



## Mekong River Commission

### For Sustainable Development

#### TERMS OF REFERENCE

##### 1. CONSULTANCY SUMMARY:

|                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| <b>Consultancy Title:</b>     | Fisheries Management Specialist to support implementation of the GEF Mekong Fisheries Project   |
| <b>Consultancy type:</b>      | Special Service Agreement (SSA)   |
| <b>Consultancy level</b>      | Level B   |
| <b>Division:</b>              | Environmental Management Division (ED)  |
| <b>Duration:</b>              | A lump-sum package for 1-year contract (average 10,5 workdays required per month) from 1 July 2026 to 30 June 2027 (possibility of a renewal, subject to satisfactory performance)  |
| <b>Duty station:</b>          | Office premises of the MRC Secretariat in Vientiane, Lao PDR.   |
| <b>Reporting to:</b>          | <input type="checkbox"/> Director of ED ( <i>overall supervision</i> ); and<br><input type="checkbox"/> MRCS Fisheries Management Specialist/Project Manager of the Mekong Fisheries Project ( <i>direct supervision</i> ). |
| <b>Expected Deliverables:</b> | <input type="checkbox"/> Please refer to Section 3 and 4.   |

##### 2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND:

###### 2.1. Introduction

The Mekong River Commission (MRC) was established under the 1995 Agreement on Cooperation for the Sustainable Development of the Mekong River Basin, signed by the governments of Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Viet Nam. The role of the MRC is to coordinate and promote regional cooperation in the sustainable development, utilization, management, and conservation of the water and related resources across the Mekong River Basin.

The MRC Secretariat (MRCS) serves as the operational arm of the MRC and its four Member Countries (MCs). It provides technical and administrative support to the MRC Joint Committee (JC) and the MRC Council to help deliver the organization's mission and strategic objectives.

Within the MRC, the Environmental Management Division (ED) is responsible for environmental monitoring, assessment, planning and management. It plays a central role in supporting basin-wide planning and ensuring that development in the Mekong River Basin is environmentally sustainable.

The ED is responsible for implementing “the Enhancing Transboundary Fisheries Management in the Lower Mekong Basin” project (hereafter referred to as the “Mekong Fisheries Project”) over the period 2026 – 2030, with financial support from the GEF IW-8, and implemented in collaboration with the IUCN. The project is implemented under the framework of MRC and contributes directly to the MRC Strategic Priorities for 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 estimated annual value of \$8-\$9 billion from fish and Other Aquatic Animals (OAAs). They make a substantial contribution to the economics of Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam, while also supporting food security, cultural identity, and local livelihoods. Freshwater fish provide a major share of national animal protein intake and play a vital role in untrient, particularly for children, contributing directly to health and development outcomes.

The LMB's extraordinary productivity stems from a complex mosaic of dynamic freshwater ecosystems, with fish species diversity per unit of catchment estimated to be roughly three times higher than that of the Amazon. These ecosystems rely on interconnected wetland landscapes that serve as crucial habitats for fish throughout 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 are facing a growing and widely recognized crisis.. Since 2018, fish catches and related incomes have declined significantly due to habitat fragmentation, degradation, and loss. The constructions of dams and irrigation structures have disrupted connectivity between the Mekong River and its tributaries, impeding fish migration, altering reproductive cycles and affecting nutrient flows. At the same time, wetland conversion has reduced critical habitats, while unsustainable agriculture, forestry and urban development practices have further diminished water quality, nutrient dynamics, and wetland recharge.

The “**Enhancing Transboundary Fisheries Management in the Lower Mekong Basin**”, also known as the **Mekong Fisheries Project**, responds directly to these challenges by strengthening the connectivity, productivity, and resilience of transboundary capture fisheries, aquatic biodiversity, and the broader ecosystem services provided by the LMB. The project will strengthen fisheries co-management systems, support value chain development, and promote income diversification. Through the MRC, it will also integrate fisheries conservation into key sectoral policies, particularly in hydropower, irrigation, and agriculture.

The project contributes to the GEF focal area of International Waters, Biodiversity, and Land Degradation, . it aligns with the GEF 8 Programming Direction, particularly the objective of advancing sustainable fisheries management, and supports key regional frameworks, including the MRC Basin Development Strategy (2021-2030) and the MRC Mekong Basin-wide Fisheries Management and Development Strategy (2018-2022).

Field activities focus on six landscapes spanning 2.7 million hectares: the 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 role for supporting regional fisheries and the opportunity to rapidly scale up successful community fisheries models. Work in these landscapes will generate the evidence needed to strengthen public investment in capture fisheries, while also encouraging more active participation from national fisheries agencies.

