy (2018-2022).

Field activities focus on six landscapes covering 2.7 million hectares: Lower Songkhram River Basin and Ing River Mouth in Thailand; Siphandone in Lao PDR; Kratie-Stung Treng and Eastern Tonle Sap in Cambodia; and the Upper Mekong Delta in Vietnam. These areas were selected based on their importance for regional fisheries and the opportunity to rapidly scale up successful community fisheries models. Work in these landscapes will provide the information needed to increase public investment in capture fisheries. They also incentivize the active participation of national fisheries agencies.

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, operationalising 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, saving and loan schemes, 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 optimal co-benefits for, and 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. It will strengthen knowledge capture and sharing through participation in IW:LEARN.

The project's outcomes align with its theory of change, aiming to restore fish stocks and fish habitat, conserve or restore 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.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE CONSULTANCY:

The main objective of this assignment is to support the implementation of the project activities by:

- Collecting and synthesizing scientific data and local knowledge to produce maps of opportunities to protect and reconnect fish habitats.
- Developing and assessing effectiveness of existing best practices including fisheries co-management, FCZs, seasonal closures, barrier removal, restoration, and reconnecting habitats.
- Preparing the Project Inception Report, including refinement of the results framework, implementation arrangement, and work plan.

4. EXPECTED OUTPUTS

- 4.1 A synthesis report detailing for each landscape on (i) Fisheries baseline assessment including current status of fish resources, habitats, fishing practices, and existing management measures; (ii) Risk and vulnerability assessment of fisheries and dependent livelihoods; (iii) Fishery context and stakeholder mapping and identification of key threats impacting fisheries and opportunities for men and women in fishing communities for sustainable fisheries management; (iv) Analysis and recommendation on fisheries management solutions and priority interventions for selected sites/villages; (v) Develop a tentative plan for project investment in each landscape for next 5 years.
- 4.2 A synthesis report on fisheries management best practices in the LMB and in particular the six project landscapes and guideline on assessing and implementing fisheries management best practices and related training material; The report will include a rapid assessment tool of fisheries management best practices, including measures for protecting and enhancing critical areas such as reproduction and spawning sites, and lessons learned across the LMB.
- 4.3 Project Inception Report including updated results framework and indicators, implementation arrangements, and monitoring and evaluation framework.

5. DELIVERABLES AND CONCRETE TIMELINES

The International Consultant will produce the following key deliverables starting the work from 1 May 2026 to 28 February 2027.

No	Deliverables	Number of working days	Deadline
1.	An inception report that highlights methodologies for data collection and strategies for implementation.	23	30 May 2026
2.	A brief field survey report, including key observations and stakeholder perspectives collected during the field missions conducted with local teams	20	15 August 2026
3.	A first draft of updated result framework and refinement of the Project Design.	10	30 August 2026
4.	A first draft of the synthesis report for fisheries baseline assessment in the project landscape (Output 4.1)	15	30 December 2026
5.	A first draft of the synthesis report for fisheries management best practices in the LMB (Output 4.2)	10	30 December 2026
6.	A first draft of inception report (Output 4.3)	10	30 December 2026
7.	A second draft of updated result framework of the ProDoc including draft workplan for 2027	10	30 January 2027
8.	A Final synthesis report for fisheries context in the project landscape (Output 4.1)	5	30 January 2027
9.	A Final synthesis report for fisheries management best practices in the LMB (Output 4.2)	6	30 January 2027
10	Meeting materials for national and regional workshops for and attendance in regional meetings (online/offline TBD)	5	28 February 2027
11	A final project inception report (Output 4.3)	6	28 February 2027
	Total	120	

6. REQUIRED TASKS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The International Consultant is required to meet with the Project Team immediately after the contract is signed in order to become familiar with the project design and the activities outlined in the attached concept notes

Detail required tasks and responsibilities to achieve each key deliverable include, but are not limited to, the following:

- A synthesis fisheries context analysis report in the project landscapes (1)

- Conduct a comprehensive review and synthesis of relevant existing datasets from national and regional sources, including prior research, monitoring programs, and outputs from projects to identify data gaps and develop methodologies for fisheries baseline assessments, threats and vulnerability assessment of fisheries and dependent livelihoods and identification of targeted communes, villages or areas and opportunities and strategies for prioritized intervention in the six landscapes.
- Lead 4 national consultants to (a local team could be mobilized to support the work if necessary)
 - o collect national data including consultations with local communities and stakeholders to capture Local Ecological Knowledge (LEK) on fish behaviour, seasonal vulnerabilities, habitat use patterns, key areas where fish are at heightened risk due to habitat loss, pollution, or overfishing with the aim of identifying “vulnerable habitats” as well as fisheries management problems.
 - o identify fisheries solutions both management and infrastructure solutions for sustainable fisheries management and reconnect critical fish habitats.
 - o identify criteria for selecting prioritized key areas/activities for targeted interventions to enhance sustainability and resilience.
 - o develop a tentative plan for overall investment of the project in each landscape for next 5 years.
- Provide inputs to produce an interactive maps of the fishery context in each landscape showing vulnerable habitats and opportunity to protect and reconnect habitats of regional significance.
- A synthesis report on fisheries management best practices in the LMB and in particular the six project landscapes and Guideline on implementing fisheries management best practices and related training material
 - Conduct a comprehensive review and synthesis of relevant literatures from national and regional sources, including prior research, fisheries management programs, and outputs from projects, where overlaps exist with the targeted landscapes, to identify lessons and good practices from fishery management practices from the four countries, NGOs, including MRC’s recently published fisheries co-management effectiveness analysis and good examples of LEK from Community Based Organizations and other related literatures such as FAO Guidebook for evaluating fisheries co-management effectiveness¹. This should also examine, but not be limited to, the feasibility of creating exclusive fishing areas around FCZs for those communities who are responsible for protecting them.
 - Lead 4 national consultants to
 - o conduct key informant and relevant stakeholders interviews to capture Local Ecological Knowledge (LEK) on fisheries management best practices, its implementation procedures and others arrangement.
 - o develop guideline for rapid assessment, including assessment indicators, of fishery management effectiveness. The assessment tools should include standard measurement tools that could be used across 4 countries and six landscapes with the focus on transformative outcomes

