

Groundwater resources in the Greater Mekong Subregion: Collaborative management to increase climate change resilience

Item	Description
Report Type	Inception Report
Implementing Entity	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
Executing Entities	Coordinating Committee for Geoscience Programmes in East and Southeast Asia Technical Secretariat (CCOP-TS); International Water Management Institute (IWMI); International Groundwater Resources Assessment Centre (IGRAC)
Participating Countries	Cambodia; Lao People’s Democratic Republic; Thailand; Viet Nam
Key Regional Stakeholder	Mekong River Commission Secretariat (MRCS)
Funding Source	Adaptation Fund (AF)
Project Duration	4 years
Project Start Date	20 May 2026
Date of Inception Meeting	20 May 2026
Date of Report Submission	20 June 2026
Prepared by	UNESCO, in its capacity as Implementing Entity, in coordination with Executing Entities and National Agencies

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List of Acronyms:

- AF Adaptation Fund
- CCOP-TS Coordinating Committee for Geoscience Programmes in East and Southeast Asia Technical Secretariat
- GMS Greater Mekong Subregion
- IWMI International Water Management Institute
- IGRAC International Groundwater Resources Assessment Centre
- MRCS Mekong River Commission Secretariat
- PSC Project Steering Committee
- UNESCO United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 Background and Purpose

Groundwater resources are critical to water security, livelihoods, ecosystem, health and climate resilience across the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS). As climate variability and pressure on water resources increase, strengthening sustainable groundwater management has become an important priority for participating countries.

The project “Groundwater Resources in the Greater Mekong Subregion: Collaborative Management to Increase Climate Change Resilience”, financed by the Adaptation Fund, aims to strengthen climate resilience through improved groundwater governance, enhanced regional cooperation, strengthened technical capacities and evidence-based decision-making across Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Viet Nam.

This Inception Report summarizes the outcomes of the Regional Inception Meeting held on 20 May 2026 and outlines the implementation framework, governance arrangements and priorities identified for the initial phase of implementation.

1.2 Key Outcomes

The inception process enabled participating countries, project partners and regional stakeholders to review the approved project framework and establish a common understanding of implementation priorities.

Participants reaffirmed the continued relevance of the project objectives, Theory of Change and pilot-based implementation approach, while emphasizing the importance of regional cooperation, technical collaboration and knowledge exchange in addressing shared groundwater challenges.

The meeting confirmed broad alignment on implementation arrangements and institutional roles and identified various operational priorities to be addressed during the initial implementation phase.

1.3 Implementation Readiness

The project is operationally ready to proceed to implementation.

The overall implementation framework, governance arrangements, monitoring architecture and annual work planning framework provide a basis for initiating activities across all project components. Priority attention during the initial implementation phase will be given to operationalizing governance arrangements, strengthening monitoring and reporting tools and completing validation of the remaining pilot area.

These activities are consistent with normal project start-up requirements and do not affect implementation readiness.

1.4 Governance, Partnerships and Regional Cooperation

The project is founded on a partnership approach that combines national leadership, regional cooperation and technical collaboration.

Participating countries will play a central role in implementation, supported by UNESCO as Implementing Entity, the Executing Entities and regional partners. The project will also contribute to the development of regional public goods, including strengthened groundwater knowledge, technical cooperation and approaches that support climate-resilient groundwater management across the Greater Mekong Subregion.

1.5 Implementation Considerations

The inception process highlighted several considerations that will inform implementation, including differences in groundwater information systems, varying institutional arrangements and the need for sustained technical cooperation and coordination among participating institutions.

The project incorporates measures to address these considerations through capacity development, knowledge-sharing, technical support and adaptive management. These factors will continue to be monitored throughout implementation but are not expected to affect project delivery.

1.6 Priorities for Early Implementation

Building on the outcomes of the inception process, the following priorities were identified for the initial implementation phase:

- Operationalization of the first annual work plan;
- Confirmation of governance and coordination arrangements;
- Further development of monitoring, evaluation and reporting tools;
- Completion of the remaining pilot area validation process;
- Initiation of capacity-development and knowledge-sharing activities;
- Launch of priority implementation activities under all project components.

These priorities will guide implementation during the first phase of the project and support the transition from project establishment to delivery of results.

1.7 Conclusion

The inception phase established a strong foundation for implementation and reaffirmed the commitment of participating countries and partners to advancing climate-resilient groundwater management across the Greater Mekong Subregion.

The project is well positioned to strengthen groundwater governance, support climate adaptation, enhance regional cooperation and build capacities that contribute to the sustainable management of groundwater resources and the resilience of communities and ecosystems across the region.

II. Project Snapshot

2.1 Project Identification

Item	Description
Project Title	Groundwater resources in the Greater Mekong Subregion: Collaborative management to increase climate change resilience
Geographical Scope	Cambodia, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Thailand, and Viet Nam
Implementation Modality	Regional project with national implementation through designated National Agencies
Project Duration	4 years
Project Start Date	20 May 2026
Funding Source	Adaptation Fund (AF)
Implementing Entity (IE)	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
Executing Entities (EE)	Coordinating Committee for Geoscience Programmes in East and Southeast Asia Technical Secretariat (CCOP-TS); International Water Management Institute (IWMI); International Groundwater Resources Assessment Centre (IGRAC)
National Agencies	Cambodia: Department of Green Economy (Ministry of Environment and Environment) Lao PDR: Department of Water Resources (Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment) Thailand: Department of Groundwater Resources Viet Nam: National Center for Water Resources Planning and Investigation (NAWAPI)
Key Regional Stakeholder	Mekong River Commission Secretariat (MRCS)

Budget Structure	Managed as a single regional financing envelope organized by component; with country and pilot allocations determined through the First Annual Work Plan
Budget Amount	USD 4,898,775

2.2 Status at Inception

At the time of the Regional Inception Meeting:

- The project has formally entered the implementation phase;
- The First Annual Work Plan (Year 1) was confirmed;
- Two pilot areas validated, with one pilot area identified and awaiting validation;
- Governance, monitoring and reporting arrangements endorsed. Further specific details of development of monitoring, evaluation and reporting tools to be completed in initial implementation phase.

III. KEY OUTCOMES OF THE INCEPTION PROCESS

3.1 Annual Work Plan and Implementation Priorities

The Inception Meeting reviewed the proposed First Annual Work Plan and confirmed that it provides an appropriate framework for initiating project implementation. The work plan reflects the objectives and results framework of the approved project document and establishes the basis for coordinated implementation across participating countries and project components.

Participants reaffirmed the pilot-based implementation approach and confirmed the suitability of the identified pilot areas currently under consideration. It was noted that one pilot area requires further technical assessment and consultation to ensure alignment with project objectives, national priorities and implementation feasibility. The outcome of this process for pending pilot area will be presented to the Project Steering Committee (PSC) for review during the initial implementation phase.

The meeting further highlighted the importance of maintaining flexibility in implementation sequencing to accommodate differing national contexts, technical requirements and operational considerations. Priority actions identified for the initial phase include operationalization of the annual work plan, completion of pilot area validation processes, strengthening of monitoring and reporting arrangements, and establishment of project governance mechanisms.

The meeting concluded that the annual work plan provides a sound basis for moving from project establishment to implementation.

3.2 Theory of Change and Results Framework

The Theory of Change was reviewed and confirmed as the overarching framework guiding project implementation, monitoring and reporting.

Participants reaffirmed the relevance of the project's outcome areas and recognized the importance of strengthening groundwater knowledge, institutional capacities, stakeholder participation and regional cooperation as key contributors to climate-resilient groundwater management across the Greater Mekong Subregion.

The meeting confirmed that the overall results framework remains fit for purpose while noting that indicators, baselines and monitoring tools will continue to be refined during the initial implementation phase to strengthen performance measurement and reporting.

3.3 Governance and Institutional Arrangements

The inception process confirmed the importance of maintaining a governance framework that supports strategic oversight, accountability, technical coordination and country ownership throughout implementation.

The project governance framework envisages the establishment of a Project Steering Committee (PSC) as the principal governance body for the project. The PSC will provide strategic guidance, review implementation progress, consider key implementation issues and support alignment between project activities and national and regional priorities.

Participating countries will be invited to identify appropriate representation for the PSC. Detailed arrangements relating to participation, meeting modalities and operating procedures will be developed through consultation among participating countries and project partners during the initial implementation phase.

To promote country ownership and shared responsibility, participating countries may wish to consider a rotating chairing arrangement for PSC meetings. Such arrangements would be reflected in the PSC operating procedures following consultation among members.

UNESCO, as Implementing Entity, will provide overall oversight and ensure compliance with Adaptation Fund requirements. The Executing Entities will provide technical leadership and implementation support within their respective areas of expertise, while National Agencies will play a central role in national coordination, stakeholder engagement and implementation at country level.

Participants emphasized the importance of maintaining effective communication and collaboration among project partners throughout implementation. Operational and technical issues will be addressed through established coordination mechanisms at the appropriate level. Where issues have broader strategic implications or require collective guidance, they may be referred to the PSC for consideration.

3.4 Monitoring, Reporting and Follow-up Actions

The inception process confirmed the overall monitoring, evaluation and reporting framework for the project. Participants emphasized the importance of establishing practical monitoring systems that support accountability, learning and adaptive management while remaining responsive to national contexts and reporting requirements.

Priority attention during the initial implementation phase will be given to further refinement of indicators, baselines, reporting tools and data collection methodologies. These efforts will support consistent monitoring of progress and facilitate evidence-based decision-making throughout implementation.

The inception process established a shared foundation for implementation and confirmed broad alignment on project objectives, governance arrangements and implementation priorities. The outcomes of the meeting provide a clear basis for moving forward with project implementation and delivery of results.

IV. NATIONAL PERSPECTIVES AND IMPLEMENTATION CONTEXT

4.1 Overview of National Contributions

Participating countries shared updates on groundwater management priorities, institutional arrangements, information systems and ongoing initiatives relevant to project implementation.

The discussions reaffirmed the strategic importance of groundwater resources for water security, climate resilience, livelihoods and sustainable development across the Greater Mekong Subregion. Participants expressed a shared interest in strengthening groundwater knowledge, improving evidence-based decision-making and enhancing regional cooperation on groundwater management.

Country representatives highlighted the importance of strengthening groundwater information systems, improving the availability and use of groundwater data, and supporting greater integration between groundwater management and climate adaptation planning. Participants also noted opportunities to strengthen regional cooperation in groundwater monitoring, information management and technical capacity development.

The meeting reaffirmed that project implementation should remain responsive to national priorities and circumstances while contributing to broader regional objectives and cooperation.

4.2 Institutional and Technical Context

The inception process confirmed that participating countries operate within diverse institutional and policy environments for groundwater management. Responsibilities are

often shared among multiple institutions, reflecting national governance structures and sectoral mandates.

Participants emphasized the importance of strengthening coordination among relevant institutions and enhancing linkages between scientific information, policy processes and operational decision-making. The project is expected to contribute to these objectives through improved access to information, technical cooperation and capacity development.

4.3 Groundwater Information and Monitoring Systems

Participants noted differences in groundwater information systems, monitoring approaches and technical capacities across the region. These differences present opportunities for enhanced cooperation, peer learning and exchange of experience among participating countries.

The project will support efforts to strengthen groundwater information systems, improve data comparability where appropriate and promote the exchange of tools, methodologies and good practices. Participants emphasized that regional cooperation and knowledge-sharing represent important assets for achieving project outcomes and strengthening climate-resilient groundwater management across the Greater Mekong Subregion.

4.4 Implementation Considerations

Several considerations emerged from the inception process that will inform implementation planning, including differing national planning and approval processes, the need for continued coordination among institutions and the importance of maintaining flexibility in implementation arrangements.

These considerations are not expected to affect implementation readiness. Rather, they provide an important foundation for adaptive management, sustained collaboration and effective implementation throughout the project period

V. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

5.1 Implementation Framework

The project will be implemented through a framework that combines national implementation, regional technical cooperation and strategic oversight. The arrangements are designed to support effective delivery of project activities while promoting country ownership, regional collaboration and accountability for results.

Implementation will be undertaken through coordinated action among participating countries, Executing Entities, regional stakeholders and UNESCO as Implementing Entity, in accordance with the approved project framework and Adaptation Fund requirements.

5.2 Institutional Roles and Responsibilities

UNESCO, as Implementing Entity, is responsible for overall project oversight, fiduciary management, safeguards compliance and reporting to the Adaptation Fund. UNESCO will facilitate coordination among project partners and support consolidated monitoring and reporting of project results.

CCOP-TS, IWMI and IGRAC will serve as Executing Entities and provide technical leadership across project components in accordance with their respective mandates and areas of expertise.

National Agencies will lead implementation at country level, including stakeholder engagement, technical inputs, validation of nationally generated information and support for implementation within pilot areas.

The project is founded on the principle of shared responsibility, with successful implementation dependent upon effective collaboration among all participating institutions.

5.3 Coordination and Technical Cooperation

Implementation will be supported through regular communication and coordination among participating institutions at regional, national and pilot levels.

Technical exchanges, planning discussions, workshops and peer-learning activities will facilitate alignment of implementation approaches, promote knowledge-sharing and support regional cooperation on groundwater management and climate resilience.

Attention will be given to cooperation relating to groundwater information systems, monitoring methodologies, pilot implementation and the exchange of good practices.

5.4 Governance and Decision-Making Arrangements

As reflected in section 3.3, the project's governance framework includes a Project Steering Committee (PSC) that will provide strategic oversight and guidance throughout implementation.

The PSC will serve as a forum for reviewing implementation progress, considering strategic issues and supporting alignment between project activities and national and regional priorities.

To facilitate effective operation of the governance framework, participating countries will be invited to designate representatives to the PSC in the initial implementation phase. Detailed arrangements relating to participation, meeting modalities and operating procedures will be further developed in consultation with participating countries and project partners.

5.5 Reporting and Accountability Arrangements

Project reporting will be undertaken in accordance with Adaptation Fund requirements and agreed implementation arrangements.

National Agencies, Executing Entities and UNESCO will contribute to reporting processes consistent with their respective roles and responsibilities. Reporting arrangements are intended to support accountability, transparency, learning and adaptive management throughout implementation.

These implementation arrangements provide the foundation for effective project delivery and achievement of project objectives.

VI. RISK MANAGEMENT AND MITIGATION MEASURES

The inception process identified various factors that may influence implementation, including differences in groundwater information systems, varying institutional arrangements and the need for sustained coordination among participating partners.

These considerations are not expected to affect implementation readiness. The project design incorporates appropriate mitigation measures through established governance arrangements, technical cooperation, capacity development, monitoring and reporting systems, and regular stakeholder engagement.

Attention during implementation will be given to:

- Strengthening coordination among participating institutions;
- Enhancing groundwater information management and knowledge exchange;
- Supporting technical capacity development where required;
- Maintaining effective monitoring, reporting and learning processes; and
- Ensuring inclusive stakeholder engagement throughout implementation.

Implementation progress and emerging risks will be reviewed regularly through project governance and reporting mechanisms. Where necessary, adjustments will be made through an adaptive management approach to ensure continued alignment with project objectives and expected results.

Overall, the inception process confirmed that the project is well positioned to manage implementation risks and proceed to full implementation.

VII. PRIORITIES FOR EARLY IMPLEMENTATION

7.1 Overview

The inception process established a common understanding of project objectives, implementation arrangements and expected results, and identified priorities for the initial implementation phase.

Priority actions include:

- Operationalization of the first annual work plan;
- Establishment of Project Steering Committee and coordination arrangements;
- Further development of monitoring, evaluation and reporting tools;
- Completion of the remaining pilot area validation process;
- Initiation of capacity-development and knowledge-sharing activities; and
- Launch of priority implementation activities under all project components.

Implementation of these priorities will be undertaken through collaborative action among participating countries, National Agencies, Executing Entities and UNESCO as Implementing Entity, consistent with their respective roles and responsibilities.

The project will apply a phased and adaptive implementation approach, allowing activities to be sequenced in accordance with technical requirements, stakeholder consultations and implementation readiness at regional, national and pilot levels.

The priorities identified through the inception process provide a clear pathway for moving from project establishment to implementation and delivery of results. Through strengthened cooperation, improved knowledge and enhanced institutional capacity, the project is expected to contribute to more resilient and sustainable groundwater management across the Greater Mekong Subregion

7.2 Looking Ahead

The inception phase marks the beginning of a four-year collaborative effort to strengthen groundwater management and climate resilience across the Greater Mekong Subregion.

The implementation arrangements, governance framework and priority actions identified through the inception process provide a solid foundation for moving from project establishment to delivery of results.

Building on the commitment demonstrated by participating countries, implementing partners and regional stakeholders, the project is well positioned to advance regional cooperation, strengthen technical capacities and support more resilient and sustainable groundwater management across the region.

The priorities identified in this section will guide implementation during the initial phase of the project and contribute to the achievement of longer-term project outcomes and impacts.

VIII. Annexes

Annex A: First Annual Work Plan

Annex B: Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

Annex C: Action List

Annex D: Inception Workshop Package

ANNEX A. FIRST ANNUAL WORK PLAN (YEAR 1)

Project start date: 20 May 2026

1. DECISION STATEMENT

The first annual work plan is from 20 May 2026 to 30 June 2027. All activities, timelines, and responsibilities below are to be reviewed and confirmed by participating National Agencies of Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Viet Nam, as well as CCOP TS, IGRAC, IWMI, and UNESCO.