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

### 3. OBJECTIVES OF THE CONSULTANCY:

The main objective of this assignment is to **support the effective implementation of the Mekong Fisheries Project**, with particular focus on Component 1, 2, and 3. The consultant will **work closely with the project team, national staff, and technical consultants** to support the development, operationalization, and scaling-up of **fisheries co-management** and **ecosystem-based fisheries management approaches**. This

includes supporting implementation of the **fisheries diversity monitoring**, and **sustainable financial mechanisms** across Member Countries within the project's focal landscapes.

#### 4. EXPECTED DELIVERABLES

The **Fisheries Management Specialist** is expected to achieve the following outcomes during his/her period of consultancy services.

- **Fisheries Co-Management (FCoM) Frameworks and Community Fisheries Management Plans:** Completed design, establishment, and monitoring reports for Fisheries Co-Management (FCoM) frameworks and community fisheries management plans across target landscapes.
- **Ecosystem-Based Fisheries Management and Best Practice Guidelines:** Finalized operational guidelines for Ecosystem-Based Fisheries Management (EBFM) and fisheries management best practices, validated by national and local stakeholders.
- **Fish Catch and Diversity Monitoring Baseline:** Established the fish catch and diversity baseline database, including weight, size, and value analyses across target focal landscapes.
- **Gender-Responsive M&E Framework:** Developed the monitoring and evaluation framework with defined indicators for fish stocks and biodiversity, integrating gender-disaggregated data and support for women's entrepreneurship.
- **Fish Habitat & Swimway Technical Portfolio:** Identified, mapped, and documented for critical fish habitats and migration swimways, including specific technical inputs for restoration.
- **Sustainable Financing & Investment Roadmap:** Established small-scale sustainable financing mechanisms, fisheries value chain investment plans, and a strategy for long-term public financing.
- **Livelihood Implementation Reports:** Implemented and documented fisheries-related livelihood activities within the focal landscapes.
- **Capacity Building Toolkit:** Developed capacity-building tools and training materials for national institutions, local institutions, and fisher groups.
- **Knowledge Management & Scaling Report:** Documented lessons learned and best practices for regional replication and scaling.
- **National Policy & Legal Briefs:** Prepared policy and legal briefs to support integration of fisheries management into national policies, planning instruments, and legal frameworks.

#### 5. DELIVERABLES AND CONCRETE TIMELINES

The Consultant will deliver the following outputs over 130 working days during the period 1 July 2026 to 30 June 2027.

| No  | Deliverables  | Number of working days | Deadline     |
|-----|---|------------------------|--------------|
| 1.  | Fisheries Co-Management (FCoM) Frameworks & Community Fisheries Management Plans. | 15                     | 30 June 2027 |
| 2.  | Ecosystem-Based Fisheries Management & Best Practice Guidelines                   | 10                     |              |
| 3.  | Fish Catch & Diversity Monitoring Baseline  | 15                     |              |
| 4.  | Gender-Responsive M&E Framework   | 10                     |              |
| 5.  | Fish Habitat & Swimway Technical Portfolio  | 10                     |              |
| 6.  | Sustainable Financing & Investment Roadmap  | 10                     |              |
| 7.  | Livelihood Implementation Reports   | 15                     |              |
| 8.  | Capacity Building Toolkit   | 15                     |              |
| 9.  | Knowledge Management & Scaling Report   | 15                     |              |
| 10. | National Policy & Legal Briefs  | 15                     |              |
|     | <b>Total Number of Workdays</b>   | <b>130</b>             |              |

## 6. REQUIRED TASKS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

To achieve the deliverable of this consultancy, the Fisheries Management Specialist will undertake the following key tasks and responsibilities during the assignment.

### A. Fisheries management:

- Support design, establishment, implementation, and monitoring of fisheries co-management (FCoM) frameworks and community fisheries management plans, across target landscapes;
- Contribute to monitoring fish catch, diversity and small-scale financing mechanisms;
- Provide technical inputs on identification, mapping, and restoration of critical fish habitats and migration corridor/swimways;
- Support development of ecosystem-based fisheries management guidelines and best practices;
- Collaborate with national and local partners to support the development and implementation of Fisheries related livelihood activities in target landscapes;
- Contribute to design, establishment, implementation of fisheries livelihood activities;
- Support development of sustainable financing mechanisms and fisheries value chain investments and identify long term public financing mechanisms to support sustainable fisheries in the focal landscapes.
- Contribute to capacity building activities and training development;
- Work with M&E officer to define indicators on fish stocks, biodiversity, and habitat connectivity
- Ensure gender-responsive and socially inclusive approaches, including gender-disaggregated data collection and analysis
- Contribute to documentation of lessons learned and scaling-up approaches

- Support integration of fisheries management into national policies and legal frameworks
- Work with M&E officer to define indicators and assess progress related to fisheries management, including fish stocks, biodiversity, and habitat connectivity;
- Ensure gender-responsive and socially inclusive approaches, including gender-disaggregated data collection and analysis in all fisheries management interventions;
- Contribute to documentation of lessons learned and best practices for replication and scaling up;
- Support integration of fisheries management into national policies and legal frameworks.