¹ <https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/8d5e2fd4-5db7-436f-b07b-1178fe5e5ca7/content>

- develop guideline for implementing fisheries management best practices and integrating landscape resource management interventions
- develop a train-the-trainers program for fisheries department officers and related stakeholders and target communities on fisheries management best practices.
- An Inception Report of the Project (3).
 - Review project documents and identify required update of the result framework and indicators .
 - Assess exiting implementation arrangement and coordination mechanisms, and identify required updates.
 - Update baseline indicators based on the findings from 2 assessment above, M&E plan, methodologies, budget and time-bound milestones for measuring progress for each project indicator, and identification of target villages/communes and propose prioritized interventions.
 - Prepare the first Annual Work Plan (2027) and tentative multiple workplan for period 2028-2030 and budgets to be submitted to Project Steering Committee (PSC) for approval.

7. PAYMENT MODE:

Since there will be several milestones to be completed and to avoid many administrative works, payment by instalment will be selected for this assignment, and it is shown below.

- The 1st payment upon signing of the Contract (23 working days corresponding to 19% of the total budget);
- The 2nd payment upon submission and acceptance by the Environmental Management Division of key deliverables 1,2,3 (30 working days corresponding to 25% of the total budget); and
- The 3rd payment upon submission and acceptance by the Environmental Management Division of key deliverables 4,5,6 (35 working days corresponding to 29% of the total budget); and
- The final payment upon submission and acceptance by Environmental Management Division of key deliverables 7,8,9,10,11 (32 working days corresponding to 27% of the total budget).

The MRC reserves the right to annul the contract in case of non-performance according to the required key deliverables and timelines of Section 5.

8. 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.

9. DECLARATION OF NON-FRAUDULENCE AND PROTECTION OF PERSONAL DATA:

The Consultant 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.

10. WORKING ARRANGEMENT:

- Overall supervision: The consultant will work under the overall supervision of the Director of the Environmental Management Division.

- Communication line: The consultant will work under the direct supervision of Fisheries Management Specialist/Project Manager of the Environmental Management Division.

11. QUALIFICATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS:

- University degree (Doctoral degrees or equivalent minimum) in Fisheries Management, Fish Ecology, Natural Resource Management, or related fields.
- Minimum 25 years experiences in designing, formulating and evaluating national/regional resource management strategy in relation to fisheries assessment and management with the strong focus on fisheries co-management or community-based management approach.
- Extensive experiences in reviewing and documenting fisheries management, fisheries statistic and wetland management projects, strategy including co-management, community-based management, community lead ecosystem restoration initiatives.
- Extensive experiences in qualitative risk assessment for fisheries and environmental, including in the Lower Mekong Basin of Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Viet Nam.
- Strong records of providing strategic and policies advices to national and regional organizations in inland fisheries management.
- Minimum 25 years of experiences in fisheries, wetland and environment of Mekong River Basin.
- Specific knowledge and experiences with relevant international agreements and practices such as the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, technical guidelines, action plans and approaches for inland fisheries management, ecosystem-based approach, and precautionary approach are advantageous.
- Extensive experiences of working with Mekong River Commission is preferable.
- Experiences with GEF funded project is preferable.
- Excellent inter-personal skills and able to negotiate constructively in a Mekong/Southeast Asia institution and cultural context.
- Fluent in English, verbal and writing and strong analytical skills.

12. SIGNATURE BLOCK

MRCS:

Name and Title: Theerawat Samphawamana

Incumbent's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Date: _____



CONCEPT NOTE

On Activity 1.1.1.1

Collect and synthesize scientific data and local knowledge to produce maps of opportunities to protect and reconnect fish habitats

20 March 2026

1. BACKGROUND

1.1. Project Summary

The Lower Mekong Basin (LMB) is home to the most productive inland fisheries on the planet, and one based on the most diverse range of species, 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 provide a major share of national animal protein intake and play 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 acknowledge. Since 2018, fishery harvests and incomes have declined considerably, 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, and impacted nutrient flows. Wetland conversion has reduced fish habitat. Unsustainable agriculture, forestry and urban development practices have diminished water quality, nutrient flows, and wetland recharge.

The “**Enhancing Transboundary Fisheries Management in the Lower Mekong Basin**” project addresses these challenges by increasing the connectivity, productivity, and resilience of transboundary capture fisheries, aquatic biodiversity, and other ecosystem services the LMB provides. The project will strengthen fisheries co-management, fisheries value chain development, and income diversification, and through the Mekong River Commission (MRC) integrate fisheries conservation into sectoral policies, especially hydropower, irrigation and agriculture.