2. ACTIVITY TABLE BY COMPONENT

COMPONENT 1 - Groundwater Resource Assessment and Monitoring

Activity	Output	Country	Timeline	Responsible
C1.1 Assess data availability, and climate change scenario analysis	Initial inventory	Regional	Aug-Nov 2026	National Agencies, CCOP-TS
C1.2 Data availability assessment and validation	Baseline dataset confirmed	Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Viet Nam	Nov-Dec 2026	National Agencies, CCOP-TS
C1.3 Identification of data gaps	Gap analysis completed	Regional	Sep-Nov 2026	CCOP-TS, IWMI, IGRAC
C1.4 Preliminary vulnerability assessment	Initial assessment note	Regional	Sep-Nov 2026	IWMI
C1.5 Draft initial Component 1 technical note	Consolidated output	Regional	Dec 2026	National Agencies, , IWMI, IGRAC CCOP-TS
C1.6 Design monitoring network (initial phase)	Monitoring concept	Regional	Dec 2026-Jun 2027	IGRAC, National Agencies

COMPONENT 2 - Priority Use and Stakeholders

Activity	Output	Country	Timeline	Responsible
C2.1 Stakeholder mapping refinement	Updated stakeholder profiles	Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Viet Nam	Sep 2026	National Agencies
C2.2 Groundwater user group identification	User typologies	Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Viet Nam	Sep-Oct 2026	National Agencies
C2.3 Dialogue sessions in pilot regions	Stakeholder dialogue outputs	Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Viet Nam	Oct 2026	National Agencies

C2.4 Gender platform design	Gender platform design completed	Regional	Oct 2026	UNESCO
C2.5 Gender platform activation	Platform operational	Regional	Oct 2026	UNESCO
C2.6 Collection of sex-disaggregated water data	Baseline gender data	Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Viet Nam	Oct 2026-Jan 2027	National Agencies
C2.7 Development of practical groundwater use guidelines	Draft guidelines	Regional	Nov 2026-Mar 2027	National Agencies, CCOP-TS

COMPONENT 3 - Resource Management, Tools and Equipment

Activity	Output	Country	Timeline	Responsible
C3.1 Screening criteria for MAR and technologies	Screening framework	Regional	Oct 2026	IWMI
C3.2 Candidate site identification	Pilot site shortlist	Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Viet Nam	Nov 2026	National Agencies, IWMI
C3.3 Site suitability assessment	Suitability report	Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Viet Nam	Nov 2026	IWMI, IGRAC
C3.4 Initial safeguards review	Safeguards clearance	Regional	Nov 2026	UNESCO
C3.5 Preliminary design of pilot interventions	Pilot designs	Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Viet Nam	Dec 2026-Mar 2027	IWMI, National Agencies
C3.6 Community consultation on interventions	Pilot configurations informed by consultations	Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Viet Nam	Jan-Mar 2027	National Agencies
C3.7 Monitoring framework for pilots	Monitoring protocols	Regional	Feb-Mar 2027	IGRAC, UNESCO

COMPONENT 4 - Regional Cooperation and Coordination

Activity	Output	Country	Timeline	Responsible
C4.1 GW regulation analysis	MOU process launched	Regional	Aug 2026 - Mar 2027	National Agencies, CCOP-TS
C4.2 Prepare TBA strategy	TBA strategy	Regional	Sep 2026 - Mar 2027	National Agencies, CCOP-TS, UNESCO
C4.3 Draft MRCS MOU outline	Structured draft	Regional	Sep 2026 - Mar 2027	UNESCO
C4.4 Regional working group establishment	Working group operational	Regional	Sep 2026 - Mar 2027	UNESCO
C4.5 First transboundary technical exchanges	Exchange sessions delivered	Regional	Mar 2027	CCOP-TS

C4.6 Documentation of national groundwater policies	Policy documentation set	Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Viet Nam	Oct-Dec 2026	National Agencies, CCOP-TS
C4.7 Joint technical discussion sessions	Agreed cooperation inputs	Regional	Jan-Mar 2027	CCOP-TS

COMPONENT 5 - Capacity Building and Training

Activity	Output	Country	Timeline	Responsible
C5.1 Identification of training needs	Needs assessment report	Regional	Aug 2026 - Jan 2027	CCOP-TS, UNESCO
C5.2 Design of training programme	Draft training plan	Regional	Feb 2027	UNESCO, CCOP-TS
C5.3 Finalization of annual training plan	Approved plan	Regional	Feb 2027	CCOP-TS, UNESCO
C5.4 Delivery of initial training modules	Training sessions delivered	Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Viet Nam	Mar-Jun 2027	CCOP-TS, UNESCO
C5.6 Establishment of community of practice	CoP operational	Regional	Mar 2027	UNESCO, CCOP-TS
C5.7 Setup of knowledge repository (SharePoint)	Platform operational	Regional	Jan-Apr 2027	IGRAC
C5.8 Knowledge products development	Training materials and notes	Regional	Mar-Jun 2027	UNESCO, CCOP-TS

3. CROSS-COMPONENT INCEPTION AND COMPLIANCE ACTIVITIES

Activity	Output	Timeline	Responsible
Inception Meeting (validation point)	Work plan validated	20 May 2026	UNESCO, CCOP-TS
Finalization of national focal point coordination	Confirmed focal points	May 2026	National Agencies
Submission of Inception Report	Report submitted	20 June 2026	UNESCO
Completion of inception consultations	Consolidated consultation outputs	Aug 2026	UNESCO
Signing of EE partnership agreements with UNESCO	Agreements signed	Aug 2026	UNESCO
First PSC meeting	First annual work plan noted and calendar agreed	Sep 2026	UNESCO, CCOP-TS
Environmental and social screening of pilot activities	ESMP compliance confirmed	Continuous	CCOP-TS, UNESCO, National Agencies
Financial and reporting compliance established	Reporting system operational	Sep 2026	UNESCO

Second PSC meeting	Progress reviewed	Mar 2027	UNESCO, CCOP-TS
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4. TIMELINE SUMMARY

Period	Key Deliverables
May-June 2026	Inception Meeting completed; work plan validated; inception report submitted
June- August 2026	Implementing partnership agreements with Executing Entities formalized; MOU process initiated
September-December 2026	Baseline data validation completed
September- December 2026	Initial technical assessments and stakeholder platform activation
November-December 2026	Pilot screening and regional cooperation activities initiated
January-March 2027	Training programme finalized; monitoring network planning completed
August 2026 -June 2027	Implementation activities

5. RESPONSIBILITY STRUCTURE

Role	Entity
Overall oversight and compliance	UNESCO
Execution and coordination	CCOP-TS
National implementation	National Agencies
Technical delivery (assessment, MAR, monitoring)	IWMI, IGRAC
Data validation and field coordination	National Agencies
Stakeholder engagement	National Agencies
Gender and safeguards implementation	UNESCO with National Agencies

6. IMPLEMENTATION RULES

1. All activities are implemented as scheduled unless jointly agreed otherwise by all National Agencies.
2. All pilot-related activities are subject to environmental and social compliance screening prior to execution.
3. Gender participation and vulnerable group inclusion are mandatory across all stakeholder engagement activities.
4. Financial reporting follows Adaptation Fund requirements with quarterly internal tracking and annual reporting.
5. All outputs listed above constitute deliverables and are tracked for reporting.

7. VALIDATION

This first annual work plan constitutes the operational basis for Year 1 implementation. This work plan is subject to validation during the inception meeting and presented to the first PSC. Participating entities are expected to review and confirm activities, timelines, and responsibilities. Adjustments will be agreed collectively prior to validation.

Validation is confirmed by:

- National Agencies of Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Viet Nam
- UNESCO (Multilateral Implementing Entity)

ANNEX C. Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

Project start date: 20 May 2026

This summary presents the essential elements that require early alignment across all partners. It focuses on the reporting schedule, institutional roles, and key compliance requirements that are binding for project implementation.

1. Reporting Schedule

The project establishes a structured and mandatory reporting cycle covering the full implementation period, with clear responsibilities and timing.

Core reporting instruments

- **Inception meeting and report**
 - One-time requirement within the first 3 months of project start
 - Led by UNESCO
- **Quarterly progress reports**
 - Continuous reporting throughout implementation
 - Prepared by the project management team under UNESCO oversight
- **Annual progress reports**
 - Consolidated reporting once per year
 - In alignment with the Project Results Framework
- **Site visit reports**
 - Conducted according to the annual work plan
- **Project Steering Committee meetings**
 - Held twice per year for strategic oversight

Evaluation and closure requirements

- **Mid-term evaluation**
 - At the end of Year 2
 - Conducted by external evaluators
- **Final evaluation**
 - Conducted during the last 3 months of the project
- **Final project report**
 - Submitted in the final month
- **Financial audit**
 - Mandatory at project closure

Key implication

All reporting outputs are required and aligned with project compliance and disbursement requirements.

2. Roles and Responsibilities

The monitoring and reporting system is anchored in a multi-level institutional structure with clearly assigned functions and authority.

Core entities and functions

- **UNESCO (Implementing Entity)**
 - Overall M&E oversight
 - Final validation of data and reporting
 - Official reporting to the Adaptation Fund
- **CCOP TS (Executing Entity)**
 - Operational management of M&E
 - Consolidation of data and reports
 - Submission to UNESCO
- **IWMI, IGRAC (Executing Entities)**
 - Technical advisory
 - Technical verification of data
 - Quality assurance of monitoring outputs
- **National Agencies**
 - Implementation of pilot activities
 - Data provision at country level
 - National validation of data and outputs
- **Community-level actors**
 - Field data collection
 - Local monitoring and verification
- **External evaluators**
 - Independent mid-term and final evaluation
- **Project Steering Committee**
 - Governance-level validation
 - Review of progress and corrective actions

Key implication

All actors operate within clearly defined roles, and a sequenced data validation process. All reporting is expected to follow this structure.

3. Key Compliance Requirements

The project establishes a clear compliance framework governing reporting, data quality, and safeguards.

Requirements

- **Reporting compliance**
 - All reporting must follow the approved schedule
 - Required as a condition for continued implementation and funding
- **Data validation**
 - All data must be validated before submission
 - Validation is required for acceptance of reports

- **Gender and safeguards integration**
 - Gender and environmental and social safeguards must be included in all reporting outputs
 - This is a mandatory cross-cutting requirement
- **Independent evaluation**
 - Mid-term and final evaluations are mandatory
 - Required for project continuation and closure

Financial and M&E resourcing

- Dedicated budget allocations are confirmed for:
 - Inception workshop
 - Steering Committee functioning
 - Mid-term and final evaluations
 - External audit
- Ongoing monitoring is embedded within project management costs

Key implication

- Reporting, validation, and safeguards are conditions for disbursement
- Independent evaluation and audit will be conducted at project closure, in line with Adaptation Fund requirements.

Annex E. Action List

Action Description	Responsible Entity	Supporting Entities	Timeline and Deadline	Status and Progress Indicators
Finalize the First Annual Work Plan (Year 1)	UNESCO (IE)	EE; National Agencies	Immediate; prior to submission of Inception Report	In progress; validated in principle, final version pending
Incorporate agreed refinements to align activities with approved outputs and outcomes	EE	UNESCO; National Agencies	Immediate; concurrent with finalization	Not started; refinements identified but not yet integrated
Finalize detailed activity sequencing, including prioritization, interdependencies, country-level rollout logic, and implementation timeline alignment	EE	UNESCO; National Agencies	Immediate; prior to validation	Not started; gaps identified during inception discussions
Circulate revised First Annual Work Plan for formal validation	UNESCO (IE)	EE; National Agencies	Immediate; following revision	Not started; dependent on prior actions
Develop a comprehensive roles and responsibilities matrix	UNESCO (IE)	EE	Immediate; priority early deliverable	Not started; matrix not yet developed
Define activity-level responsibilities across institutions	UNESCO (IE)	EE; National Agencies	Immediate; linked to matrix development	Not started; currently only high-level roles defined

Confirm procedures and arrangements for engagement and management of project staff, including recruitment, contracting, and institutional responsibilities	UNESCO (IE)	EE; National Agencies	Immediate; prior to full operational deployment	Not started; procedures not formally defined
Clarify cross-cutting responsibilities (data, monitoring, reporting)	UNESCO (IE)	EE	Immediate; aligned with matrix development	Not started; not operationally specified
Confirm PSC governance arrangements (mandate and functions)	UNESCO (IE)	EE; National Agencies	Immediate; before first PSC meeting	Not started; accepted in principle only
Finalize PSC composition and representation	UNESCO (IE)	EE; National Agencies	Immediate; prior to operationalization	Not started; composition not confirmed
Establish PSC operational procedures and meeting schedule	UNESCO (IE)	EE	Immediate; before first PSC session	Not started; procedures not defined
Define and formalize project-wide decision-making procedures, reporting lines, and coordination mechanisms across implementing and executing entities	UNESCO (IE)	EE; National Agencies	Immediate; early implementation phase	Not started; procedures not fully specified during inception
Refine pilot area configurations (all pilot areas)	EE	National Agencies;	Short term; early implementation	In progress; two pilots validated, one pending

		UNESCO (IE)		
Conduct technical consultations on Pilot Area 3	EE	National Agencies	Short term; before PSC submission	Not started; consultation required
Prepare documentation for submission of Pilot Area 3 to PSC	EE	UNESCO (IE); National Agencies	Short term; after consultations	Not started; depends on prior action
Develop monitoring and reporting tools	UNESCO (IE)	EE	Immediate to short term; before first reporting cycle	Not started; tools not developed
Prepare standardized reporting templates	UNESCO (IE)	EE	Immediate; aligned with M&E setup	Not started; templates not developed
Clarify indicators, baselines, and data collection approaches	EE	UNESCO (IE); National Agencies	Short term; early implementation phase	Not started; baselines not defined
Define data collection and reporting methodologies	EE	UNESCO (IE)	Short term; linked to M&E system	Not started; methodologies not standardized
Confirm and operationalize data flow protocols (national to regional)	EE	UNESCO (IE); National Agencies	Short term; before reporting begins	Not started; protocols not formalized
Define and confirm financial reporting procedures, including reporting frequency, formats,	UNESCO (IE)	EE; National Agencies	Short term; prior to first financial reporting cycle	Not started; procedures not fully specified at inception

responsibilities, and audit arrangements in line with implementing entity requirements				
Establish an operational monitoring and reporting system	EE	UNESCO (IE); National Agencies	Short term; before first reporting cycle	Not started; system not operational
Institutionalize an action tracking mechanism (matrix or dashboard)	EE	UNESCO (IE); National Agencies	Short term; early implementation	Not started; tracking system not established
Establish and operationalise a Complaints Management Committee	UNESCO (IE)	CCOP-TS	Established in early implementation	Not started; not operational

Concept Note and Agenda

The Regional Inception Meeting for the Adaptation Fund Project

Groundwater resources in the Greater Mekong Subregion: Collaborative management to increase climate change resilience

Time: 14-17pm (GMT+7) on 20 May 2026 (online meeting)

I. Background

The Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) comprises Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR), Thailand and Viet Nam. With a rapidly increasing population in the range of 250 million people, the region is experiencing more variable surface water flows, a prolonged dry season and intensifying droughts and a growing demand for water resources, including groundwater. Despite relatively abundant surface water resources, a considerable number of low-income groups and urban/rural communities rely on low-cost groundwater for their domestic, agrarian and industrial use. Several groundwater reserves are transboundary and it is recognized that there is limited capacity to manage these shared resources and limited knowledge about the sustainable yields of these transboundary aquifers. Recent and predicted population dynamics will put more pressure on limited water resources, accelerated by consumption and behavioural patterns, unless serious awareness, education, and science-based information flow balance this trend.

This project seeks to address challenges through implementing a transboundary groundwater collaboration, establishing effective regional capacities, partnerships and networks in the Greater Mekong for the sustainable management and utilization of groundwater resources as an adaptation response to protect people, livelihoods and ecosystems from climate change impacts. Five main components are outlined in the project: 1. Groundwater resource assessment and monitoring; 2. Priority use and stakeholders; 3. Resource management, information tools and equipment; 4. Regional cooperation, coordination and information exchange; and 5. Capacity building and training. These five components will be achieved in the pilot areas, with adjustments to configuration where required to ensure implementation feasibility, while maintaining the cross-cutting transboundary result that will significantly strengthen the local capacity of primary stakeholders to address climate resilience issues across the region. Implementation of project activities in the pilot areas will be guided by the project's cross-cutting objectives and will enable the joint generation of resilience deliverables on the ground.

The Greater Mekong Subregion is endowed with a rich tapestry of cultures, ecosystems, and histories, but it also shares common vulnerabilities in the face of climate change. Groundwater resources, often hidden beneath the surface, are integral to the survival and prosperity of this region's diverse communities. They are the invisible veins that sustain life, agriculture, and ecosystems. Yet, these hidden treasures face threats from shifting rainfall patterns, rising temperatures, and increasing water demand.

The Regional Inception Meeting for the Adaptation Fund Project “[Groundwater resources in the Greater Mekong Subregion: Collaborative management to increase climate change resilience](#)” marks a significant milestone in our shared commitment to addressing the multifaceted challenges arising from climate change. Nestled within this lush and ecologically vital region, groundwater, a lifeline for communities and ecosystems, is under increasing threat due to the impacts of climate change. This meeting is a structured technical alignment phase to review and consolidate implementation, governance and reporting arrangements at the start of the project. Importantly, it emphasizes cultivating a strong sense of teamwork among the participating countries and stakeholders.

UNESCO, in close coordination with CCOP-TS, IGRAC, IWMI and the National Agencies of Cambodia (Department of Green Economy), Lao People’s Democratic Republic (Department for Water Resources), Thailand (Department of Groundwater Resources), and Viet Nam (National Center for Water Resources Planning and Investigation), is organizing the online Regional Inception Meeting on 20 May 2026 as a project kick-off.

II. Objectives of the Regional Inception Meeting

The Regional Inception Meeting is a compliance-critical step to operationalise Board-approved commitments and consolidate implementation arrangements at the start of the 4-year project. It will be held online with participation of all organizations that have been assigned roles and responsibilities in the project organization, including the Implementing Entity (UNESCO), Executing Entities (CCOP-TS, IWMI, and IGRAC) as well as country representatives from the National Agencies, technical advisors, and The Mekong River Commission Secretariat (MRCS) will contribute to the Inception Meeting. The Inception Meeting is crucial to generate momentum for project implementation and to consolidate and review and confirm where appropriate the work plan for the project’s first year.

The primary objectives of this Regional Inception Meeting are multifaceted, encompassing both the immediate and long-term goals of the project:

- **Fostering shared understanding and national ownership:** This meeting aims to foster a shared understanding of the project's overarching goals, specific objectives, and expected outcomes among all participating stakeholders. A unified vision is crucial for effective project implementation, ensuring all National Agencies fully understand and take ownership of the project.
- **Facilitating Collaboration:** Collaboration is at the heart of this project. The meeting will serve as a platform to facilitate collaboration and coordination among the participating countries and key stakeholders, including governmental bodies, intergovernmental organizations, and research institutions. Effective collaboration and successful project implementation rely heavily on strong working relationships and a sense of shared purpose among country representatives and stakeholders. Team-building activities will be integrated throughout the meeting to promote effective communication, trust, and a supportive atmosphere.
- **Outlining Project Governance:** This includes discussing the roles, functions, and responsibilities within the project's decision-making structures, including reporting and communication lines, and

conflict resolution mechanisms; Roles and responsibilities of all project organization structures will be clarified and meetings planned. The first Project Steering Committee (PSC) meeting will be scheduled following the Regional Inception Meeting. See also working document #4.

- **Outlining Project Components:** The meeting will review and confirm where appropriate agreed components and their implementation modalities, delineating the specific tasks, responsibilities, and timelines, responsibilities, and timelines for each (project team and National Agencies). This clarity is essential for ensuring that the project proceeds smoothly and efficiently.
- **Establishing a clear Roadmap for project implementation and First Annual Work Plan,:** Participants will review, refine and consolidate the pilot areas and first annual work plan as per the approved proposal and results framework. See also working documents #3 and #6. The budget will be managed as a single regional envelope by component, with country and pilot allocations confirmed through the Year 1 Annual Work Plan.
- **Project Monitoring and Evaluation and Reporting** Review and refine project Theory of Change and recheck assumptions; Provide a detailed overview of reporting, as well as monitoring and evaluation (M&E) requirements. The M&E and workplan should be agreed and scheduled; Review and agree on reporting procedures and obligations, and arrangements for audits; Plan and schedule PSC meetings. See also working document #5.