*B. Other duties:*

- Review technical reports and provide comments as required;
- Support mainstreaming of ecosystem-based fisheries management into regional related strategies, plans and policies, and financing mechanisms;
- Work with the PM in identifying gaps and opportunities to improve implementation of project;
- Support organization of meetings, consultations, field missions, and other related activities;
- Perform other project-related tasks assigned to support the overall implementation of the project.

**7. PAYMENT MODE:**

- Payments shall be made monthly on a lump-sum basis, based on average of **10.5 workdays per month** and satisfactory performance and deliverables;
- Payments are subject to submission of invoices, timesheet, and acceptance of deliverables by the ED Director or Project Manager;
- Final payment will be made upon completion of all deliverables and satisfactory performance evaluation, signed by the ED Director or Project Manager.

| <b>Deliverable and Expected Quality</b>   | <b>% for payment per installment</b> | <b>Deadline</b>   |
|---|--------------------------------------|-------------------|
| 1. A lump-sum package based on the monthly assignment for <b>July 2026</b>      | <b>8%</b>                            | 10 August 2026    |
| 2. A lump-sum package based on the monthly assignment for <b>August 2026</b>    | <b>8%</b>                            | 10 September 2026 |
| 3. A lump-sum package based on the monthly assignment for <b>September 2026</b> | <b>8%</b>                            | 10 October 2026   |
| 4. A lump-sum package based on the monthly assignment for <b>October 2026</b>   | <b>8%</b>                            | 10 November 2026  |
| 5. A lump-sum package based on the monthly assignment for <b>November 2026</b>  | <b>8%</b>                            | 10 December 2026  |
| 6. A lump-sum package based on the monthly assignment for <b>December 2026</b>  | <b>8%</b>                            | 10 January 2027   |
| 7. A lump-sum package based on the monthly assignment for <b>January 2027</b>   | <b>8%</b>                            | 10 February 2027  |
| 8. A lump-sum package based on the monthly assignment for <b>February 2027</b>  | <b>8%</b>                            | 10 March 2027     |
| 9. A lump-sum package based on the monthly assignment for <b>March 2027</b>     | <b>8%</b>                            | 10 April 2027     |
| 10. A lump-sum package based on the monthly assignment for <b>April 2027</b>    | <b>8%</b>                            | 10 May 2027       |
| 11. A lump-sum package based on the monthly assignment for <b>May 2027</b>      | <b>10%</b>                           | 10 June 2027      |
| 12. A lump-sum package based on the monthly assignment for <b>June 2027</b>     | <b>10%</b>                           | 10 July 2027      |
|   | <b>100%</b>                          |                   |

*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.*

## **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 be working under the overall supervision of the Director of the Environmental Management Division.
- Communication line: The consultant will be working under the direct supervision of MRCS Fisheries Management Specialist/Project Manager of the Mekong Fisheries Project.

**11. QUALIFICATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS:**

- Advanced degree (Master's or PhD) in fisheries science, aquatic ecology, natural resource management, or related field;
- At least 15 years of professional experience in inland fisheries management, preferably in Southeast Asia;
- Demonstrated expertise in ecosystem-based approaches, fisheries co-management, and habitat conservation;
- Experience in community-based natural resource management, government agencies, and regional institutions;
- At least 10 years of progressively responsible experience in international water resources management, transboundary governance, and/or implementation of GEF-funded IW projects;
  - At least 5 years of working experience in developing and implementing sustainable finance mechanisms;
- Demonstrated knowledge of GEF International Waters strategies and monitoring frameworks, including IW:LEARN guidance;
- Significant experience working with or advising regional bodies such as river basin organizations, with preference for experience in Southeast Asia and the Mekong region;
- Strong capacity for policy dialogue, institutional coordination, and facilitation of multi-country processes;
- Proven ability to deliver high-quality technical outputs and training materials;
- Excellent communication, writing, and facilitation skills in English; knowledge of local languages of the LMB region is an asset;
- Familiarity with GEF-funded project implementation and MRC institutional context is desirable;
- Proven ability to work collaboratively with a wide range of stakeholders and in multicultural environments;
- Language: English is the working language of the MRC Secretariat. For the post advertised, fluency in oral and written English is required.

**12. SIGNATURE BLOCK**

MRCS:

Name and Title: Theerawat Samphawamana Incumbent's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_**Director of the Environmental Management  
Division**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_