The project supports the GEF's International Waters, Biodiversity, and Land Degradation focal areas, aligns with the GEF IW Advancing Sustainable Fisheries Management objective in the GEF 8 Programming Direction, and makes a major contribution to the MRC Basin Development Strategy (2021-2030) and MRC Mekong Basin-wide Fisheries Management and Development Strategy (2018-2022).

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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, operationalising 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, saving and loan schemes, 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 optimal co-benefits for, and 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. It will strengthen knowledge capture and sharing through participation in IW:LEARN.

The project's outcomes align with its theory of change, aiming to restore fish stocks and fish habitat, conserve or restore 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.

1.2. Component and Activity description

The Activity 1.1.1.1. Collect and synthesize scientific data and local knowledge to produce maps of opportunities to protect and reconnect fish habitats is under **Component 1: Implementation of transboundary fisheries solutions**.¹

Component 1 aims to scale up proven fisheries co-management (FCoM) practices to protect and restore habitats and increase fish stocks, adopting an ecosystem-based approach that addresses the life cycle requirements of species in a transboundary context. It addresses key barriers, such as the lack of an integrated, ecosystem-based fisheries management framework, weak enforcement, poor institutionalization of national legislation at the local level, and insufficient support for empowering local communities to implement sustainable management practices.

This component builds on a growing body of evidence of good fisheries management practices, which will be assessed and scaled up to achieve transformative outcomes. Best practices include developing networks of protected fish habitats and conservation and restoration of swimways that support the ecological cycle of fish species, including migratory species, throughout the LMB.

Fisheries co-management benefits from a flexible, learning-oriented approach that adapts to evolving conditions and embraces new insights. Long-term success depends on managing resources at the ecosystem level from local through to regional scales. Therefore, Component 1 emphasizes an integrated, ecosystem-based strategy by taking the following actions:

- **Expanding capacities for integrated FCoM:** This involves implementing, testing, and measuring the effectiveness of ecosystem-based approaches that go beyond site-specific (e.g., FCZs) and species-specific management. It includes protecting free-passage corridors that allow fish to complete their life cycles and developing exclusive fishery harvest buffer zones adjacent to FCZs. These zones enable co-managers to benefit from their investments in protecting fish stocks over a broader landscape.
- **Protecting critical fish habitats:** Ecosystem-based FCoM will protect vital three-dimensional habitats, such as deep river pools, tributaries, and floodplains, that are essential for fish life cycles and threatened biodiversity. It also addresses the impacts of agricultural expansion and associated agrochemicals, which degrade aquatic ecosystems near FCZs and beyond.
- **Inclusive co-management in buffer zones:** Management will expand beyond conservation areas to include co-management of fishing in community-managed buffer zones adjacent to conservation areas. These zones will be fished exclusively by the communities responsible for the broader co-management, ensuring a more integrated approach across landscapes.

By focusing on ecosystem-wide connectivity, habitat protection, and inclusive co-management, Component 1 seeks to build resilient fisheries and biodiversity while enhancing the livelihoods of local communities. This holistic approach will contribute to reversing declines in fish stocks and biodiversity across the LMB.

Component 1 is structured around a single outcome, **“Fisheries management improved in target landscapes”**, with two indicators, 4 outputs and 10 activities. The outputs include improved gathering and dissemination of key knowledge on fish ecosystem management and fisheries co-management; the protection and management of 50,000 hectares of critical fish habitats; and the strengthening of governance, as well as the technical and financial capacities of local community fisheries. These outputs and activities contribute directly to the MRC BDS and SP priorities, particularly the call for updating,

¹ This includes solutions for building resilience and protection/restoration of critical fish habitats.

identifying, mapping, and demarcating key habitats in the LMB. This component is essential for ensuring the recovery of fish stocks and achieving improved fisheries yield across the region.

Outcome	Responsible Actors	Indicators
Outcome 1.1 Fisheries management improved in target landscapes	MRCs and Executing agencies technical team of MCs; Provincial and District Governments; and villages; MRC Fishery Technical Advisory Committee.	<i>OI 1.1.a:</i> Fish catch weight and size in the target landscapes <i>OI 1.1.b:</i> Fish catch diversity and value in the target landscapes

Outcome 1.1: Fisheries management improved in focal landscapes

Fisheries co-management is one among many options under effective and holistic management framework which may be explored under this project.

Output 1.1.1 Critical fish habitat maps and threat and opportunity baseline assessments in LMB.²

MRC 2024³ and the Prodoc provide a background on the drivers of change and threats to the fisheries in the LMB. Building on this, the proposed output will deliver a *baseline assessment of threat and vulnerability within the project landscapes. This assessment will identify and map the main threats and vulnerability to fisheries, such as habitat degradation, catchment disturbance, impacts to water quality from effluents and water pollution, fishing pressure, invasive species and climate-related influences. This assessment, based on the level of threats and vulnerability to sustainable fisheries, will help pinpoint specific communes, villages, and priority areas for intervention. The results will inform targeted strategies and actions to safeguard fisheries and enhance their long-term sustainability.*

This output will be developed using a comprehensive, evidence-based approach that integrates existing scientific knowledge, Local Ecological Knowledge (LEK), and new data collection efforts. An interactive map of critical fish habitats will also be produced (by separated consultant), incorporating the baseline threat and vulnerability assessment to visualize key threats and support ongoing monitoring.