III. Expected Outputs

The expected results of the Regional Inception Meeting are the following:

1. Consolidated Planning Documents

- **First Annual Work Plan (AWP):** A consolidated activity schedule aligned among partners for the project's first year (2026-2027).
- **Reviewed and refined Theory of Change:** A consolidated framework, targets, and verified assumptions.

2. Governance & Operational Agreements

- **Project Governance Structure**
- **Responsibility Matrix:** A clear breakdown of the roles and specific duties of UNESCO, CCOP-TS, IWMI, IGRAC, and National Agencies.
- **Communication & Reporting:** Review and confirm, where appropriate, reporting lines, frequency of updates, and internal communication channels between regional and national teams, required for implementation, monitoring, decision-making, and reporting to the Adaptation Fund.
- **PSC and Roadmap:** A consolidated schedule and agenda for upcoming PSC meetings.

3. Management & Compliance Frameworks

- **Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) Plan:** An agreed schedule for data collection, site visits, and performance tracking.

4. Regional Inception Meeting Records

- **National Status Synthesis:** A baseline collection of presentations and data shared by national agencies regarding current groundwater management policies and challenges.
- **Inception Meeting Minutes:** A record of all discussions, key decisions made, and a consolidated "Action List" for immediate next steps and project's inception report.

5. Inception Report

- The meeting's Inception Report will consolidate: first annual work plan, M&E arrangements, roles and responsibilities, implementation modalities, and governance structure, and will enable immediate start of implementation and reporting to the Adaptation Fund without gaps.

IV. Time and Venue

- **Time: 14-17 pm (GMT+7), 20 May 2026**
- **Modality: Online (via Zoom).** Register in advance for this meeting: <https://unesco-org.zoom.us/meeting/register/gogcydHfQBGat0l14tdoaQ>. The session will be recorded for internal documentation purposes with interpretation in Khmer, Lao, Thai, and Vietnamese.

V. Participants

Approximately 20-30 participants from the project Implementing Entity (UNESCO), Executing Entities (CCOP-TS, IWMI, and IGRAC), the National Agencies, and MRCS. Participation is by invitation only.

Draft tentative Agenda of the Regional Inception Meeting

Time	Agenda Item	Remarks/Note
13:50-14:00	Registration	
14:00 – 14:15	Welcome and opening remarks	UNESCO
14:15-14:30	Introduction to participants (by Organizations and Countries' representatives)	UNESCO
14:30-14:50	Overview of Project Background, Goals, Objectives, and Expected Outcomes and Components	UNESCO
Session 1: Work plan and pilot areas		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and agree on First Annual Work Plan • Review and agree on pilot modalities and pilot areas Objective: reviewed, refined, and confirmed where appropriate	UNESCO & CCOP-TS
Session 2: Theory of Change		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and agree on Theory of Change and assumptions Objective: review and refine where appropriate	UNESCO
Session 3: M&E and reporting		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reporting schedule • Responsibilities • Data flow Objective: agreed	UNESCO
Session 4: Governance and implementation		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roles and responsibilities • PSC structure • Reporting lines • Financial and audit • Objective: aligned and agreed 	UNESCO & CCOP-TS
Session 5: Summary of key points of alignment and next steps toward implementation		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and agree on full set of deliverables • Review and agree on readiness for implementation start (20 May 2026) 	UNESCO
Session 6: Closing remarks		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closing remarks 	UNESCO

Minutes of Meeting

The Regional Inception Meeting for the Adaptation Fund Project

Groundwater resources in the Greater Mekong Subregion: Collaborative management to increase climate change resilience

Items	Details
Date and time	20 May 2026, 14:00-16:15 (GMT+7)
Modality	Online via Zoom, with simultaneous interpretation in Khmer, Lao, Thai and Vietnamese
Moderator	Mr. Tarik Hassan, Regional Coordinator – Groundwater Cooperation and Climate Resilience, UNESCO Regional Office in Bangkok
Meeting purpose	To launch the implementation phase and consolidate the Year 1 work plan, pilot area approach, Theory of Change, M&E/reporting arrangements, and governance/implementation mechanisms.
Project parties represented	UNESCO (Implementing Entity); CCOP-TS, IWMI and IGRAC (Executing Entities); National Executing Agencies of Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Viet Nam; Mekong River Commission Secretariat (MRCS).
Annexes to this meeting's minutes	Annex 1: Concept note and Agenda Annex 2: List of participants Annex 3: Presentations at the Meeting

I. Opening and project overview

UNESCO/Mr. Tarik Hassan, Regional Coordinator – Groundwater Cooperation and Climate Resilience, UNESCO Regional Office in Bangkok, started the meeting, welcomed participants and introduced housekeeping rules.

Ms. Marina Patrier, Deputy Director of UNESCO Regional Office in Bangkok, opened the workshop. She welcomed representatives of Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Viet Nam and highlighted the urgency of groundwater cooperation in the GMS. She underlined that increasing population, longer dry seasons, intensifying droughts and more erratic surface-water flows are adding pressure to groundwater resources that are not yet fully understood or consistently managed. She emphasized three key messages: (i) shared direction across the five interlinked components; (ii) impact at scale, with pilots designed to generate results that can inform broader regional application; and (iii) knowledge sharing and peer learning as essential elements of transboundary groundwater governance.

Following the opening remarks, UNESCO facilitated a brief round of introductions, inviting the most senior representatives from each country and organization to introduce themselves by organization and country.

Representatives from National Agencies of Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Viet Nam, the Executing Entities CCOP-TS, IGRAC, and IWMI, and project stakeholder MRCS briefly introduced themselves.

Following the introduction round, UNESCO provided a project overview and presented the key institutions and their expected roles in the project. The project overview recalled the project name and its five components including groundwater resource assessment and monitoring; priority use and stakeholders; resource management, information tools and equipment; regional cooperation, coordination and information exchange; and capacity building and training. The key institutions involved in the project including **UNESCO** – with its mandate in science, water cooperation and capacity building through IHP – serves as the **Implementing Entity**, responsible for overall project management, coordination, fiduciary oversight, monitoring, reporting and compliance with Adaptation Fund requirements. **CCOP-TS** – a regional geoscience cooperation platform – serves as an **Executing Entity**, supporting regional coordination, operational implementation and country cooperation. **IGRAC** – a UNESCO-affiliated centre specialized in groundwater assessment and information systems – serves as an **Executing Entity**, supporting groundwater assessment, data harmonization, database development and monitoring guidance. **IWMI** – with technical expertise in water management, groundwater and managed aquifer recharge (MAR) – serves as an **Executing Entity**, supporting technical analysis, MAR feasibility and pilot design. **National Agencies (Department of Green Economy of Cambodia, Department of Water Resources of Lao PDR, Department of Groundwater Resources of Thailand, and National Center for Water Resources Planning and Investigation (NAWAPI) of Viet Nam** lead country-level coordination, technical inputs, data provision, stakeholder engagement and pilot implementation support. **MRCS**, as a regional stakeholder, contributes relevant experience in Mekong cooperation, regional coordination and information exchange.

II. Session 1 - Year 1 work plan, pilot areas and implementation modalities

2.1 Presentations and discussions

UNESCO provided an overview of the proposed first annual work plan, covering the first 12 months from today, 20 May 2026. The overview highlighted that the annual work plan included the main activity areas under the five approved project components, together with indicative timelines, expected deliverables, roles and coordination arrangements, as a basis for further review and refinement with Executing Entities and National Agencies.

UNESCO presented a review of the pilot areas for implementation. Regarding **Pilot Area 1**, it was noted that discussions had taken place prior to the inception workshop with relevant agencies and executing entities on the configuration of the first pilot area. Based on these discussions, a suggestion was made to slightly adjust the pilot area from the one originally proposed in the project document to another transboundary aquifer, namely AS88. It was clarified that the project document requires the pilot areas to be transboundary aquifers, and that the Vientiane system is in line with AS88. The proposed adjustment will therefore be brought into the inception report, with the understanding that it remains fully in line with the approved project document. **Pilot Area 2** remains the Upper Mekong Delta transboundary aquifer shared by Cambodia and Viet Nam. **Pilot Area 3** is going through an alternative configuration and remains under refinement; options mentioned included a Cambodia-Lao PDR transboundary aquifer and, as a possible alternative, a Lao PDR-Viet Nam one. UNESCO indicated that any refinement must remain transboundary in nature and consistent with the approved project framework and will need to be submitted to the Adaptation Fund and the Project **Steering Committee (PSC)** for review and approval. The issue will therefore be reflected in the inception report and followed up with

discussions with the concerned National Agencies and Executing Entities before being brought to the PSC for decision.

Following the discussion on pilot areas, Mr. Tarik Hassan briefly presented the project's implementation modality. He explained that the project will be implemented across the pilot areas through a combination of regional coordination and national implementation, with activities delivered through the pilot frameworks. He further noted that implementation will be operationalized through key cross-cutting instruments, including the Gender Action Plan, the Environmental and Social Management Plan, stakeholder engagement, and capacity-building activities.

CCOP-TS/ Mr. Songyang Wu, Regional Expert, then provided its perspective on the proposed work plan, focusing on feasibility, sequencing, regional coordination, and key risks and enabling factors at the start of implementation. CCOP-TS noted that groundwater capacity differs across the four countries. Thailand and Viet Nam have stronger existing groundwater institutions and monitoring systems and could support regional methodological harmonization, while Cambodia and Lao PDR require a capacity-first approach.

CCOP-TS emphasized the need for careful sequencing, noting that Component 1 assessment work should inform Component 3 pilot/MAR selection, while Component 2 activities on stakeholder engagement and gender-responsive participation should start early and run in parallel. CCOP-TS also highlighted the importance of data harmonization, trust-building through joint technical work, early engagement with provincial and community stakeholders, and formalizing MRC engagement in the Year 1 work plan.

For regional cooperation and sustainability, CCOP-TS suggested initiating the regional working group and Community of Practice early, using existing CCOP, UNESCO and MRC networks where possible. It also recommended that the knowledge management platform be operational by the end of Year 1 and flagged sustained national agency engagement and staff turnover as key risks to be mitigated through PSC oversight, training records and knowledge-sharing mechanisms.

2.2 Comments received

Source	Comment / Request	Responses/Follow-up noted during the meeting
CCOP-TS / Marivic Uzarraga (chat)	<p>General Comment on Workplan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Link the activities to project document output, example, C1.1-C1.5 -> Output 1.1 ➤ Revise C1.1 title to: "Assess data availability and compile baseline information for groundwater vulnerability and resilience assessment" ➤ Reason: The project document does not explicitly mention "climate change scenario analysis" as a standalone activity in Year 1. The approved wording focuses more on vulnerability, resilience potential, groundwater assessment frameworks. ➤ Add an activity under Component 1: develop a regional groundwater database structure and data-sharing protocol; draft regional GIS/database framework and data-sharing protocol; Responsible: IGRAC and CCOP-TS; timeline: Oct 2026-Feb 2027. This activity would align strongly with: Output 1.1, 1.2 and monitoring harmonization requirements. ➤ Under Component 2: Can C2.4 and C2.5 be merged? Propose title - Establish project gender-responsive participation 	UNESCO acknowledged these comments and will consider their integration into the revised technical work plan and inception report.

Source	Comment / Request	Responses/Follow-up noted during the meeting
	<p>mechanism or establish and operationalize gender platform for groundwater governance *Add wording in C2.3, C2.6, C2.7 --"including women and vulnerable groups"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Under Component 3, add an activity on development of pilot sustainability and O&M framework; output: draft sustainability and financing approach for pilot interventions; timeline: Mar-Jun 2027; responsible: National Agencies, UNESCO and IWMI. ➤ Under Component 4, clarify whether "TBA Strategy" means Transboundary Aquifer Management Strategy or Transboundary Aquifer Cooperation Strategy. 	
IWMI / Paul Pavelic	Requested screening of a map showing clearly where pilot areas are or are proposed to be.	UNESCO explained that the map would be shared after further discussions with CCOP-TS and National Agencies.
Thailand / Prof. Sucharit Koontanakulvong	<p>Proposed that pilot areas should contribute to the Mekong River in/out system; referred to AS88, AS89 and AS90 as possible sites previously identified in UNESCO materials. The Thailand-Cambodia transboundary area may fall in a smaller watershed and needs further discussion.</p> <p>Due to the lack of monitoring data in some countries, selection of monitoring wells should be moved to the end of Year 1 so preparation/drilling can start in Year 2.</p> <p>Workshops should be planned after field implementation so case studies can be presented to member countries.</p> <p>Roles of country authorities and international organizations in the chart presented should be clearly defined.</p>	UNESCO acknowledged these inputs and will follow up bilaterally with national agencies and CCOP-TS, as part of the refinement of the technical work plan and pilot configuration.
Viet Nam / NAWAPI-MAE	NAWAPI noted that national approval will be required for project activities to be formally implemented in Viet Nam, and that the approval process may take approximately one month. NAWAPI will coordinate with UNESCO Office in Hanoi to obtain the necessary information for the approval dossier, including clarification on the total funding allocation for NAWAPI. In parallel, while the formal approval process is underway, NAWAPI indicated its willingness to mobilize its own resources to continue preparatory and implementation-related work in Viet Nam to avoid delays.	UNESCO noted the approval process and will hold a bilateral discussion with NAWAPI and CCOP-TS to assess implications for timeline and support needs.

2.3 Session conclusions

The Year 1 work plan and implementation approach were considered broadly aligned with the approved project framework, and will serve as an initial working basis for implementation, recognising that the work plan remains under active development and requires further refinement of key elements before full operationalisation, including sequencing, roles and responsibilities, and selected activities, and without

constituting a final approved version at this stage. Participants acknowledged that the current work plan should be used as a guiding framework for initial implementation, while not all elements are yet finalised or fully specified.

Key elements requiring further refinement include, inter alia, the sequencing of activities, clarification of roles and responsibilities across implementing partners, revision of selected activity definitions, and finalization of the configuration of Pilot Area 3. These elements are to be addressed through the development of the detailed technical work plan, to be led by UNESCO in coordination with CCOP-TS, Executing Entities and National Agencies during the initial phase of implementation.

Pilot Area 1 and Pilot Area 2 were considered as broadly consistent with the project framework, while Pilot Area 3 requires further refinement and consultation and remains to be finalized through follow-up technical discussions and PSC review.

It was further noted that the allocation of roles and responsibilities within the annual work plan will require refinement in the detailed technical work plan to ensure clarity across implementing, executing and national levels.

Follow-up actions will include bilateral and technical discussions with relevant partners to further specify these elements and consolidate them into the revised technical work plan and inception report.

The comments from CCOP-TS, Thailand and Viet Nam will be reflected in the Inception Report and in the revised technical work plan, as appropriate.

III. Session 2 - Theory of Change

3.1 Presentations and discussions

UNESCO/Ms. Lan Huong, Natural Sciences Specialist in UNESCO Viet Nam presented the project Theory of Change as approved in the project document. The presentation recalled the logical linkages between project outputs, outcomes, instrument packages, project impact, global impact and paradigm-shift objective.

The presentation highlighted that the five project components are mutually reinforcing. Groundwater assessment and monitoring will generate the evidence base; stakeholder engagement and gender-responsive participation will ensure that groundwater users, including women and vulnerable groups, are involved; pilot interventions will demonstrate practical groundwater management and adaptation measures; regional cooperation will support harmonized approaches and policy uptake; and capacity building will strengthen long-term technical and institutional capability.

The Theory of Change is based on several key assumptions, including that participating countries remain committed to regional cooperation; National Agencies and Executing Entities are able to coordinate effectively; relevant groundwater data can be accessed, shared and harmonized; pilot areas are sufficiently defined and technically feasible; communities and stakeholders are willing to participate; gender and safeguards requirements can be meaningfully integrated; and project outputs are taken up by national and regional institutions beyond the project period.

3.2 Comments received

Source	Comment / request	Follow-up noted during the meeting
Thailand / Prof. Sucharit Koontanakulvong	Requested the documents/slides shown during the meeting to allow better understanding and internal review. Thailand may provide further comments afterwards	UNESCO acknowledged the request agreed to share the presentation/documents for further review
IWMI / Paul Pavelic	Considered the Theory of Change an acceptable and faithful depiction of the project document but at a high-level, asked at what stage it would be drilled down to pilot level and how indicators, baselines and targets would be defined for tracking progress from activities to impact.	UNESCO clarified that project indicators exist in the project document. Pilot-level indicators, detailed technical work plan, budget, M&E arrangements and results framework will be further refined with CCOP-TS, discussed with all agencies, and brought to the PSC for approval.
CCOP-TS / Marivic Uzarraga (chat)	Suggested structuring the Theory of Change around inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and impact, showing causal relationships, cross-component interaction, enabling assumptions and behavioural/system changes.	UNESCO acknowledged the comments and will consider them in the narrative refinement of the inception report, as appropriate.
	Recommended strengthening climate adaptation framing with wording around effective regional capacities, partnerships and cooperative mechanisms supporting sustainable groundwater management and climate change adaptation, protecting people, livelihoods and ecosystems from increasing climate-related water security risks.	
	Suggested revising outputs to match the project document, including Output 1.1: Shared aquifer inventory for the GMS compiled that assesses groundwater vulnerability and resilience potential; and Output 1.2: Harmonized groundwater monitoring network established.	

3.3 Session conclusions

The Theory of Change was confirmed without objection as a basis for implementation, with acknowledgement of the request from Thailand that related documents/slides will be shared for further review; and of the comments from CCOP-TS which will be considered in narrative refinement of the Inception Report, while remaining consistent with the project document.

IV. Session 3 - Monitoring, evaluation and reporting

4.1 Presentations and discussions

UNESCO/ Mr. Tarik Hassan presented an overview of the project's monitoring, evaluation and reporting requirements, emphasizing that these arrangements are central to Adaptation Fund compliance and to tracking progress across the regional and national levels. He explained that the inception workshop marks the formal project start date, and that an inception report will be prepared following the workshop to consolidate the agreed annual work plan, M&E arrangements, roles and responsibilities, implementation modalities, and governance structure.

The presentation also outlined the main reporting requirements, including regular progress reporting, annual Project Performance Reports, safeguards and gender-related monitoring, periodic monitoring through project

visits where relevant, and the preparation of evaluation and audit reports in line with Adaptation Fund and UNESCO requirements. Tarik highlighted that reporting should capture both technical progress and implementation issues, including progress against outputs and indicators, risks, lessons learned, expenditures, and adaptive management needs.

He further noted that information and reporting should flow through the National Agencies, to Executing Entities, to UNESCO, and finally to Adaptation Fund, with clear coordination among regional and country-level teams. UNESCO will coordinate with CCOP-TS to develop suitable reporting templates.

It was noted that several operational elements of the governance framework, including the recruitment of the Chief Technical Advisor, the finalization of reporting templates, and the clarification of roles of certain stakeholders such as MRCS, will be further developed during the early implementation phase.

4.2 Comments received

Source	Comment / request	Follow-up noted during the meeting
MRCS/ Sinxay Vongphachanh	asked for clarification on the respective roles and responsibilities of the international organizations, including MRCS in the project reporting process	UNESCO clarified that at this stage, as the role of MRCS was not established in the project document, there is no need for reporting with the current set up. Further discussions will be arranged to clarify practical modalities for its engagement, including the reporting and monitoring requirements linked to that.
Viet Nam/ NAWAPI	Work Plan should provide further information on project structure and implementation mechanism as well as the detailed components which should be implemented in each country.	UNESCO clarified that discussion on aspects relating to the governance of the project would be covered in the next session.

4.3 Session conclusions

The reporting schedule, roles/responsibilities and data flow were confirmed as the basis for implementation.

V. Session 4 - Governance and implementation

5.1 Presentations and discussions

UNESCO/Mr. Nissay Sam, Project Officer at UNESCO Cambodia, presented the project governance and implementation framework, including the institutional roles and coordination arrangements outlined in the project document. The presentation highlighted that the project governance is led by the Project Steering Committee (PSC), which provides strategic guidance, supports problem-solving during implementation, reviews project progress, and helps ensure that the project remains aligned with its objectives and priorities. The PSC includes representation from UNESCO as the Implementing Entity, the Executing Entities, and the National Agencies.

UNESCO, as the Implementing Entity, retains overall oversight and accountability for the project, including compliance with funding requirements, grant accountability, procurement oversight, resource utilization, monitoring and reporting. The Executing Entities — CCOP-TS, IWMI and IGRAC — provide technical and regional support, facilitate coordination across countries, contribute to technical outputs, and support

consolidation of regional-level inputs. The National Agencies are responsible for country-level implementation, including delivery of activities, data collection, national coordination and stakeholder engagement.

The presentation further emphasized that responsibilities are distributed across implementing, executing and national levels, with information flowing from National Agencies to Executing Entities and then to UNESCO for consolidation and reporting. Regional coordination is intended to ensure consistency and comparability across countries, while national implementation ensures that activities remain relevant to country contexts and local needs. The governance and coordination framework therefore aims to ensure accountability, clear reporting lines, joint delivery, and effective information flow among partners.

CCOP-TS/ Mr. Songyang Wu, Regional Expert, then presented its role as an Executing Entity, the engagement model with national agencies in 4 countries and a proposed operational coordination mechanism. As the Executing Agency, CCOP-TS provides technical alignment and operational continuity across the four countries so that the project functions as one coherent regional initiative.

The project direction function is taken by the CCOP-TS Director on a part-time basis, supported by a Chief Technical Advisor (CTA, to be hired by CCOP-TS), and a broader technical delivery model involving National Agencies, IWMI, IGRAC and UNESCO.

CCOP-TS then presented proposed country engagement modalities and highlighted that implementation support would need to be tailored to the different institutional contexts and capacities of each country. For Cambodia, the approach will focus on co-facilitation of community consultations and field assessments, reflecting the need for close support in field-level implementation and stakeholder engagement. For Lao PDR, CCOP-TS highlighted the need for early capacity support and regular monthly technical calls, given the relatively greater need for technical backstopping. For Thailand, the national agencies is expected to play a stronger technical role, including support to regional data harmonization methodology and possible triangular cooperation with Lao PDR. For Viet Nam, the counterpart will lead the Mekong Delta components, with CCOP-TS providing regional coordination support and UNESCO Hanoi facilitating liaison, while taking into account Viet Nam's national reporting and approval processes.

CCOP-TS proposed an operational coordination architecture: National Agencies submit monthly technical reports to CCOP-TS; CCOP-TS consolidates quarterly reports to UNESCO; the PSC meets twice a year for strategic oversight; coordination is supported through monthly technical calls, PSC meetings, all-country workshops, CCOP-UNESCO field visits, an online workspace, standard progress-report templates, field visit reports within one month, and an issue-escalation protocol from national level to CCOP-TS, UNESCO and the PSC.

The working modality will include national focal points covering technical and administrative functions, Joint Technical Working Groups operated at each pilot area, and the CTA as day-to-day technical coordinator across 4 countries. Annual work plans will be co-developed with all national partners rather than handed down to them.

CCOP-TS also highlighted safeguards for consistent implementation: a harmonized methodology for aquifer inventory and vulnerability assessment; harmonized monitoring protocols with standard parameters, measurement of frequencies and data format across all pilots; a shared GIS/data platform; annual methodology review to address any divergence. Technical details will be discussed with all agencies after this Inception Workshop.

Regarding the structure oversight, CTA reviews technical outputs before submission to UNESCO; semi-annual compliance checks against environmental and social policy and gender commitments. The inception report (to be finalized one month after today's workshop) will function as abiding reference for all subsequent annual workplan. The mid-term evaluation plays as a go/no-go checkpoint for the remaining activities.

Regarding adaptive management, CCOP-TS proposed that risks be tracked on a continuous basis through a project risk register maintained by CCOP-TS and reviewed during PSC meetings. Where implementation risks or capacity gaps emerge, targeted contingency budget support could be arranged. CCOP-TS also suggested organizing short lessons-learned sessions after each pilot visit, so that practical findings from the field can be captured and used to adjust implementation as needed.

5.2 Comments received

Source	Comment / request	Follow-up noted during the meeting
CCOP-TS / Marivic Uzarraga (chat) and Songyang Wu	In the work plan, the wording of roles should reflect that CCOP-TS provides regional coordination and operational implementation support, while IWMI and IGRAC provide specialized technical implementation support. In the annual work plan, activities such as C1.3 (identification of data gaps) and C1.5 should not list CCOP-TS as the sole responsible party; IWMI and IGRAC should be included as relevant.	UNESCO acknowledged and will review the need to rectify roles and responsibilities in the work plan.
Thailand / Assoc.Prof. Sucharit Koontanakulvong (chat)	Asked who should DGR contact if some more clarifications are requested for preparation for further approval from DGR executives.	UNESCO responded that the content will be refined with CCOP-TS, and templates will be prepared.
	Whether climate change resilience in groundwater resources would be defined under the project.	IWMI explained that defining groundwater resilience is linked to the identification of project success indicators, including whether groundwater quality and groundwater storage can be sustained over the long term. These were noted as key measures for groundwater resilience and effective adaptation to climate change.
	Asked who DGR will contact if some more clarification is requested	UNESCO/Mr. Tarik Hassan will be the focal point for any clarification/information needed
IWMI / Paul Pavelic	Reaffirmed that IWMI appears underrepresented in the annual work plan and could provide stronger technical support.	UNESCO acknowledged and will review technical delivery roles of IMWWI in the annual workplan.
	Asked whether the Year 4 conference could include scientific contributions and innovative elements to be presented, possibly linked to capacity building/training. Noted that this is an open question for discussion.	UNESCO noted the suggestion for further discussion.
	Suggested to add into UNESCO's presentation (Slide 1) the governance narrative that governance arrangements support safeguards compliance,	UNESCO clarified that the full governance structure can be found in the project documents. UNESCO also acknowledged

Source	Comment / request	Follow-up noted during the meeting
CCOP-TS / Marivic Uzarraga (chat)	gender-responsive implementation and results-based monitoring.	and will review all the suggestions to be reflected in the narrative of the governance structure in the inception report.
	Suggested to add into UNESCO's presentation (Slide 2) clarification that information and reporting are coordinated through National Agencies, Executing Entities and UNESCO.	
	Suggested to add into UNESCO's presentation (Slide 2) that the PSC provides strategic guidance, reviews implementation progress and supports coordination across participating countries and institutions.	
	Suggested to revise UNESCO's presentation (Slide 2) "regional coordination wording to emphasize harmonized methodologies, monitoring approaches and reporting across countries, as well as regional learning and knowledge exchange."	
	Suggested to add into UNESCO's presentation that governance arrangements support delivery and monitoring of approved outputs and indicators, and include safeguard oversight, ESMP compliance and gender-responsive implementation.	
	Suggested to add into UNESCO's presentation that regional technical working groups may support implementation and coordination, and that stakeholder and community participation are integrated into implementation and monitoring processes.	
CCOP-TS / Songyang Wu	Clarified that the project document foresees a CTA hired by CCOP-TS to provide technical guidance and he/she will organize an executive project team consisting of national experts from the four countries and technical assistance partners, including IWMI, IGRAC and UNESCO.	UNESCO noted the clarification.

5.3 Session conclusions

The governance structure and coordination mechanisms were confirmed as broadly aligned with the project document, while certain operational modalities remain to be further specified and operationalized during early implementation.

Roles and responsibilities were considered broadly defined, but the technical delivery arrangements and responsibility matrix require refinement in order to further clarify the specific roles of CCOP-TS, IWMI, IGRAC, National Agencies and UNESCO through the development of the detailed technical work plan in the initial phase of implementation.

VI. Final alignment, readiness and closing

UNESCO summarized the agreements and suggestions made with no objection from participants:

- ✓ The Year 1 work plan was aligned and confirmed, subject to the refinements noted during the meeting.
- ✓ The pilot areas were broadly confirmed, with Pilot Area 3 requires further refinement and consultation. UNESCO will discuss and revert to all concerned partners.
- ✓ The Theory of Change was confirmed, with a request to share documents/slides.
- ✓ M&E and reporting arrangements were confirmed.
- ✓ Governance and implementation arrangements were confirmed, with further refinement required on technical delivery.

UNESCO clarified that the project implementation phase formally starts following the completion of the inception phase and the holding of the inception workshop. This does not mean that all field activities will commence immediately. Rather, several open items identified during the workshop — including the clarification of Pilot Area 3, the detailed technical work plan, budget arrangements, establishment of the PSC, and other issues raised during the meeting — will need to be further addressed during the first weeks and months of implementation reflecting that the inception phase established the overall framework, while detailed technical and operational elements will be consolidated during the initial implementation phase. The meeting therefore established a common basis for project implementation, while confirming that a number of technical, operational and coordination elements remain to be further elaborated and consolidated during the early implementation phase. This follow-up process will serve to consolidate outstanding technical and operational elements and ensure clarity on roles, sequencing and implementation arrangements prior to full-scale execution

UNESCO/Mr. Flavio Bonetti, Representative of UNESCO to Cambodia, closed the workshop on behalf of UNESCO. He expressed appreciation to the representatives of the four participating countries, Executing Entities and regional partners for their active participation and constructive contributions. He highlighted three key messages: the importance of maintaining alignment around the annual work plan and clarified roles and responsibilities; the need for a realistic and adaptive approach in view of data gaps, capacity differences and the complexity of transboundary groundwater cooperation; and the value of sustained commitment across institutions, disciplines and borders. He underlined that the agreed work plan, M&E arrangements and governance structure should now become operational tools, and that the pilots should generate scalable models and lessons for the region. He reaffirmed UNESCO's full commitment, as the Implementing Entity, to supporting effective coordination, technical quality, accountability, and collaboration among all partners throughout implementation of the project.

Annex: Summary of Proceedings

1 Session 1: First Annual Work Plan and Pilot Areas

Key issues raised

The discussion on the First Annual Work Plan and pilot areas focused on operational feasibility, sequencing of activities across components, and clarity in implementation modalities.

A key issue concerned the alignment of the proposed work plan with the approved project document, particularly regarding terminology, activity structuring, and direct linkage to project outputs. Participants emphasised the need to maintain strict consistency with approved outputs while allowing for refinement to reflect implementation realities¹.

Capacity disparities across countries were explicitly highlighted. Thailand and Viet Nam were identified as having relatively stronger groundwater monitoring systems and technical capacities, whereas Cambodia and Lao People's Democratic Republic were noted to require an initial focus on capacity strengthening and technical backstopping².

Additional issues included:

- The adequacy and availability of baseline groundwater data across countries
- The sequencing of monitoring network development, with concerns that insufficient baseline data may delay network operationalisation
- The need for early establishment of data harmonisation protocols and regional databases
- The importance of integrating gender-responsive elements consistently across stakeholder-related activities

Pilot area selection generated technical discussion, particularly regarding the configuration of the first pilot area and the requirement to ensure that all pilot areas are transboundary and aligned with the project document framework.

Decisions taken

The following decisions were confirmed during the session and constitute decisions accepted without objection and subject to further refinement, forming the basis for actions detailed in Section 10, Annex Action List, and supported by the Annex Meeting Minutes and the Annex First Annual Work Plan:

- The First Annual Work Plan was considered broadly aligned with the project document and suitable as an initial working basis, accepted without objection as an initial working basis, subject to refinement, and to be operationalised through actions referenced in Section 10.2 and Annex First Annual Work Plan
- The pilot-based implementation approach was accepted without objection as the proposed operational modality for Year 1
- Pilot Area 1 and Pilot Area 2 were considered broadly consistent with project requirements
- Pilot Area 3 remains under refinement and will be further developed through consultations and submitted to the PSC for formal approval

Points of convergence and divergence

There was general alignment, with no objections recorded, on the overall structure and feasibility of the work plan, as well as on the pilot-based implementation model.

Limited divergence arose regarding:

- The precise sequencing of certain activities, particularly monitoring network development
- The level of detail required in linking activities to outputs
- The technical framing of selected activities, including climate analysis elements

These divergences were procedural in nature and did not affect overall alignment.

Implications for implementation

The session recorded no objection to proceeding to implementation, subject to refinement and as reflected in decisions under Section 6 and actions under Section 10, while requiring:

- Early technical revision of the work plan to ensure output-level alignment
- Integration of capacity-differentiated implementation approaches across countries
- Early initiation of data harmonisation and database development processes
- Continued consultation on the configuration of Pilot Area 3

2 Session 2: Theory of Change

Key issues raised

The discussion focused on the adequacy and clarity of the Theory of Change as an operational framework.

Participants raised the need for:

- Clear linkage between high-level outcomes and pilot-level implementation
- Greater clarity on how indicators, baselines, and targets would be defined and operationalised
- Improved structuring of the Theory of Change narrative to reflect inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, and impacts in a causal sequence

There were also technical observations regarding alignment of terminology with the approved project document, particularly in relation to outputs and monitoring constructs¹.

Decisions taken

- The Theory of Change was acknowledged as acceptable without objection and consistent with the approved project document and will guide implementation as detailed in the Annex Theory of Change and supported by the Annex Meeting Minutes, with any further clarification to be addressed through actions referenced in Section 10
- Key assumptions underpinning the Theory of Change were validated without objection
- No major structural revisions were deemed necessary at the inception stage

Points of convergence and divergence

There was a general alignment, with no objections raised, on the overall validity of the Theory of Change as a guiding framework.

Minor divergence related to:

- The desired level of operational detail at the pilot level
- The structure and presentation of the Theory of Change narrative

These were considered refinement issues rather than substantive disagreements.

Implications for implementation

- The Theory of Change was accepted without objection as the guiding framework, subject to refinement and as detailed in Annex Theory of Change
- Further refinement was identified without objection and is reflected in actions under Section 10
- Narrative improvements may be incorporated in reporting documentation while maintaining consistency with the approved framework

3 Session 3: Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting

Key issues raised

The session highlighted the central role of monitoring, evaluation and reporting in ensuring compliance with AF requirements and effective project management.

Key issues included:

- Clarification of roles and responsibilities across IE, EE, and National Agencies
- Definition of reporting flows from national to regional levels and onwards to the AF
- The need for standardised reporting templates and harmonised data collection approaches

A specific issue was raised regarding the role of MRCS in reporting processes, noting that its role is not explicitly defined in the project document¹.

Decisions taken

- The overall reporting framework, including reporting cycles and data flow structure, was accepted in principle as detailed in the Annex M&E Framework and supported by the Annex Meeting Minutes, subject to further operational specification, and to be operationalised through actions referenced in Section 10.2
- Roles and responsibilities for monitoring and reporting were agreed in principle
- The hierarchical reporting flow from National Agencies through EE to UNESCO and subsequently to the AF was confirmed

Points of convergence and divergence

There was no objection recorded on the reporting framework and its importance for accountability and coordination.

Limited divergence arose regarding:

- The specific role of regional stakeholders not formally defined in the project structure
- The level of detail required in reporting templates

Implications for implementation

- Development of standardised reporting templates was identified without objection as a required action, subject to refinement and linked to Section 10.2 and the Annex Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting Framework
- Further clarification of the role of regional stakeholders will be required through subsequent discussions

- Monitoring and reporting systems will be discussed and accepted in principle, subject to refinement and as reflected in decisions under Section 6.4 and actions under Section 10.

4 Session 4: Governance and Implementation

Key issues raised

The governance session focused on institutional roles, coordination mechanisms, and operational modalities across multiple levels.

Key issues included:

- The need to refine the allocation of technical responsibilities among EE
- Ensuring clarity in the division of roles between regional coordination and country-level implementation
- The adequacy of coordination mechanisms to ensure consistency across countries

Concerns were raised that certain roles, particularly technical delivery responsibilities, were not sufficiently specified in the initial work plan and required clarification¹.

Additional issues included:

- The definition and content of regular reporting outputs
- The incorporation of safeguards, including environmental and social safeguards and gender responsiveness, into governance structures
- The need for clear communication channels and focal points

Decisions taken

- The governance structure was acknowledged as broadly aligned with the project document and accepted in principle as detailed in the Annex Implementation and Governance and supported by the Annex Meeting Minutes, subject to refinement of technical responsibilities, to be addressed through actions in Section 10.2
- The PSC was confirmed as the central governance mechanism for strategic oversight
- Overall roles and responsibilities were accepted, subject to refinement of the technical responsibility matrix

Points of convergence and divergence

There was broad convergence on the governance structure and its adequacy for project implementation.

Areas of divergence included:

- The distribution of technical implementation responsibilities across EE
- The level of specificity required in role definitions within the work plan

Implications for implementation

- Refinement of the responsibility matrix was identified without objection and is reflected in actions under Section 10
- Clarification of technical delivery roles will be essential for operational efficiency

- Governance arrangements were accepted without objection in principle as requiring integration of safeguards, subject to refinement and as detailed in the Annex Implementation and Governance

5 Session 5: Final Alignment and Readiness

Key issues raised

The final session focused on consolidating the outcomes of previous discussions and assessing readiness for implementation.

Key issues included:

- Confirmation of alignment across all project elements
- Identification of outstanding issues requiring follow-up during early implementation
- Clarification of timelines for addressing unresolved technical and governance matters

Decisions taken

- The First Annual Work Plan was confirmed, subject to refinement
- Pilot areas were confirmed, with the exception of Pilot Area 3, which requires further consultation
- The Theory of Change, monitoring and reporting framework, and governance arrangements were confirmed
- Overall readiness for implementation was considered by participants, with no objections raised and with no critical blocking issues identified and accepted without objection, subject to completion of identified refinements as reflected in Section 10 and the Annex Action List

Points of convergence and divergence

There was general alignment, with no objections recorded, on overall readiness and alignment.