Activity 1.1.1.1: Collect and Synthesize Scientific Data and Local Knowledge to Produce Maps of Opportunities to Protect and Reconnect Fish Habitats

This activity will implement the necessary steps to produce expected outputs described under Output 1.1.1. These outputs will take the form of a synthesis report, detailing the following:

- (i) Fisheries baseline assessment including current status of fish resources, habitats, fishing practices, and existing management measures;
- (ii) Risk and vulnerability assessment of fisheries and dependent livelihoods;
- (iii) Fishery context and stakeholder mapping and identification of key threats impacting fisheries and opportunities for men and women in fishing communities for sustainable fisheries management;

² All Landscape Demonstration Sites comply with Ostrom’s checklist for common property resources. This includes oversight along the Thai and Lao Mekong under the guidance of the monks at multiple Buddhist Temples who could help strengthen an integrated and legally declared as fishery co-management resource protected area networks in at least those two countries.

³ Options for Investment and Associated Measures to Optimize Fisheries Production under Changed River Conditions

- (iv) Analysis and recommendation on fisheries management solutions and priority interventions for selected sites/villages;
- (v) Develop a tentative plan for project investment in each landscape for next 5 years.

2. OBJECTIVES

The overall objective of this Concept Note is to set out an approach for a joint development and implementation of Project Management Unit, International Consultants and National Mekong Committee Secretariats, National Consultants/Line Agencies to implement **Activity 1.1.1.1: Collect and Synthesize Scientific Data and Local Knowledge to Produce Maps of Opportunities to Protect and Reconnect Fish Habitats** and achieve its outputs. As such, this Concept Note outlines key steps to be implemented including:

- Conduct a comprehensive review and synthesis of relevant existing fisheries and fisheries-dependent livelihoods datasets from national and regional sources. This includes previous research, monitoring programs, and outputs from related projects where overlaps exist with the targeted landscapes. The activity will produce inception reports that identify data gaps and propose a methodology to address these gaps in order to produce the fisheries baseline assessments, threats and vulnerability assessments of fisheries and dependent livelihoods, and to identify targeted communes, villages, or areas, as well as opportunities and strategies for prioritized interventions in the six landscapes.
- Conduct data collection and assessment as identified above and consult with local communities and stakeholders, to capture local ecological knowledge (LEK) related to fish behaviour, seasonal vulnerabilities, habitat use patterns, key areas where fish are at heightened risk due to habitat loss, pollution, or overfishing with the aim of identifying “vulnerable habitats” as well as fisheries management problems. This information, together with scientific data collected above, will be used to identify opportunities for protecting and reconnecting fish habitats of regional fisheries significance. All data collection efforts must be gender-sensitive and ensure inclusive participation.
- Conduct a comprehensive fisheries context analysis in the project landscapes based on data collected, but not limited to Fisheries baseline assessment; Risk and vulnerability assessment of fisheries and dependent livelihoods; Fishery context and stakeholder mapping and identification of key threats impacting fisheries and opportunities for men and women in fishing communities for sustainable fisheries management; Analysis and recommendation on fisheries management solutions and priority interventions for selected sites/villages in the project landscapes; Develop a tentative plan for project investment in each landscape for next 5 years.
- Provide inputs to produce an interactive maps that highlight priority areas for interventions within each Landscape, guiding efforts to protect critical habitats, reconnect fragmented ecosystems, and sustain fish populations. These maps will also provide baseline data to measure the success of ecosystem-based fisheries management interventions under the project and inform the development of co-management strategies that enhance ecological connectivity and the long-term resilience of fisheries in the LMB.

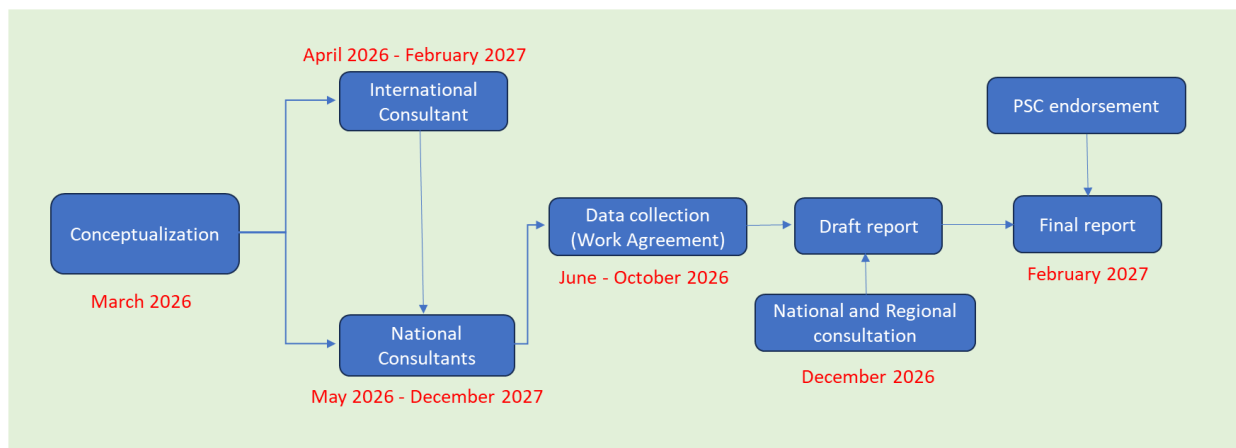
3. APPROACH FOR IMPLEMENTATION

International and national consultants will be recruited to lead the collection and synthesis of scientific data and local knowledge required to produce the synthesis report outlined in this concept note. The international consultant will serve as the team lead, supervising a group of four national consultants from Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Viet Nam under this assignment.