Residual divergence relates only to outstanding technical refinements, particularly:

- Finalisation of pilot configurations
- Refinement of the responsibility matrix
- Development of detailed operational tools such as reporting templates

Implications for implementation

- The project enters may proceed to implementation, accepted without objection, subject to completion of refinements as referenced in Section 10 and the Annex Action List , and following completion of identified refinements and formalisation of outstanding elements, following the inception phase
- Identified refinements are reflected in actions under Section 10 and subject to implementation confirmation
- The PSC will play a central role in confirming outstanding strategic decisions

Minutes of Meeting

The Regional Inception Meeting for the Adaptation Fund Project

Groundwater resources in the Greater Mekong Subregion: Collaborative management to increase climate change resilience

Annex 2: List of participants

No	Institutions	Names	Positions	Note
I	National Implementing agencies from 4 countries			
1	Cambodia- Ministry of Environment (MOE)	Taing Meng Eang	Director, Department of Green Economy, General Directorate of Policy and Strategy	
2		Sandab Khim	Deputy Director, Department of Green Economy	
3		Nop Sokhai	Deputy Director, Department of Green Economy	
4		Sopheha Mel	Chief of Bureau, Department of Green Economy	
5		Phan Kongkea	Vice Chief, Department of Green Economy	
6		Chan Soknaran	Vice Chief, Department of Green Economy	
7		Taing Punleu	Vice Chief, Department of Green Economy	
8	Laos - Department of Water Resources, Ministry of Agriculture and Environment	Ounakone Xayviliya	Deputy Director of Groundwater Division	
9		Keomanivone Phouthakhanty	Technical officer	Please confirm

No	Institutions	Names	Positions	Note
10	Thailand - Department of Groundwater Resources, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment	Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sucharit Koontanakulvong	Leading water resources engineering expert, Chulalongkorn University	
11		Mrs. Punyawee Thomas	Plan and Policy Analyst, International Relations Unit, Planning Division	
		Ms. Ocpasorn Oc-carach	Senior Expert in Groundwater Research and Development	
12	Viet Nam - National Center for Water Resources Planning and Investergation (NAWAPI) under Ministry of Agriculture and Environment (MAE)	Dr. La Duc Dung, General Director	General Director	
13		Nguyen Van Manh	Head of Project Development and Cooperation Division	
14		Nguyen Viet Tung	Deputy Head of Project Development and Cooperation Division	
15		Tran Thi Giang	Specialist of Project Development and Cooperation Division	
II	International Executing Entities			
16	IGRAC	Elisabeth Lictevout	Director	
17	CCOP-TS	Yongzheng Ma	Director	
18		Marivic Pulvera Uzarraga	Manager, Project Operation & Information	
19		Songyang Wu	Regional Expert	
20		Thanitnunth Invakul	Technical Assistant	Please confirm
21	IWMI	Mark Dubois	Regional Representative Southeast Asia	
22		Paul Pavelic	Senior Researcher – Hydrogeology	

No	Institutions	Names	Positions	Note
III	Project stakeholders			
23	MRCS	Sinxay Vongphachanh	Agriculture and Irrigation Specialist	
24		Thanawat Wetchapan	Project and Partnership Coordinator	Please confirm
	Implementing agency			
25	UNESCO	Marina Patrier	Deputy Director, Regional Office in Bangkok	
26		Flavio Bonetti	UNESCO Representative to Cambodia	
27		Jonathan Baker	UNESCO Representative to Viet Nam	
28		Kiri Drollett	Senior Operations Officer, Regional Office in Bangkok	
29		Tarik Hassan	Regional Coordinator - Groundwater Cooperation and Climate Resilience	
30		Chanchana Wongot	IT Assistant, Regional Office in Bangkok	
31		Samram Tuy	National Project Officer, UNESCO Office in Phnom Penh	
32		Nissay Sam	National Project Officer, UNESCO Office in Phnom Penh	
33		Socheata Chun	National Project Assistant (SC), UNESCO Office in Phnom Penh	
34		Lan Huong Tran	Natural Sciences Programme Specialist, UNESCO Office in Viet Nam	
35		Lan Nguyen	Project Officer, Water and Climate, UNESCO Office in Viet Nam	
36		An Nguyen Thi Minh	Senior Project Assistant, UNESCO Office in Viet Nam	

Annex E. Action List

Action Description	Responsible Entity	Supporting Entities	Timeline and Deadline	Status and Progress Indicators
Finalize the First Annual Work Plan (Year 1)	UNESCO (IE)	EE; National Agencies	Immediate; prior to submission of Inception Report	In progress; validated in principle, final version pending
Incorporate agreed refinements to align activities with approved outputs and outcomes	EE	UNESCO; National Agencies	Immediate; concurrent with finalization	Not started; refinements identified but not yet integrated
Finalize detailed activity sequencing, including prioritization, interdependencies, country-level rollout logic, and implementation timeline alignment	EE	UNESCO; National Agencies	Immediate; prior to validation	Not started; gaps identified during inception discussions
Circulate revised First Annual Work Plan for formal validation	UNESCO (IE)	EE; National Agencies	Immediate; following revision	Not started; dependent on prior actions
Develop a comprehensive roles and responsibilities matrix	UNESCO (IE)	EE	Immediate; priority early deliverable	Not started; matrix not yet developed
Define activity-level responsibilities across institutions	UNESCO (IE)	EE; National Agencies	Immediate; linked to matrix development	Not started; currently only high-level roles defined

Confirm procedures and arrangements for engagement and management of project staff, including recruitment, contracting, and institutional responsibilities	UNESCO (IE)	EE; National Agencies	Immediate; prior to full operational deployment	Not started; procedures not formally defined
Clarify cross-cutting responsibilities (data, monitoring, reporting)	UNESCO (IE)	EE	Immediate; aligned with matrix development	Not started; not operationally specified
Confirm PSC governance arrangements (mandate and functions)	UNESCO (IE)	EE; National Agencies	Immediate; before first PSC meeting	Not started; accepted in principle only
Finalize PSC composition and representation	UNESCO (IE)	EE; National Agencies	Immediate; prior to operationalization	Not started; composition not confirmed
Establish PSC operational procedures and meeting schedule	UNESCO (IE)	EE	Immediate; before first PSC session	Not started; procedures not defined
Define and formalize project-wide decision-making procedures, reporting lines, and coordination mechanisms across implementing and executing entities	UNESCO (IE)	EE; National Agencies	Immediate; early implementation phase	Not started; procedures not fully specified during inception
Refine pilot area configurations (all pilot areas)	EE	National Agencies;	Short term; early implementation	In progress; two pilots validated, one pending

		UNESCO (IE)		
Conduct technical consultations on Pilot Area 3	EE	National Agencies	Short term; before PSC submission	Not started; consultation required
Prepare documentation for submission of Pilot Area 3 to PSC	EE	UNESCO (IE); National Agencies	Short term; after consultations	Not started; depends on prior action
Develop monitoring and reporting tools	UNESCO (IE)	EE	Immediate to short term; before first reporting cycle	Not started; tools not developed
Prepare standardized reporting templates	UNESCO (IE)	EE	Immediate; aligned with M&E setup	Not started; templates not developed
Clarify indicators, baselines, and data collection approaches	EE	UNESCO (IE); National Agencies	Short term; early implementation phase	Not started; baselines not defined
Define data collection and reporting methodologies	EE	UNESCO (IE)	Short term; linked to M&E system	Not started; methodologies not standardized
Confirm and operationalize data flow protocols (national to regional)	EE	UNESCO (IE); National Agencies	Short term; before reporting begins	Not started; protocols not formalized
Define and confirm financial reporting procedures, including reporting frequency, formats,	UNESCO (IE)	EE; National Agencies	Short term; prior to first financial reporting cycle	Not started; procedures not fully specified at inception

responsibilities, and audit arrangements in line with implementing entity requirements				
Establish an operational monitoring and reporting system	EE	UNESCO (IE); National Agencies	Short term; before first reporting cycle	Not started; system not operational
Institutionalize an action tracking mechanism (matrix or dashboard)	EE	UNESCO (IE); National Agencies	Short term; early implementation	Not started; tracking system not established

FIRST ANNUAL WORK PLAN (YEAR 1)

Project start date: 20 May 2026

1. DECISION STATEMENT

The first annual work plan is from 20 May 2026 to 30 June 2027. All activities, timelines, and responsibilities below are to be reviewed and confirmed by participating National Agencies of Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Viet Nam, as well as CCOP TS, IGRAC, IWMI, and UNESCO.

2. ACTIVITY TABLE BY COMPONENT

COMPONENT 1 - Groundwater Resource Assessment and Monitoring

Activity	Output	Country	Timeline	Responsible
C1.1 Assess data availability, and climate change scenario analysis	Initial inventory	Regional	Jun-Oct 2026	National Agencies, CCOP-TS
C1.2 Data availability assessment and validation	Baseline dataset confirmed	Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Viet Nam	Jun-Aug 2026	National Agencies, CCOP-TS
C1.3 Identification of data gaps	Gap analysis completed	Regional	Jul-Aug 2026	CCOP-TS
C1.4 Preliminary vulnerability assessment	Initial assessment note	Regional	Aug-Sep 2026	IWMI
C1.5 Draft initial Component 1 technical note	Consolidated output	Regional	Sep 2026	CCOP-TS
C1.6 Design monitoring network (initial phase)	Monitoring concept	Regional	Oct 2026-Mar 2027	IGRAC, National Agencies
C1.7 National coordination sessions on monitoring	Agreed national inputs	Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Viet Nam	Feb-Mar 2027	National Agencies

COMPONENT 2 - Priority Use and Stakeholders

Activity	Output	Country	Timeline	Responsible
C2.1 Stakeholder mapping refinement	Updated stakeholder profiles	Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Viet Nam	Sep 2026	National Agencies
C2.2 Groundwater user group identification	User typologies	Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Viet Nam	Sep-Oct 2026	National Agencies

C2.3 Dialogue sessions in pilot regions	Stakeholder dialogue outputs	Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Viet Nam	Oct 2026	National Agencies
C2.4 Gender platform design	Gender platform design completed	Regional	Oct 2026	UNESCO
C2.5 Gender platform activation	Platform operational	Regional	Oct 2026	UNESCO
C2.6 Collection of sex-disaggregated water data	Baseline gender data	Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Viet Nam	Oct 2026-Jan 2027	National Agencies
C2.7 Development of practical groundwater use guidelines	Draft guidelines	Regional	Nov 2026-Mar 2027	National Agencies, CCOP-TS

COMPONENT 3 - Resource Management, Tools and Equipment

Activity	Output	Country	Timeline	Responsible
C3.1 Screening criteria for MAR and technologies	Screening framework	Regional	Oct 2026	IWMI
C3.2 Candidate site identification	Pilot site shortlist	Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Viet Nam	Nov 2026	National Agencies, IWMI
C3.3 Site suitability assessment	Suitability report	Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Viet Nam	Nov 2026	IWMI, IGRAC
C3.4 Initial safeguards review	Safeguards clearance	Regional	Nov 2026	UNESCO
C3.5 Preliminary design of pilot interventions	Pilot designs	Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Viet Nam	Dec 2026-Mar 2027	IWMI, National Agencies
C3.6 Community consultation on interventions	Pilot configurations informed by consultations	Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Viet Nam	Jan-Mar 2027	National Agencies
C3.7 Monitoring framework for pilots	Monitoring protocols	Regional	Feb-Mar 2027	IGRAC, UNESCO

COMPONENT 4 - Regional Cooperation and Coordination

Activity	Output	Country	Timeline	Responsible
C4.1 GW regulation analysis	MOU process launched	Regional	Jun -Dec 2026	National Agencies, CCOP-TS
C4.2 Prepare TBA strategy	TBA strategy	Regional	Jun -Nov 2026	National Agencies, CCOP-TS, UNESCO
C4.3 Draft MRCS MOU outline	Structured draft	Regional	Jul -Oct 2026	UNESCO

C4.4 Regional working group establishment	Working group operational	Regional	Oct-Nov 2026	UNESCO
C4.5 First transboundary technical exchanges	Exchange sessions delivered	Regional	Dec 2026	CCOP-TS
C4.6 Documentation of national groundwater policies	Policy documentation set	Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Viet Nam	Oct-Dec 2026	National Agencies, CCOP-TS
C4.7 Joint technical discussion sessions	Agreed cooperation inputs	Regional	Jan-Mar 2027	CCOP-TS

COMPONENT 5 - Capacity Building and Training

Activity	Output	Country	Timeline	Responsible
C5.1 Identification of training needs	Needs assessment report	Regional	Aug 2026-Jan 2027	CCOP-TS, UNESCO
C5.2 Design of training programme	Draft training plan	Regional	Feb 2027	UNESCO, CCOP-TS
C5.3 Finalization of annual training plan	Approved plan	Regional	Feb 2027	CCOP-TS, UNESCO
C5.4 Delivery of initial training modules	Training sessions delivered	Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Viet Nam	Mar-Jun 2027	CCOP-TS, UNESCO
C5.6 Establishment of community of practice	CoP operational	Regional	Mar 2027	UNESCO, CCOP-TS
C5.7 Setup of knowledge repository (SharePoint)	Platform operational	Regional	Jan-Apr 2027	IGRAC
C5.8 Knowledge products development	Training materials and notes	Regional	Mar-Jun 2027	UNESCO, CCOP-TS

3. CROSS-COMPONENT INCEPTION AND COMPLIANCE ACTIVITIES

Activity	Output	Timeline	Responsible
Inception Meeting (validation point)	Work plan validated	20 May 2026	UNESCO, CCOP-TS
Finalization of national focal point coordination	Confirmed focal points	May 2026	National Agencies
Completion of inception consultations	Consolidated consultation outputs	By 30 June 2026	CCOP-TS
Submission of Inception Report	Report submitted	20 June 2026	UNESCO
Signing of EE partnership agreements with UNESCO	Agreements signed	By 31 July 2026	UNESCO
First PSC meeting	First annual work plan noted and calendar agreed	August 2026	UNESCO, CCOP-TS
Environmental and social screening of pilot activities	ESMP compliance confirmed	Continuous	CCOP-TS, UNESCO, National Agencies

Financial and reporting compliance established	Reporting system operational	Jun-Jul 2026	UNESCO
Second PSC meeting	Progress reviewed	February 2027	UNESCO, CCOP-TS

4. TIMELINE SUMMARY

Period	Key Deliverables
May-June 2026	Inception Meeting completed; work plan validated; inception report submitted
June- August 2026	Implementing partnership agreements with Executing Entities formalized; MOU process initiated
August-October 2026	Baseline data validation completed
September-October 2026	Initial technical assessments and stakeholder platform activation
November-December 2026	Pilot screening and regional cooperation activities initiated
January-March 2027	Training programme finalized; monitoring network planning completed
August 2026 -June 2027	Implementation activities

5. RESPONSIBILITY STRUCTURE

Role	Entity
Overall oversight and compliance	UNESCO
Execution and coordination	CCOP-TS
National implementation	National Agencies
Technical delivery (assessment, MAR, monitoring)	IWMI, IGRAC
Data validation and field coordination	National Agencies
Stakeholder engagement	National Agencies
Gender and safeguards implementation	UNESCO with National Agencies

6. IMPLEMENTATION RULES

1. All activities are implemented as scheduled unless jointly agreed otherwise by all National Agencies.
2. All pilot-related activities are subject to environmental and social compliance screening prior to execution.
3. Gender participation and vulnerable group inclusion are mandatory across all stakeholder engagement activities.
4. Financial reporting follows Adaptation Fund requirements with quarterly internal tracking and annual reporting.
5. All outputs listed above constitute deliverables and are tracked for reporting.

7. VALIDATION

This first annual work plan constitutes the operational basis for Year 1 implementation. This work plan is subject to validation during the inception meeting and presented to the first PSC. Participating entities are expected to review and confirm activities, timelines, and responsibilities. Adjustments will be agreed collectively prior to validation.

Validation is confirmed by:

- National Agencies of Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Viet Nam
- UNESCO (Multilateral Implementing Entity)

Implementation, Governance, and Fiduciary Arrangements

Project start date: 20 May 2026
Status: For review and validation

Roles and responsibilities

Entity	Role	Responsibilities
UNESCO (Implementing Entity)	Oversight and accountability	Overall coordination; fund management and disbursement; reporting to the Adaptation Fund; quality assurance of outputs; compliance with environmental and social requirements
CCOP-TS	Executing Entity: execution and coordination	Day-to-day implementation; coordination with national partners; preparation of work plans, reports, and financial tracking; secretariat to the PSC
National Agencies (Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, Viet Nam)	National implementation	Data provision; coordination with national ministries and agencies; implementation of pilot activities; validation of national-level outputs
IWMI	Executing Entity: technical partner	Technical advisory support for groundwater management, pilot design, and resilience measures
IGRAC	Executing Entity: technical partner	Technical advisory support on groundwater assessment, monitoring, and information systems
Project Director (CCOP-TS)	Executive leadership	Operational management; oversight of staff and budget execution; reporting to UNESCO and PSC
Chief Technical Advisor (CCOP-TS)	Technical oversight	Technical guidance; supervision of technical outputs; support to monitoring and evaluation
Project Manager (UNESCO)	Management oversight	Supervision of execution; liaison with Adaptation Fund; coordination across partners

Objective: All roles and responsibilities are confirmed for implementation, with adjustments as required.

Governance structure

Body	Composition	Function
Project Steering Committee (PSC)	National Agencies of Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Viet Nam (one representative each), UNESCO, CCOP-TS, Chief Technical Advisor	Strategic oversight; review of progress; review of deliverables; resolution of escalated issues; facilitation of implementation
National Agencies	Designated national ministries and agencies in each country	National implementation; participation in PSC decision-making; provision and

		validation of data; coordination with national stakeholders; oversight of pilot execution at country level
Implementing Entity (UNESCO)	UNESCO Regional Bureau and field offices	Oversight, compliance, reporting, fund management, accountability to the Adaptation Fund
Executing Entity	CCOP-TS management and staff	Execution and coordination of activities; consolidation of reporting; operational management
Executing Entities	IWMI, IGRAC	Technical validation, advisory support, and quality assurance

PSC meeting schedule

Meeting type	Frequency	Timing
Regular PSC meetings	Twice per year	Throughout project duration
Additional meetings	As required	Based on implementation needs

Objective: The PSC structure and meeting schedule are confirmed, with adjustments as required during implementation.”.

Reporting and communication lines

Flow	Direction	Content
National Agencies, IGRAC, and IWMI to CCOP-TS	Upward	Data, implementation progress, pilot reporting
CCOP-TS to UNESCO	Upward	Consolidated reports, financial status, implementation updates
UNESCO to Adaptation Fund	Upward	Official reporting, financial reporting, compliance reporting
UNESCO to PSC	Horizontal	Progress updates, decisions required
PSC to UNESCO and CCOP-TS	Downward	Strategic guidance and review

Objective: All reporting and communication lines are established as required in line with project arrangements.

Conflict resolution mechanism

Step	Action	Responsible
1	Issue identified at implementation level	National Agency, Executing Entity or CCOP-TS
2	Internal resolution attempt	CCOP-TS with relevant partners
3	Escalation to Project Director	CCOP-TS
4	Escalation to UNESCO	Project Director
5	Final resolution	Project Steering Committee

Objective: All project partners agree to follow the escalation sequence for conflict resolution.