The international consultant will be responsible for preparing the inception report, developing the data collection methodology, and producing the synthesis report, with timely support from the national consultants.

Depending on the scope defined in the inception report, a local team may also be recruited to carry out additional data collection. This team will work under the direct supervision of the national consultants.

The scope of the interactive maps will be determined during the assignment. An additional consultant will be recruited to develop interactive maps illustrating opportunities to protect and reconnect fish habitats.



4. DELIVERABLES AND TIMELINES

No	Deliverables	Deadline
1.	Recruitment of consultants	30 May 2026
2.	Inception report	30 May 2026
3.	Field survey and assessment and consultation	30 September 2026
4.	Draft reports (English and local languages)	30 October 2026
5.	Validation/National/Regional workshops	15 December 2026
6.	Final report	28 February 2027



CONCEPT NOTE

On Activity 1.1.2.1

Develop and assess effectiveness of existing best practices including fisheries co-management, FCZs, seasonal closures, barrier removal, restoration, and reconnecting habitats

20 March 2026

1. BACKGROUND

1.1. Project Summary

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However, the LMB's fisheries face a growing crisis, which all riparian countries acknowledge. Since 2018, fishery harvests and incomes have declined considerably, 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, and impacted nutrient flows. Wetland conversion has reduced fish habitat. Unsustainable agriculture, forestry and urban development practices have diminished water quality, nutrient flows, and wetland recharge.

The “**Enhancing Transboundary Fisheries Management in the Lower Mekong Basin**” project addresses these challenges by increasing the connectivity, productivity, and resilience of transboundary capture fisheries, aquatic biodiversity, and other ecosystem services the LMB provides. The project will strengthen fisheries co-management, fisheries value chain development, and income diversification, and through the Mekong River Commission (MRC) integrate fisheries conservation into sectoral policies, especially hydropower, irrigation and agriculture.

The project supports the GEF's International Waters, Biodiversity, and Land Degradation focal areas, aligns with the GEF IW Advancing Sustainable Fisheries Management objective in the GEF 8 Programming Direction, and makes a major contribution to the MRC Basin Development Strategy (2021-2030) and MRC Mekong Basin-wide Fisheries Management and Development Strategy (2018-2022).

Field activities focus on six landscapes covering 2.7 million hectares: Lower Songkhram River Basin and Ing River Mouth in Thailand; Siphandone in Lao PDR; Kratie-Stung Treng and Eastern Tonle Sap in Cambodia; and the Upper Mekong Delta in Vietnam. These areas were selected based on their importance for

regional fisheries and the opportunity to rapidly scale up successful community fisheries models. Work in these landscapes will provide the information needed to increase public investment in capture fisheries. They also incentivize the active participation of national fisheries agencies.

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, operationalising 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, saving and loan schemes, 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 optimal co-benefits for, and 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. It will strengthen knowledge capture and sharing through participation in IW:LEARN.

The project's outcomes align with its theory of change, aiming to restore fish stocks and fish habitat, conserve or restore 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.

1.2. Component and Activity description

The Activity 1.1.2.1. *Develop and assess effectiveness of existing best practices including fisheries co-management, FCZs, seasonal closures, barrier removal, restoration, and reconnecting habitats* is under **Component 1: Implementation of transboundary fisheries solutions**.¹

Component 1 aims to scale up proven fisheries co-management (FCoM) practices to protect and restore habitat and increase fish stocks, adopting an ecosystem-based approach that addresses the life cycle requirements of species in a transboundary context. It addresses key barriers, such as the lack of an integrated, ecosystem-based fisheries management framework, weak enforcement, poor

¹ This includes solutions for building resilience and protection/restoration of critical fish habitats.

institutionalization of national legislation at the local level, and insufficient support for empowering local communities to implement sustainable management practices.

This component builds on a growing body of evidence of good fisheries management practices, which will be assessed and scaled up to achieve transformative outcomes. Best practices include developing networks of protected fish habitats and conservation and restoration of swimways that support the ecological cycle of fish species, including migratory species, throughout the LMB.

Fisheries co-management benefits from a flexible, learning-oriented approach that adapts to evolving conditions and embraces new insights. Long-term success depends on managing resources at the ecosystem level from local through to regional scales. Therefore, Component 1 emphasizes an integrated, ecosystem-based strategy by taking the following actions:

- **Expanding capacities for integrated FCoM:** This involves implementing, testing, and measuring the effectiveness of ecosystem-based approaches that go beyond site-specific (e.g., FCZs) and species-specific management. It includes protecting free-passage corridors that allow fish to complete their life cycles and developing exclusive fishery harvest buffer zones adjacent to FCZs. These zones enable co-managers to benefit from their investments in protecting fish stocks over a broader landscape.
- **Protecting critical fish habitats:** Ecosystem-based FCoM will protect vital three-dimensional habitats, such as deep river pools, tributaries, and floodplains, that are essential for fish life cycles and threatened biodiversity. It also addresses the impacts of agricultural expansion and associated agrochemicals, which degrade aquatic ecosystems near FCZs and beyond.
- **Inclusive co-management in buffer zones:** Management will expand beyond conservation areas to include co-management of fishing in community-managed buffer zones adjacent to conservation areas. These zones will be fished exclusively by the communities responsible for the broader co-management, ensuring a more integrated approach across landscapes.