Financial and audit arrangements

Function	Responsible	Requirement
Fund management	UNESCO	Receipt, management, and disbursement of project funds
Financial execution	CCOP-TS	Use of funds according to approved work plans and budgets
Financial reporting	CCOP-TS to UNESCO	Quarterly and annual financial reporting
Audit	External auditor	Final certified audit at project closure
Compliance	UNESCO	Ensure adherence to financial rules and Adaptation Fund requirements

Objective: Financial management and audit procedures are confirmed for implementation, in line with project requirements.

Staffing arrangements

Position	Entity	Function
Project Manager	UNESCO	Oversight, coordination, reporting
Project Director	CCOP-TS	Overall execution management
Chief Technical Advisor	CCOP-TS	Technical supervision
Agencies	National Agencies, IGRAC, IWMI	Specialized technical support
Project support staff	CCOP-TS	Operational and administrative support

Objective: Staffing structure is confirmed and operational from project start.

Pilot implementation modalities

Pilot area	Modality	Implementation approach
Lao PDR-Thailand pilot area within the Mekong system	Coordinated implementation	Coordinated activities with alignment of technical approaches; joint technical exchange; shared approaches to groundwater management and monitoring
Cambodia-Viet Nam (Upper Mekong Delta)	Coordinated implementation	Coordinated activities with alignment of technical approaches; joint technical exchange; shared approaches to groundwater management and monitoring
Additional pilot area within the Mekong system	Implementation modality to be refined based on feasibility	Coordinated activities with alignment of technical approaches; specific implementation arrangements to be defined following feasibility assessment and country agreement

Objective: All pilot implementation modalities are confirmed and adopted with adjustments where required to address feasibility constraints while preserving project objectives.

Implementation requirements

Requirement

All entities operate according to defined roles

PSC review required for major decisions

Financial reporting required for disbursement

Audit required for project closure

Pilot modalities must follow agreed structure

Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting

Project start date: 20 May 2026

This summary presents the essential elements that require early alignment across all partners. It focuses on the reporting schedule, institutional roles, and key compliance requirements that are binding for project implementation.

1. Reporting Schedule

The project establishes a structured and mandatory reporting cycle covering the full implementation period, with clear responsibilities and timing.

Core reporting instruments

- **Inception meeting and report**
 - One-time requirement within the first 3 months of project start
 - Led by UNESCO
- **Quarterly progress reports**
 - Continuous reporting throughout implementation
 - Prepared by the project management team under UNESCO oversight
- **Annual progress reports**
 - Consolidated reporting once per year
 - In alignment with the Project Results Framework
- **Site visit reports**
 - Conducted according to the annual work plan
- **Project Steering Committee meetings**
 - Held twice per year for strategic oversight

Evaluation and closure requirements

- **Mid-term evaluation**
 - At the end of Year 2
 - Conducted by external evaluators
- **Final evaluation**
 - Conducted during the last 3 months of the project
- **Final project report**
 - Submitted in the final month
- **Financial audit**
 - Mandatory at project closure

Key implication

All reporting outputs are required and aligned with project compliance and disbursement requirements.

2. Roles and Responsibilities

The monitoring and reporting system is anchored in a multi-level institutional structure with clearly assigned functions and authority.

Core entities and functions

- **UNESCO (Implementing Entity)**
 - Overall M&E oversight
 - Final validation of data and reporting
 - Official reporting to the Adaptation Fund
- **CCOP TS (Executing Entity)**
 - Operational management of M&E
 - Consolidation of data and reports
 - Submission to UNESCO
- **IWMI, IGRAC (Executing Entities)**
 - Technical advisory
 - Technical verification of data
 - Quality assurance of monitoring outputs
- **National Agencies**
 - Implementation of pilot activities
 - Data provision at country level
 - National validation of data and outputs
- **Community-level actors**
 - Field data collection
 - Local monitoring and verification
- **External evaluators**
 - Independent mid-term and final evaluation
- **Project Steering Committee**
 - Governance-level validation
 - Review of progress and corrective actions

Key implication

All actors operate within clearly defined roles, and a sequenced data validation process. All reporting is expected to follow this structure.

3. Key Compliance Requirements

The project establishes a clear compliance framework governing reporting, data quality, and safeguards.

Requirements

- **Reporting compliance**
 - All reporting must follow the approved schedule
 - Required as a condition for continued implementation and funding
- **Data validation**
 - All data must be validated before submission
 - Validation is required for acceptance of reports
- **Gender and safeguards integration**

- Gender and environmental and social safeguards must be included in all reporting outputs
- This is a mandatory cross-cutting requirement
- **Independent evaluation**
 - Mid-term and final evaluations are mandatory
 - Required for project continuation and closure

Financial and M&E resourcing

- Dedicated budget allocations are confirmed for:
 - Inception workshop
 - Steering Committee functioning
 - Mid-term and final evaluations
 - External audit
- Ongoing monitoring is embedded within project management costs

Key implication

- Reporting, validation, and safeguards are conditions for disbursement
- Independent evaluation and audit will be conducted at project closure, in line with Adaptation Fund requirements.

Adaptation Fund Project

Groundwater resources in the Greater Mekong Subregion: Collaborative management to increase climate change resilience

Theory of Change

Impact	Effective regional capacities, partnerships, and networks in the Greater Mekong Subregion (Viet Nam, Lao PDR, Cambodia, and Thailand) for the sustainable management and utilization of groundwater resources as an adaptation response to protect people, livelihoods, and ecosystems from climate change impacts.
Assumptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The broad nature of analytical activities will lead to an assessment that is comprehensive and reflects regional specifics and diverse perspectives. • The water management mechanisms will be informed by scientific analysis as well as socio-economic and environmental considerations. • The inclusion of community-level demonstration projects will increase ownership and provide practical examples for decision-makers to replicate in other regions
Component	Component 1: Groundwater resource assessment and monitoring
Outcome	Outcome 1: A regional GMS approach to address challenges of climate change, sustainable water use, and resilience is created.
Assumptions	In-country stakeholders, including governments and beneficiaries, will devote sufficient staff and in-kind resources, including data, to analytical efforts and capacity strengthening.

Outputs	1.1 Harmonized regional groundwater resource inventories are utilized	1.2 Information-based policies are enabled
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Component	Component 2: Priority use and Stakeholders:	
Outcome	Outcome 2: Groundwater users in different economic sectors in the GMS have equitable access to the necessary information and guidelines and are able to participate actively in groundwater management.	

Assumptions	In-country stakeholders, including governments and beneficiaries, will devote sufficient staff and in-kind resources, including data, to analytical efforts and capacity strengthening.	
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Outputs	2.1 Increased participation by groundwater users across different sectors who are aware of resource management issues and have access to information and guidelines that support more sustainable use region-wide.	2.2 Participation of women and other vulnerable groups in groundwater management is supported and monitored.
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Component	Component 3: Resource management, information tools and equipment	
Outcome	Outcome 3: Climate resilience and groundwater use in pilot areas is increased, and the needs of low-income and other vulnerable groups are prioritized.	
Assumptions	In-country stakeholders, including governments and beneficiaries, will devote sufficient staff and in-kind resources, including data, to analytical efforts and capacity strengthening.	
Outputs	3.1 Adequate collaborative resource management methods and tools made available, enabling information sharing, cooperation, and mutual support across the GMS.	3.2 Information-based measures to align groundwater management with broader climate change resilience measures and surface water management.

Component	Component 4: Regional cooperation, coordination and information exchange	
Outcome	Outcome 4: A regionally consistent policy and management framework for groundwater resources in support of climate change adaptation is adopted.	
Assumptions	In-country stakeholders, including governments and beneficiaries, will devote sufficient staff and in-kind resources, including data, to analytical efforts and capacity strengthening.	

Outputs	4.1 Regional cooperative network established for sustainable groundwater management in support of climate change adaptation.	4.2 Information exchange mechanisms and collaboration introduced to integrate data and information into policy and practice.
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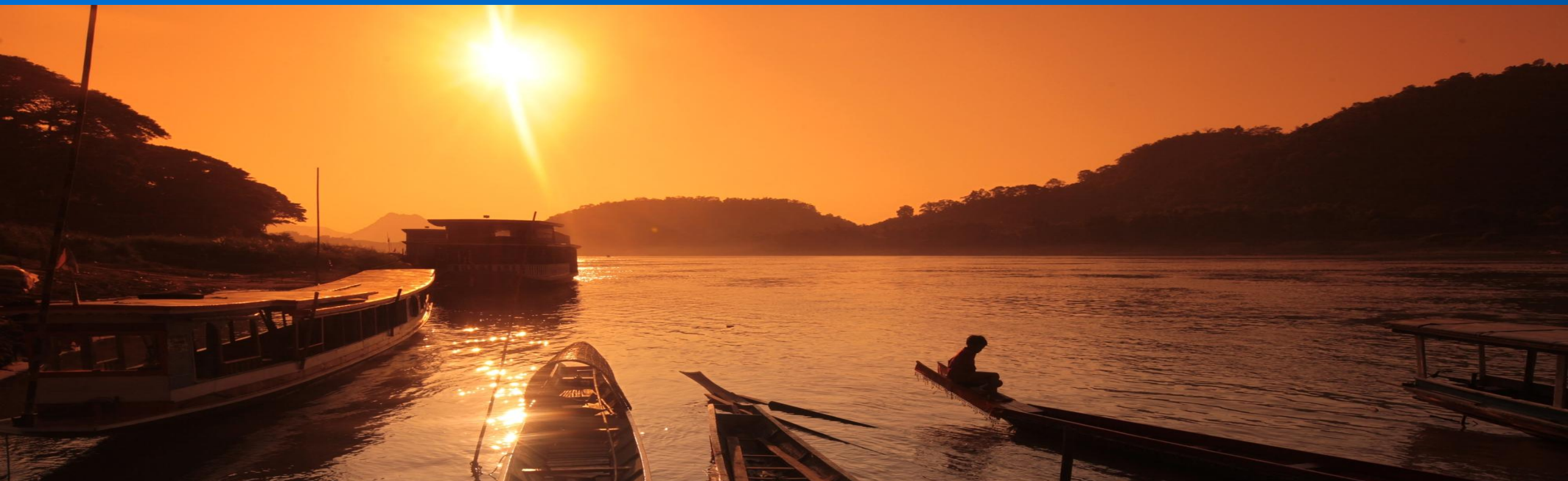
Component	Component 5: Capacity building and training	
Outcome	Outcome 5: GMS stakeholders capably use project tools on groundwater use for CCA and resilience.	

Assumptions	In-country stakeholders, including governments and beneficiaries, will devote sufficient staff and in-kind resources, including data, to analytical efforts and capacity strengthening.	
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Outputs	5.1 A groundwater community-of-practice created and equipped with the knowledge and skills to ensure technical and management capabilities.	
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Groundwater resources in the Greater Mekong Subregion Project Overview

20.05.2026



Adaptation Fund Project



ADAPTATION FUND

Groundwater resources in the Greater Mekong Subregion; collaborative resource management to increase climate change resilience

Participating countries: Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, Viet Nam

Stakeholder: MRCS

Partner organizations:



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Intergovernmental
Hydrological Programme



International Groundwater Resources Assessment Centre



International Water
Management Institute

**COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR
GEOSCIENCE PROGRAMMES IN EAST
AND SOUTHEAST ASIA (CCOP)**



Mekong River Commission
For Sustainable Development



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Intergovernmental
Hydrological Programme



**GROUNDWATER
SUMMIT 2022**

UN-Water Summit on Groundwater

1. International Hydrological Programme (IHP):

More than 50-year Hydrologic Scientific Research on freshwater.

2. World Water Assessment Programme (WWAP):

Monitoring and reporting on global freshwater resources.

3. Transboundary Waters Assessment Programme (TWAP):

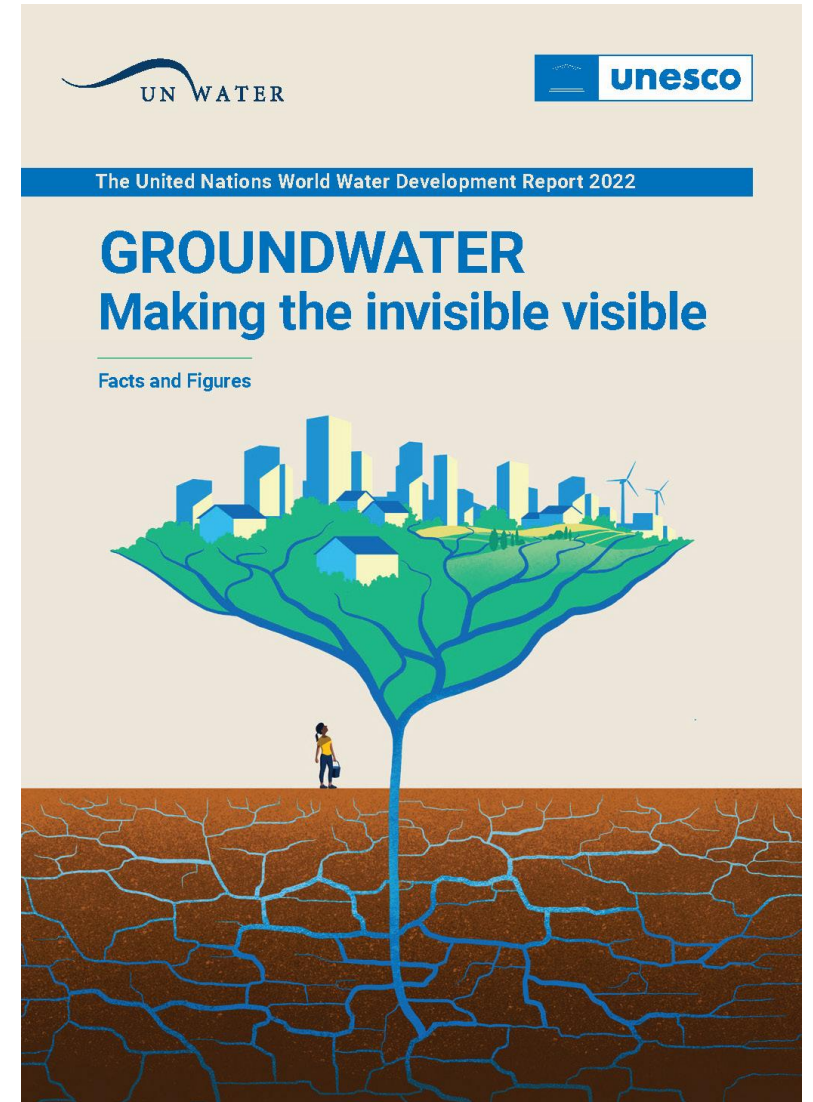
UNESCO is responsible for transboundary aquifers.

4. ISARM (Internationally Shared Aquifer Resources Management) Initiative

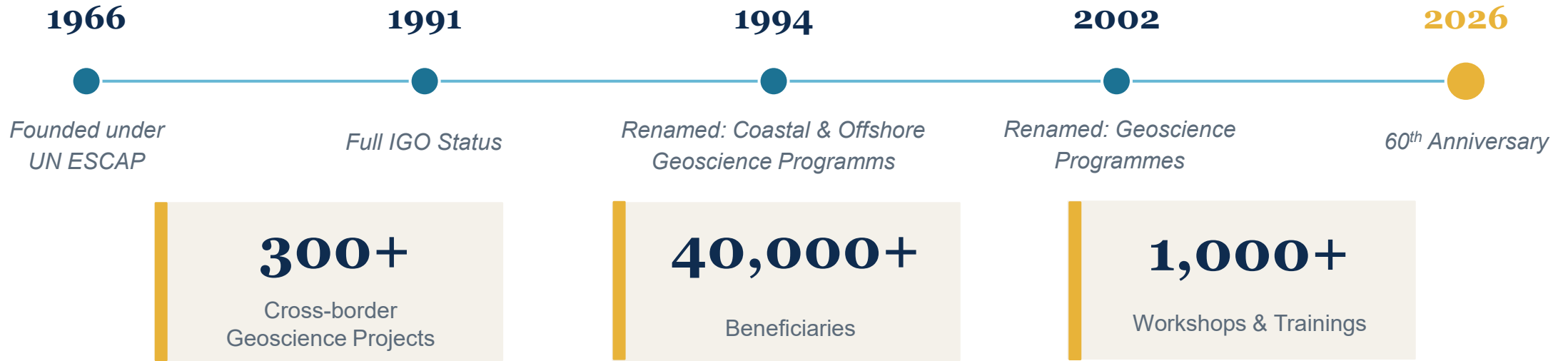
is an UNESCO and IAH (international Association of Hydrogeologist) led multi-agency for the management of transboundary aquifers.

5. Policy Guidance: Advising on sustainable

practices and legal frameworks for groundwater governance.



HISTORY



MEMBERSHIP & PARTNERSHIPS

16 Member Countries

Brunei · Cambodia · China · Indonesia · Japan · Korea · Lao PDR · Malaysia · Mongolia · Myanmar · PNG · Philippines · Singapore · Thailand · Timor-Leste · Vietnam

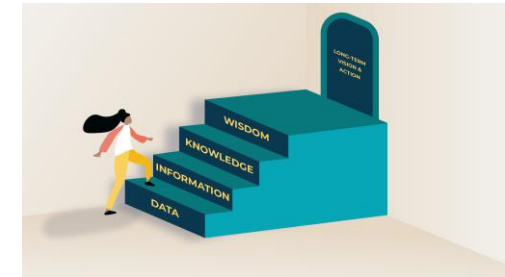
13 Cooperating Countries

Australia · Belgium · Canada · Denmark · Finland · France · Germany · Netherlands · Norway · Poland · Russia · UK · USA

19 Cooperating Organizations

UN-ESCAP · UNESCO · UNEP · IUGS · IOC · World Bank · JICA · EuroGeoSurveys · ASCOPE · IOMAC · CIFEG · CPC · DDE · GETECH · IERI/GIST · SPC · UKM · YES Network · Hanyang Univ.

- **Who we are:** Global groundwater center working under the auspices of UNESCO and WMO, supported by Dutch government
- **What we do:** Groundwater data and information sharing; groundwater assessment and research, knowledge transfer and awareness raising
- **We focus on:**
 - Groundwater monitoring
 - Transboundary aquifers monitoring and assessment
- Contribution at global level and national level



In the project, IGRAC will be one of the Executing Entity implementing project components:

1. Providing expertise in groundwater assessment, management, climate resilience
2. Designing and operate groundwater Information Management System for data sharing
3. Supporting shared aquifer inventory, data harmonisation, and assessment tools
4. Providing technical guidance on monitoring network and resilience assessments
5. Delivering training, capacity building, and best-practice knowledge exchange

A Global CGIAR Center

“ IWMI provides and promotes science-based solutions for land and water management to achieve food security and climate resilience ”

Regional Office: Vientiane, Lao PDR

Presence in Region: ~ 30 years

Staff Numbers: ~ 20 (Vientiane), ~ 350 (Globally)

Thematic areas of expertise on groundwater:

- GW resources assessments (multi-scale)
- Groundwater quantity and quality monitoring
- Surface-Water groundwater interactions
- Community-led groundwater use for irrigation
- Managed Aquifer Recharge (MAR)
- Capacity development and training
- Technical coordination
- Groundwater policy support
- Socially inclusive groundwater governance

First Year Inputs on Workplan and Alignment

1. MAR scoping study (regional scale)
2. Review of monitoring networks and gaps in TBA project areas
3. Planning for resource assessment and resource management support (in priority project areas)



Mekong River Commission Secretariat (MRCS)

1. Organisation & mandate

- Intergovernmental platform for Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Viet Nam under the 1995 Mekong Agreement.
- Supports cooperative and sustainable Mekong water resources management.
- Provides basin planning, technical analysis, data exchange, coordination and capacity support.

2. MRC Groundwater & climate experience

- SGUMA phases 1–3: assessments, pilot studies, conceptual and numerical models.
- Technical Guidance and 2026–2030 Implementation Plan for sustainable groundwater use in agriculture.
- Climate resilience work: drought/flood knowledge, water security, irrigation efficiency and asset management.

3. Expected AF project contribution

- Coordinate through MRCS/NMC channels and support Project Steering Committee dialogue.
- Provide technical input on monitoring, data harmonisation, surface–groundwater linkages and scenario testing.
- Support uptake through guidance, training, regional learning and adaptation planning.

MRC groundwater pathway: from evidence to implementation



Key message: MRC facilitates technical harmonisation and shared learning; national agencies lead decisions and implementation.



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National Agencies

- 1. Cambodia: Department of Green Economy**
- 2. Lao PDR: Department for Water Resources (DWR)**
- 3. Thailand: Department of Groundwater Resources (DGR)**
- 4. Viet Nam: National Center for Water Resources Planning and Investigation (NAWAPI)**



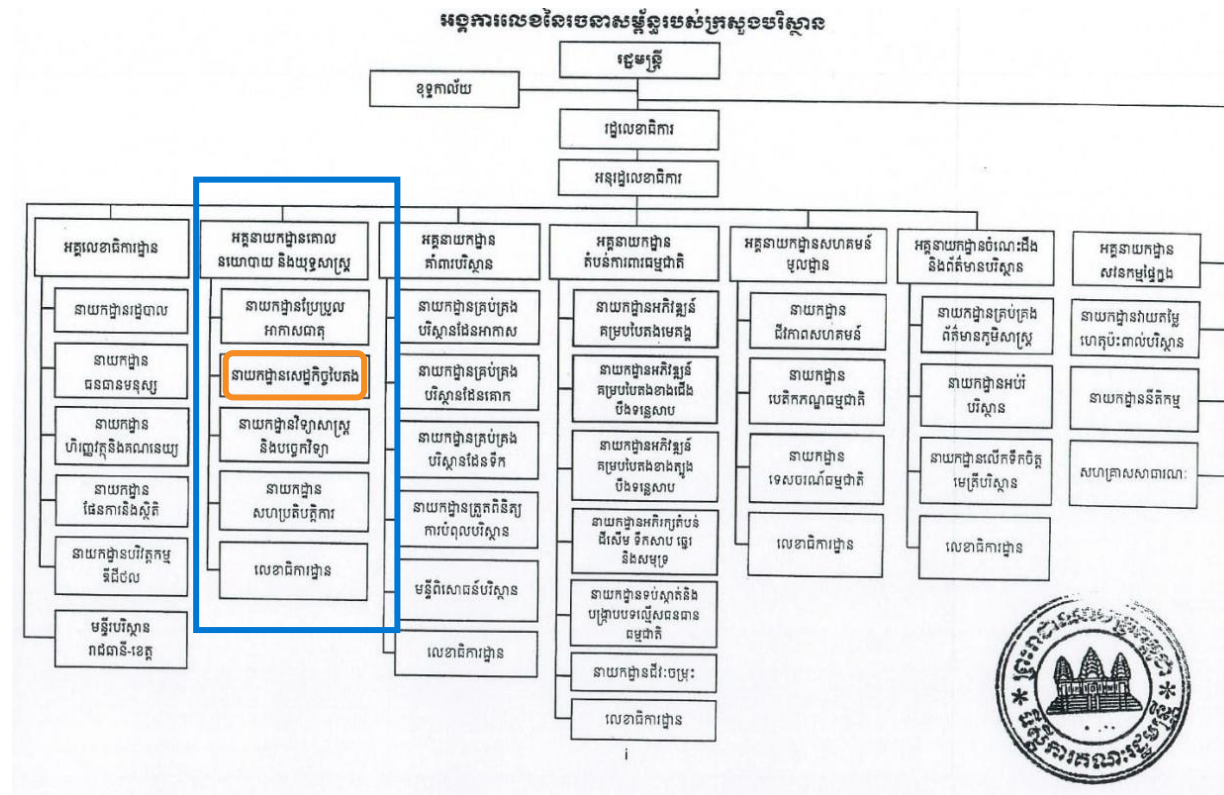
Cambodia: Department of Green Economy General Directorate of Policy and Strategy, MOE

Vision

To support and promote development in Cambodia through an inclusive green economic transformation that leads toward a sustainable future for all people, with good environmental quality and resilience.

Mission

To coordinate with relevant ministries, institutions, development partners, and stakeholders in formulating policies and implementing related projects, with priority focus on sustainable cities, green buildings, sustainable energy, sustainable consumption and production, and strategic environmental assessment.



Lao PDR: Department of Water Resources, MAE

Mandate: Division of Ground Water Management under the DWR, MAE mandate focus on:

- ✧ To develop the mechanism, legislations for groundwater management;
- ✧ To inventory and monitoring the groundwater quality and quantity in collaboration with related agencies;
- ✧ To study and propose an issuance of permission for groundwater resources use and development

Relevant Experience

- 15 years of experience in groundwater management.
- Supported development of Water and Water Resources Law and groundwater regulations.
- Contributed to develop provincial groundwater management plans in 12 provinces.
- Experience in climate resilience, water security, and sustainable groundwater management.

Expected Contribution

- Provide technical expertise on groundwater management and climate resilience.
- Support policy development, planning, and institutional coordination.
- Contribute to sustainable water management and climate adaptation strategies.
- Facilitate knowledge sharing and stakeholder engagement.



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Thailand: The Department of Groundwater Resources



The Department of Groundwater Resources, Ministry of Natural Resources & Environment, Thailand

DGR is the sole government agency responsible for groundwater resource management in Thailand.



Our Mission



To explore, assess, develop, conserve, and restore groundwater resources for sustainable and balanced utilization.



To regulate and control groundwater activities, by enforcing laws and regulations.



To enhance organization's capacity and develop database system by using digital technology in sustainable groundwater management.



To integrate and collaborate with all stakeholders in groundwater management both nationally and internationally.



Relevant Experience

- GW Potential Assessment & Hydrogeologic Map
- Groundwater Supply for Agriculture and Domestic Use
- High-Quality Groundwater Supply for Drought and Salinity Areas
- Groundwater Restoration (MAR)
- River Bank Filtration (study process)
- GW database management



Contribution to the Project



- Groundwater Data



- Capacity Building Course
 - Data Collection and Analysis
 - Groundwater Modeling



- Sharing Experience and knowledge



- Hydrogeology and hydrochemistry expert

Viet Nam: NAWAPI national technical institution for water resources

Mandate, institutional foundation and implementation readiness for the UNESCO–AF GMS Groundwater Project



National Center for Water Resources Planning and Investigation (NAWAPI)

Hanoi - Vietnam

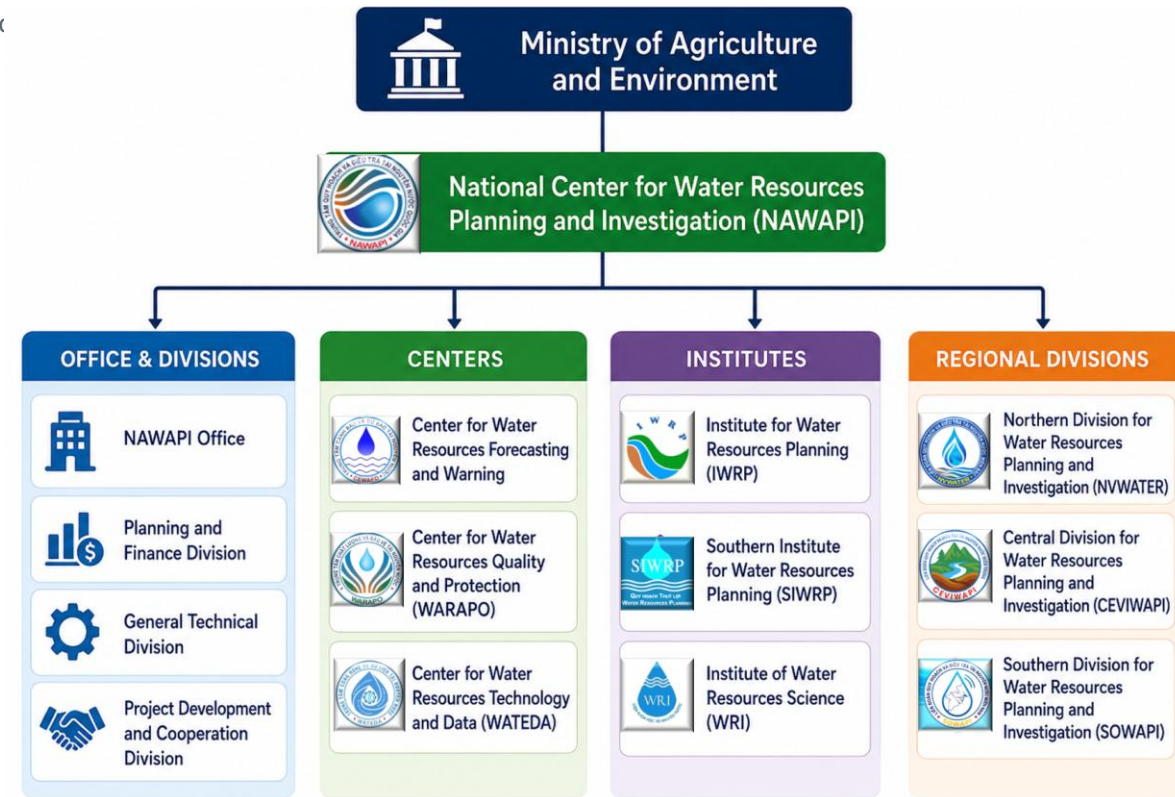


Public service unit under the Ministry of Agriculture and Environment, with national functions in planning, basic investigation, monitoring, forecasting, warning, protection, restoration and sustainable development of water resources.

2008
Established and operating nationwide

2025
Strengthened through institutional merger

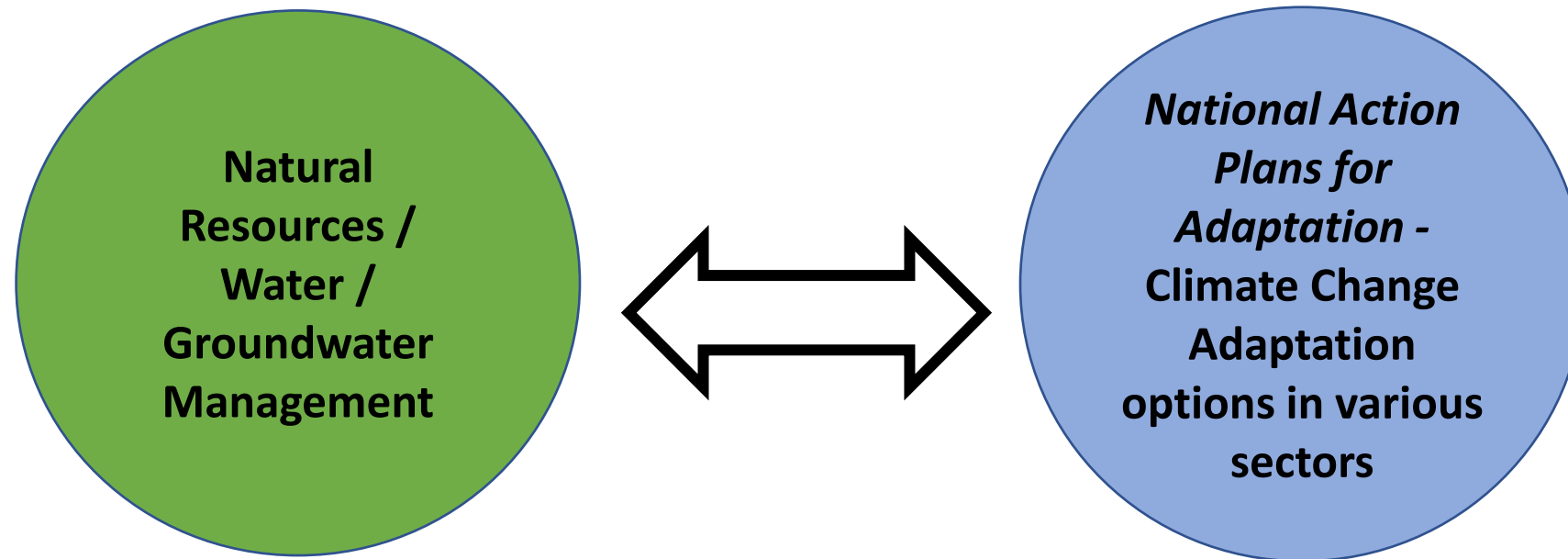
60+
Years of accumulated technical experience



- **Leading Agency**
- **National Network**
- **Technological resources**

Project Background

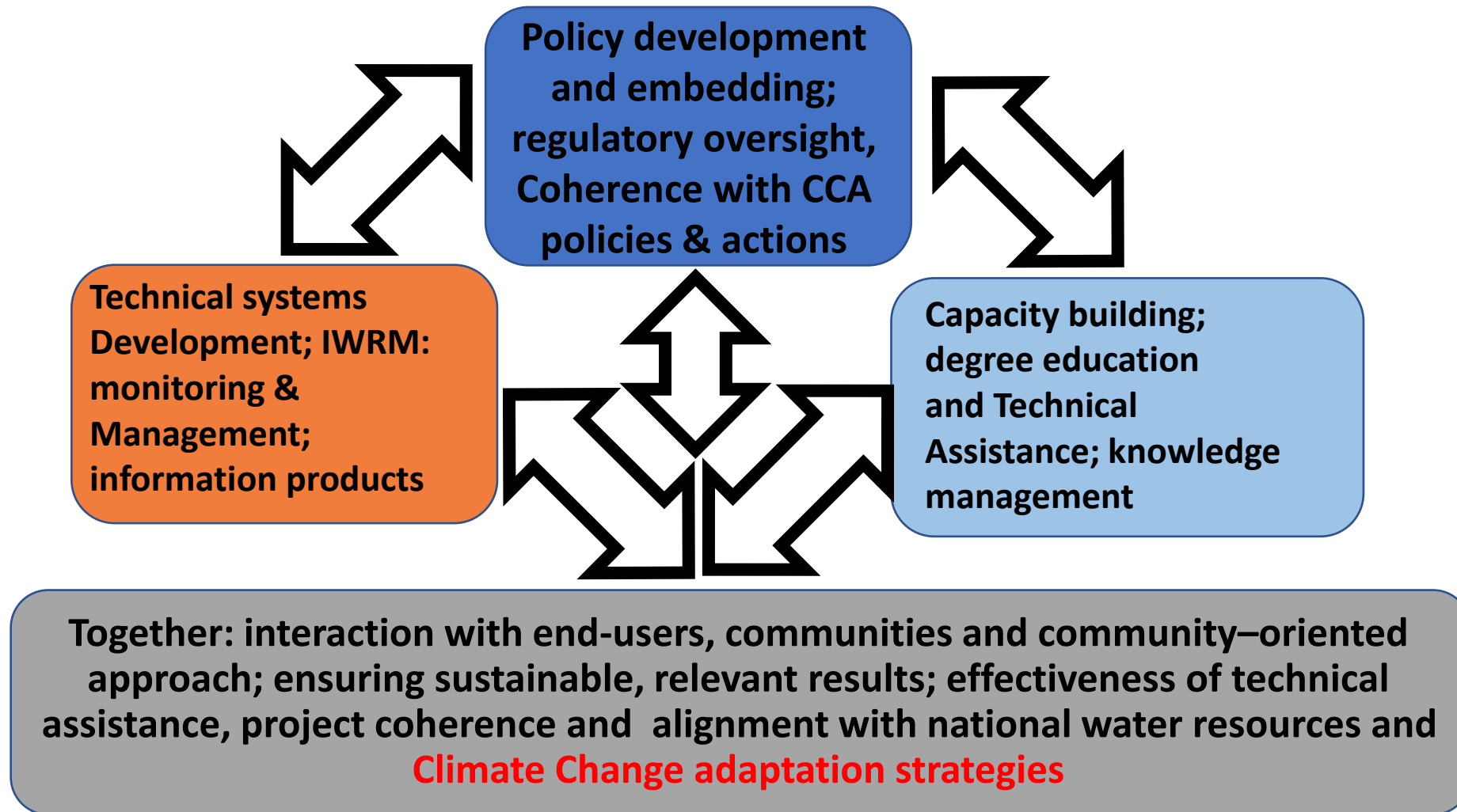
Groundwater management should be part of the national/regional climate change adaptation discourse and associated Action Plans through implementing adaptative measures



OPPORTUNITIES: designated national groundwater authorities and communities gain access to international climate change adaptation support.

OBLIGATIONS: groundwater authorities and experts engage with users and stakeholders to strengthen climate resilience through improved groundwater use.