By focusing on ecosystem-wide connectivity, habitat protection, and inclusive co-management, Component 1 seeks to build resilient fisheries and biodiversity while enhancing the livelihoods of local communities. This holistic approach will contribute to reversing declines in fish stocks and biodiversity across the LMB.

Component 1 is structured around a single outcome, “*Fisheries management improved in target landscapes*”, with two indicators, 4 outputs and 10 activities. The outputs include improved gathering and dissemination of key knowledge on fish ecosystem management and fisheries co-management; the protection and management of 50,000 hectares of critical fish habitats; and the strengthening of governance, as well as the technical and financial capacities of local community fisheries. These outputs and activities contribute directly to the MRC BDS and SP priorities, particularly the call for updating, identifying, mapping, and demarcating key habitats in the LMB. This component is essential for ensuring the recovery of fish stocks and achieving improved fisheries yield across the region.

Outcome	Responsible Actors	Indicators
Outcome 1.1 Fisheries management improved in target landscapes	MRCS and Executing agencies technical team of MCs; Provincial and District Governments; and villages;	<u>OI 1.1.a:</u> Fish catch weight and size in the target landscapes <u>OI 1.1.b:</u> Fish catch diversity and value in the target landscapes

Outcome 1.1: Fisheries management improved in focal landscapes

Fisheries co-management is one among many options under effective and holistic management framework which may be explored under this project.

Output 1.1.2 Fisheries management best practice guidelines based on LMB experiences and lessons learned produced and disseminated

FAO defined Fisheries management as

the integrated process of information gathering, analysis, planning, consultation, decision-making, allocation of resources and formulation and implementation, with enforcement as necessary, of regulations or rules which govern fisheries activities in order to ensure the continued productivity of the resources and the accomplishment of other fisheries objectives (FAO, 1997).

The overall objective of fisheries management is the sustainable use of fishery resources through a comprehensive set of regulatory, institutional, and management measures. Fisheries co-management is one of these key approaches, fundamentally aimed at strengthening governance by sharing responsibility and decision-making between government authorities and resource users. FCoM is particularly valuable in supporting of other fisheries best practices, such as FCZs, seasonal closures, selective fishing gears, barrier removal, restoration, and reconnecting habitats, by actively engaging fishing communities. This collaborative approach has demonstrated strong potential to improve both ecological and socio-economic outcomes.

There are already some excellent guidelines available for FCoM (MRC, 2024)² and FCZs³ in the LMB. However, *the information on fisheries management best practices in the LMB remains scattered and inadequately disseminated, limiting its accessibility and practical application.* A consolidated set of *regional fisheries management best practices*, developed by the MRC, could address this issue by *synthesizing available evidence and demonstrating how it can be applied effectively in practice.*

The output will include a *methodology/tools for conducting rapid assessment of fisheries management best practices*, including measures for protecting and enhancing critical areas such as reproduction and spawning sites, and lessons learned across the LMB. This assessment will serve as the basis for national stakeholder discussions at the end of the first year to verify the effectiveness of these practices, enabling their integration into the subsequent phases of the project implementation plan.

The assessment also provide best practices of participatory decision-making processes, adaptive learning, and governance mechanisms that are linked to project-specific Theories of Change for ecosystem-based FCoM. Furthermore, the report will be presented to local fishing communities through the organization of meetings.

Activity 1.1.2.1: Develop and assess effectiveness of existing best practices including fisheries co-management, FCZs, seasonal closures, barrier removal, restoration, and reconnecting habitats.

The outputs under this Activity 1.1.2.1 include a synthesis report with the following qualities.

² Mekong River Commission. (2024). *Lessons learned from capture fisheries co-management in the Lower Mekong River Basin and opportunities for further support.*

³ <https://fishbio.com/fcz-guidebook/>

- (i) A synthesis on fisheries management best practices and lessons learned in the LMB and in particular the six project landscapes;
- (ii) A guideline on assessing the effectiveness of fisheries management best practices (A rapid assessment tool) that that could be used across 4 countries and six landscapes with the focus on transformative outcomes.
- (iii) A guideline for implementing fisheries management best practices, including measures for protecting and enhancing critical areas such as reproduction and spawning sites; preparation and endorsement of management plan, boundaries demarcation, stakeholder involved and approved if any, operation, financial incentives and process cycle and lessons learned across the LMB and in particular the six project landscapes.
- (iv) A training program for fisheries department officers and related stakeholders and target communities on fisheries management best practices.
- (v) Training materials produced in English, Khmer, Lao and Thai languages.

2. OBJECTIVES

The overall objective of this Concept Note is to set out an approach for a joint development and implementation of Project Management Unit, International Consultants and National Mekong Committee Secretariats, National Consultants/Line Agencies to implement **Activity 1.1.2.1: Develop and assess effectiveness of existing best practices including fisheries co-management, FCZs, seasonal closures, barrier removal, restoration, and reconnecting habitats** and achieve its outputs. As such, this Concept Note outlines key steps to be implemented including:

- Conduct a comprehensive review and synthesis of relevant literatures from national and regional sources, including prior research, fisheries management programs, and outputs from projects, where overlaps exist with the targeted landscapes, to identify lessons and good practices from fishery management practices from the four countries, NGOs, including MRC's recently published fisheries co-management effectiveness analysis and good examples of LEK from Community Based Organizations and other related literatures such as FAO Guidebook for evaluating fisheries co-management effectiveness⁴. This should also examine, but not be limited to, the feasibility of creating exclusive fishing areas around FCZs for those communities who are responsible for protecting them.
- Conduct key informant and relevant stakeholders interviews to capture Local Ecological Knowledge (LEK) on fisheries management best practices, its implementation procedures and others arrangement in order to produce synthesis report on fisheries management best practices in the LMB and in particular in the six project landscapes.
- Develop guideline for rapid assessment, including assessment indicators, of fishery management effectiveness. The assessment tools should include standard measurement tools that could be used across 4 countries and six landscapes with the focus on transformative outcomes.
- Develop guideline for implementing fisheries management best practices and integrating landscape resource management interventions implemented in targeted villages under 6 Focal landscapes and effectively protecting floodplain and other critical areas, such as flooded forest, adjacent habitats critical to FCZs and 'open access' fishing buffer areas and reducing vulnerabilities within interconnected floodplain and tributary migratory routes. This includes protected FCZs under Buddhist temple oversight. Additionally, the guideline will propose SMART outcome indicators

⁴ <https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/8d5e2fd4-5db7-436f-b07b-1178fe5e5ca7/content>

tailored to the specific needs of each Focal Landscape, ensuring that progress can be measured effectively.

- Develop a training program for fisheries department officers and related stakeholders and target communities on fisheries management best practices.

3. APPROACH FOR IMPLEMENTATION

International and national consultants will be recruited to lead the collection and synthesis of scientific data and local knowledge in order to produce the synthesis report and guidelines outlined in this concept note. The international consultant will serve as the team lead, supervising a group of four national consultants from Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Viet Nam.

The international consultant will be responsible for preparing the inception report, developing the methodology for data collection, and leading the formulation of the synthesis report and guidelines, with timely inputs from the national consultants. In close collaboration with the national consultants, the international consultant will also design and develop a training program tailored to the specific needs of each country.



4. DELIVERABLES AND TIMELINES

No	Deliverables	Deadline
1.	Recruitment of consultants	30 May 2026
2.	Inception report	30 May 2026
3.	Data collection (if needed)	30 September 2026
4.	Draft reports (English and local languages)	30 October 2026
5.	Validation/National/Regional workshops	15 December 2026
6.	Final report	28 February 2027



CONCEPT NOTE

On Inception Report to the project

Enhancing Transboundary Fisheries Management in the Lower Mekong Basin

20 March 2026

1. BACKGROUND

1.1. Project Summary

The Lower Mekong Basin (LMB) is home to the most productive inland fisheries on the planet, and one based on the most diverse range of species, 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 provide a major share of national animal protein intake and play 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 acknowledge. Since 2018, fishery harvests and incomes have declined considerably, 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, and impacted nutrient flows. Wetland conversion has reduced fish habitat. Unsustainable agriculture, forestry and urban development practices have diminished water quality, nutrient flows, and wetland recharge.

The “**Enhancing Transboundary Fisheries Management in the Lower Mekong Basin**” project addresses these challenges by increasing the connectivity, productivity, and resilience of transboundary capture fisheries, aquatic biodiversity, and other ecosystem services the LMB provides. The project will strengthen fisheries co-management, fisheries value chain development, and income diversification, and through the Mekong River Commission (MRC) integrate fisheries conservation into sectoral policies, especially hydropower, irrigation and agriculture.

The project supports the GEF's International Waters, Biodiversity, and Land Degradation focal areas, aligns with the GEF IW Advancing Sustainable Fisheries Management objective in the GEF 8 Programming Direction, and makes a major contribution to the MRC Basin Development Strategy (2021-2030) and MRC Mekong Basin-wide Fisheries Management and Development Strategy (2018-2022).

Field activities focus on six landscapes covering 2.7 million hectares: Lower Songkhram River Basin and Ing River Mouth in Thailand; Siphandone in Lao PDR; Kratie-Stung Treng and Eastern Tonle Sap in Cambodia;

and the Upper Mekong Delta in Vietnam. These areas were selected based on their importance for regional fisheries and the opportunity to rapidly scale up successful community fisheries models. Work in these landscapes will provide the information needed to increase public investment in capture fisheries. They also incentivize the active participation of national fisheries agencies.

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, operationalising 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, saving and loan schemes, 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 optimal co-benefits for, and 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. It will strengthen knowledge capture and sharing through participation in IW:LEARN.

The project's outcomes align with its theory of change, aiming to restore fish stocks and fish habitat, conserve or restore 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.

1.2. Scope of the Inception report of the project

1.2.1. Objectives

- Formalize any agreed marginal change to the original structure (activities and budget, not outputs and outcomes).
- Update and narrow down project implementation arrangements and monitoring responsibilities and Partners arrangement during implementation

- Prepare the first Annual Work Plan (2027), budget and tentative plan to 2030 approved by the Project Steering Committee (PSC).
- Update baseline indicators, M&E plan, stakeholder engagement plan, gender mainstreaming, ESMS, communication plan and outline the project monitoring system (or matrix) that clarifies responsibilities, methodologies, budget and time-bound milestones for measuring progress for each project indicator.

1.2.2. Structure of the report

Introduction and background

- Project overview: A summary of the project's long-term goal, objective, and expected outcomes
 - A brief history of the project's preparation phase.
 - Contextual updates: Any changes to the country or regional context that have occurred since the project was initially designed.

Project updates and revisions

- Validation of the results framework:
 - Confirmation or refinement of the project's Result Framework, including indicators, targets, and means of verification based on the inception workshop's discussions.
- Annual Work Plan and Budget:
 - A detailed, results-based work plan and budget for the first year of project implementation, based on the endorsed Result Framework and any budget revisions.

Management and governance arrangements

- Roles and responsibilities:
 - A clear definition of the roles, functions, and responsibilities of all key project partners, including:
 - The Implementing Agency (IUCN)
 - The Executing Agencies
 - MRC Secretariat
 - Cambodia Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
 - Lao PDR National Mekong Committee
 - Vietnam Research Institute of Aquaculture
 - Thailand Department of Fisheries
 - National Mekong Commission Secretariats
 - Government focal points, and consultants, etc.
- Project management structure:
 - Confirmation of the project's governance structure, including the composition of the Project Steering Committee and how decision-making will be handled.
 - ToR for the PSC

- Project management manual:
 - Reporting
 - Plan
 - Financial and procurement manual

Project monitoring and evaluation (M&E)

- M&E framework:
 - An updated monitoring and evaluation plan that details how project performance will be tracked against key indicators. This includes confirming reporting requirements and schedules.
 - Identification of all key indicators, metrics, data collection and means of verification
 - Identification of key linkages between inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and objectives including indicators
 - Cross-checking/verification against the Theory of Change
- Risk management:
 - A review and update of the project's risk matrix and the mitigation measures.

Cross-cutting issues

- Gender inclusion:
 - Confirmation of the project's approach to gender mainstreaming and an update to the Gender Action Plan.
- Environmental and social safeguards:
 - Review and endorsement of the project's Environmental and Social Management Framework, ensuring alignment with GEF Minimum Standards and best practices.
- Stakeholder engagement and communication:
 - A communication and knowledge management plan for engaging partners and disseminating project outcomes.

2. OBJECTIVES

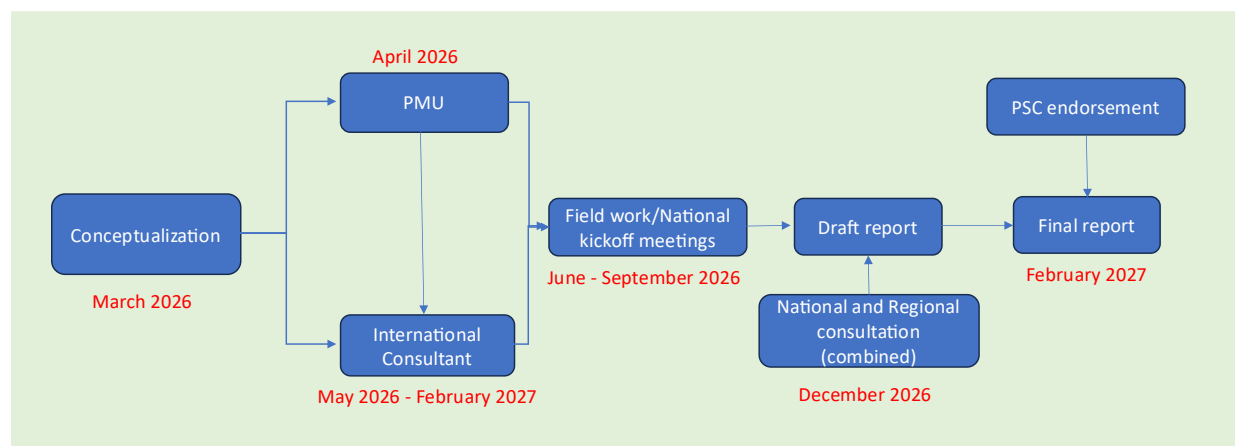
The overall objective of this Concept Note is to set out an approach for a joint development and implementation of Project Management Unit, International Consultants and National Mekong Committee Secretariats, Line Agencies to produce **Project Inception Report**. As such, this Concept Note outlines key steps to be implemented including:

- Conduct a comprehensive review of the Project Document based on synthesising relevant existing fisheries, fisheries value chain and related fisheries business and fisheries-dependent livelihoods datasets from national and regional sources, previous research, publications, monitoring programs, and outputs from related projects where overlaps exist with the targeted landscapes in order to produce a implementation strategy and annual work plan and the inception report as outlined above.

- Conduct field observation and discussion with relevant stakeholders to capture national priorities, procedures and suggestions into the project implementation and annual work plans.
- Collaborate with International Consultants, National Consultants and local teams under *Activity 1.1.1.1 Collect and synthesize scientific data and local knowledge to produce maps of opportunities to protect and reconnect fish habitats; Activity 1.1.2.1 Develop and assess effectiveness of existing best practices including fisheries co-management, FCZs, seasonal closures, barrier removal, restoration, and reconnecting habitats; and Activity 2.1.1.1 Assess and prioritise fisheries-related VCs based on market analyses* to integrate their findings into the inception report and update the baseline of the project.

3. APPROACH FOR IMPLEMENTATION

PMU will take lead in preparing the inception report with the support of an international consultant and the inputs from the baseline studies. PMU will be in charge of coordinating cross stakeholders and provide inputs for this process and the international consultant will be responsible for preparing the inception report including implementation strategy and workplans.



4. DELIVERABLES AND TIMELINES

No	Deliverables	Deadline
1.	Recruitment of consultants	30 April 2026
2.	Field work and national kick-off meetings	30 September 2026
3.	Draft reports (English)	30 October 2026
4.	Validation/National/Regional workshops (combined with other national and regional meetings)	30 November 2026
5.	Draft report	15 December 2026
6.	Final report	28 February 2027