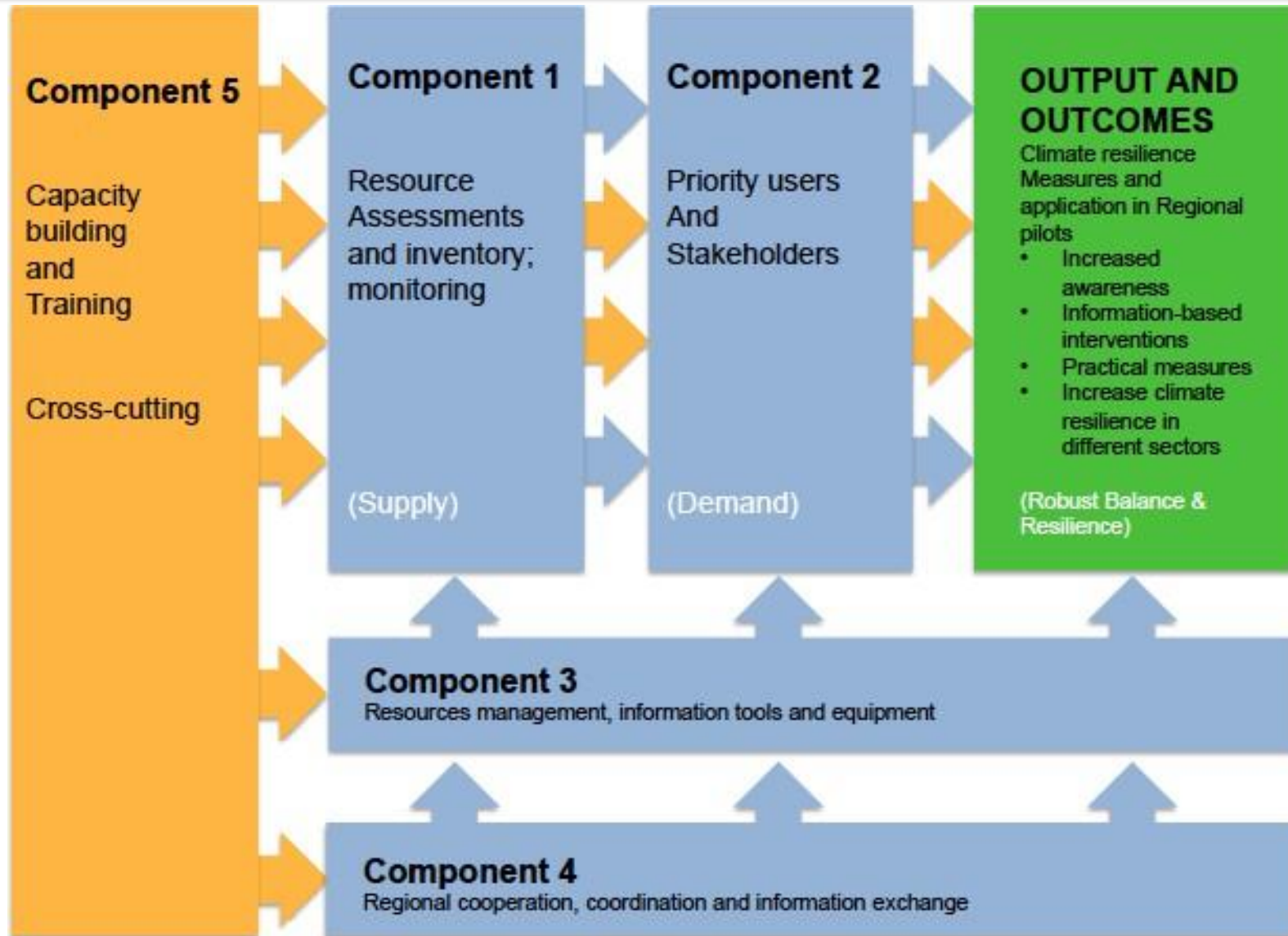
Objective: partnerships for groundwater management and climate resilience



Objectives and Expected Outcomes

- 1. Build shared understanding of project objectives**
- 2. Strengthen collaboration among regional stakeholders**
- 3. Confirm outcomes and implementation direction**
- 4. Enable effective project execution and coordination**

Project structure and overview



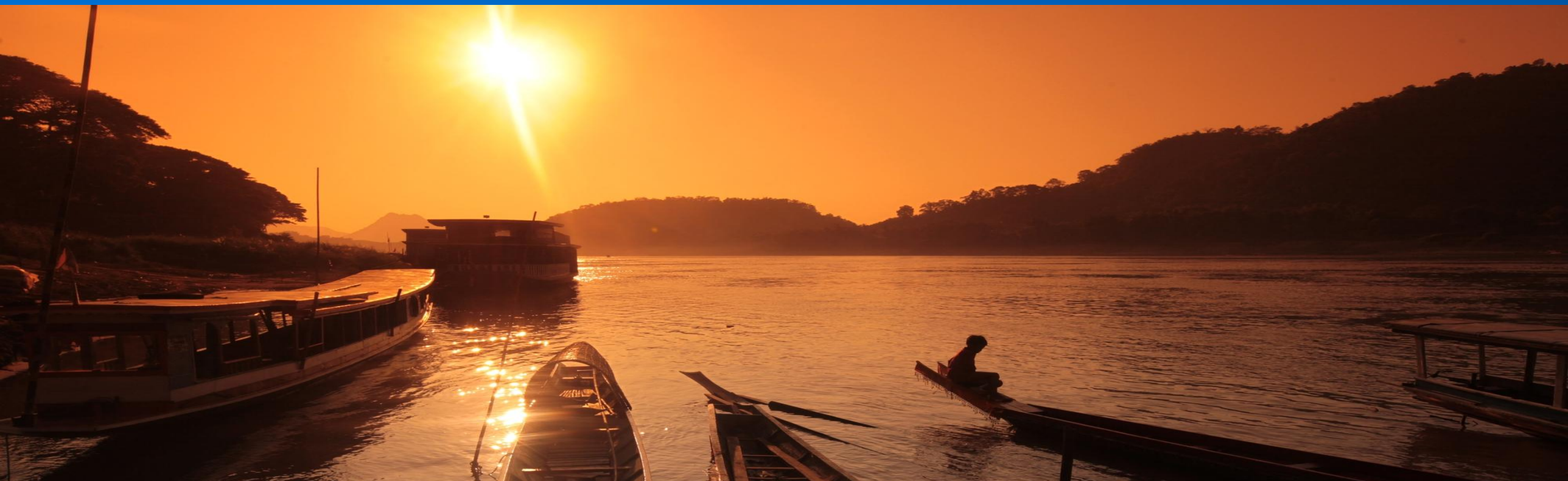
Implementation Structure

- 1. UNESCO as Implementing Entity**
- 2. Executing partners CCOP-TS, IWMI, IGRAC**
- 3. National agencies implement country activities**
- 4. Regional organisation: MRCS**
- 5. Regional coordination and reporting mechanisms**



Session 1 – First Annual Work Plan and Pilot Modalities

20.05.2026



Year 1 Work Plan

- 1. First Annual Work Plan aligned with ProDoc**
- 2. Sequences activities across project components and pilot areas**
- 3. Defines roles of UNESCO, executing entities, national agencies**
- 4. Aligns timelines, deliverables, and coordination arrangements**



A. Review and refine pilot areas for Year 1 implementation

B. Pilot Area 1

1. Mekong system site AS88 Lower Mekong aquifer focus aligns with project document.

C. Pilot area 2: Upper Mekong Delta Transboundary Aquifers.

D. Pilot area 3: Alternative transboundary configuration under refinement, with options to be confirmed during implementation planning

Implementation Modalities

A. Implementation approach

1. Implementation is structured around pilot areas
2. Alignment between regional coordination and national implementation
3. Activities will be delivered through these pilots

B. How activities will be operationalized in pilot contexts

1. Gender Action Plan (GAP) and Environmental and Social Management Plan (ESMP)
2. Stakeholder engagement
3. Capacity-building

C. Confirm key elements required to initiate implementation

1. Work plan is feasible and ready for implementation start. Sequencing is acceptable
2. Pilot areas and Year 1 focus are sufficiently defined



Session 1 – Summary of Key Points for Confirmation

- 1. Year 1 Work Plan is aligned and ready for implementation**
- 2. Pilot areas approach is accepted for initial phase**
- 3. Implementation approach of activities across components is accepted**

INCEPTION WORKSHOP | 20 MAY 2026 | ONLINE

Groundwater resources in the Greater Mekong Subregion: Collaborative management to increase climate change resilience

Cambodia · Lao PDR · Thailand · Vietnam

Dr. Songyang WU, Regional Expert

CCOP Technical Secretariat (CCOP-TS) - Project Executing Entity (EE)



ADAPTATION FUND



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SESSION

01

Work Plan

Feasibility & Sequencing

REGIONAL EXPERIENCE



Thailand & Vietnam — Capable Partners

- Strong national agencies (DGR / NAWAPI) with established monitoring systems;
- Can lead harmonization of regional datasets and methodology development;
- Previous CCOP-KIGAM workshops produced agreed frameworks ready to build on.

Cambodia & Lao PDR — Capacity-First Approach

- Limited groundwater data and expert capacity; project must invest early in support;
- Community-level engagement through Component 2 is especially critical here;
- National agency (DGE, DWR) need clear technical backstopping from the project implementing entities.

Transboundary Coordination

- Data-sharing protocols across borders require formal bilateral agreements — better to initiate early;
- Language and classification harmonization is a consistent challenge; IGRAC tools help, but need adaptation;
- Joint field teams (CCOP-TS experience) accelerate trust-building between national agencies.

Community & Stakeholder Engagement

- MAR uptake is higher when communities co-design solutions rather than receive pre-designed systems;
- Gender-disaggregated water data collection requires dedicated facilitation; cannot be assumed;
- Local government coordination at the provincial level is key; national-only engagement is insufficient.



WORK PLAN FEASIBILITY & SEQUENCING

Components 1 and 2 front-load the knowledge and stakeholder foundation before introducing MAR infrastructure in Component 3.

Overall Feasibility

- Year 1 inception activities are achievable within the proposed timeline;
- National partner engagement (DGR, NAWAPI, DGE, DWR) is well-established;
- Shared aquifer inventory (Output 1.1) can begin with available national datasets in Thailand & Vietnam;
- Harmonized monitoring design (Output 1.2) realistically launches in Year 2 after baseline data is gathered.

Sequencing Logic

- Inception Phase → PSC establishment → Annual Work Plan;
- Component 1 (Assessment) must precede Component 3 (MAR pilots);
- Gender platform and community dialogues (Component 2) should run in parallel with technical assessment from Year 1.

Key Considerations

- Lao PDR & Cambodia capacity gaps may affect data availability in Year 1 – **plan for targeted technical support**;
- MAR pilot site selection requires months of hydrogeological data; **avoid rushing to Year 2 targets**;
- Annual Work Plan should include built-in review points after Inception Report to adjust sequencing;
- Cross-component data flows (Component 1→2→3) need an explicit coordination protocol from the outset.

WORK PLAN FEASIBILITY & SEQUENCING



Component 4: Regional Cooperation

- Regional knowledge exchange (Component 4) can begin early with existing CCOP-TS networks to build momentum;
- Regional working groups (Output 4.1) can convene around Pilot 1 first, building consensus model;
- Legislative gap analysis (Output 4.2) prioritises Cambodia & Lao PDR, where regulatory frameworks are less developed;
- MRC engagement is essential for transboundary policy uptake and should be formalised in Year 1.

Component 5: Capacity Building

- Training programmes (Output 5.1) launched in Year 2, leveraging CCOP-KIGAM existing curricula;
- Community of Practice (CoP) seeded at the inception phase; expands at each PSC and country workshop;
- Knowledge management platform (Output 5.2, SharePoint) operational by end of Year 1 to capture early outputs;
- International Conference in Year 4 to consolidate and disseminate project knowledge.

Risks & Enablers

- RISK: Sustaining engagement of National Agencies across four countries over 4 years – **use PSC and CoP as continuity anchors**;
- RISK: Staff turnover in National Agencies; **institutionalise knowledge via training records**;
- ENABLER: CCOP-KIGAM established monitoring infrastructure provides immediate baselines and training platforms;
- ENABLER: UNESCO field offices (Phnom Penh, Hanoi) and MRC provide in-country presence.

Thank you



ADAPTATION FUND

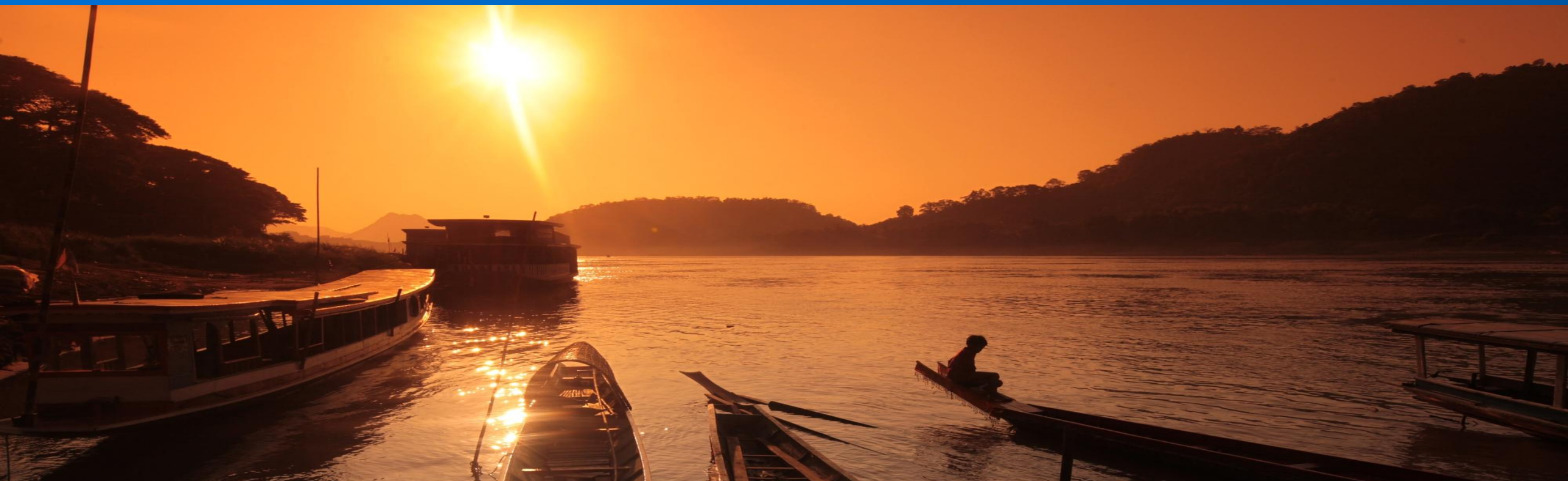


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Session 2 – Theory of Change

20.05.2026



Outputs

- 1. Data and information**
- 2. Policies and guidelines**
- 3. Tools and methods**
- 4. Coordination mechanisms**
- 5. Training and knowledge**

Outcomes

- 1. Regional approach**
- 2. Stakeholder participation**
- 3. Resilience in pilot areas**
- 4. Regional cooperation**
- 5. Capacity strengthened**

- 1. Sustainable groundwater management**
- 2. Increased climate resilience**

Theory of Change

- 1. Regional impact: strengthened capacities, partnerships and networks for sustainable groundwater management**
- 2. Logical framework: components lead to outcomes supporting climate resilience**
- 3. Key assumptions: stakeholder engagement, data availability, and practical demonstration**
- 4. Critical dependencies: national commitment, data sharing, and regional coordination**
- 5. Points for validation: assumptions, coherence of outcomes, and feasibility for implementation**

The problem

Why this project is needed

The region faces growing water stress, but groundwater remains under-used in climate adaptation planning.

Climate pressure is increasing

More variable rainfall, longer dry seasons, droughts, floods and sea-level related pressures are making water availability less predictable.

Groundwater is a hidden safety net

Many rural and urban communities rely on groundwater for domestic use, farming and livelihoods, especially during dry periods.

The resource is shared across borders

Several aquifers are transboundary, but information, monitoring and management are not yet sufficiently coordinated.

The message

If countries and communities understand groundwater better and manage it together, it can help reduce climate-related water insecurity.

The expected changes

Outputs	Outcomes	Expected change
Evidence products	Shared inventories, monitoring and information-based policies	A common GMS approach for climate-resilient groundwater management
User engagement	Guidelines, dialogues, women and vulnerable group participation	Groundwater users can participate and use information in decisions
Pilot measures	Collaborative tools and adaptive technologies in pilot areas	Climate resilience and groundwater use improve, prioritising vulnerable groups
Regional cooperation	Cooperative network and information exchange mechanism	Policy and management become more regionally consistent
Capacity building	Community of practice, skills and knowledge products	Stakeholders can use tools and knowledge beyond the project



Impacts

Project impact

Effective regional capacities, partnerships and networks for sustainable groundwater management as a climate adaptation response.

Who benefits?

Communities, farmers, water users, technical agencies, policy-makers - with priority attention to low-income and vulnerable groups.

Global contribution

Supports SDG 6 on water and sanitation, SDG 13 on climate action, and UNESCO's strategic focus on climate, biodiversity, water and DRR.



Key assumptions behind the Theory of Change

1. Stakeholders contribute

Governments and beneficiaries provide staff time, data and in-kind support for analysis and capacity strengthening.

2. Evidence is inclusive

Assessments reflect regional differences and include scientific, socio-economic and environmental considerations.

3. Demonstrations influence decisions

Community-level pilots build ownership and provide practical examples that decision-makers can replicate.

4. Governance is sustained

Networks, cooperation mechanisms and knowledge tools remain useful after Adaptation Fund activities conclude.

5. Benefits reinforce development

Better water knowledge supports environmental benefits and positive social and economic outcomes.

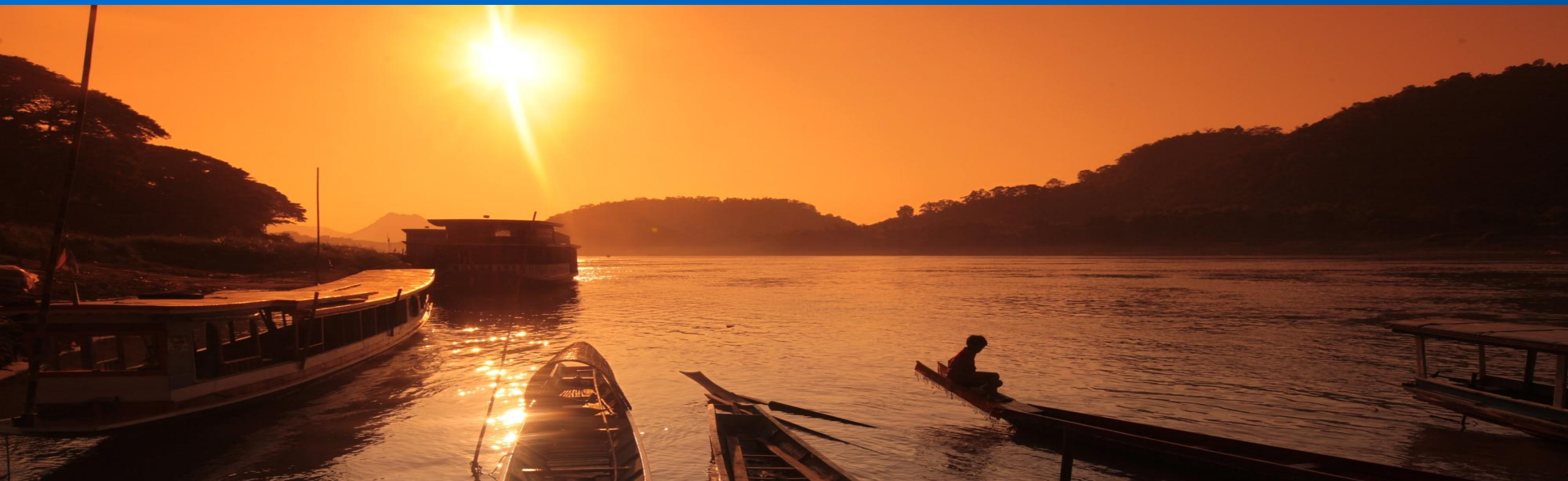


Session 2 – Summary of Key Points for Confirmation

- 1. Theory of Change is acceptable as presented**
- 2. Key assumptions and dependencies are validated**
- 3. No major gaps identified requiring revision**

Session 3 – M&E and Reporting Framework

20.05.2026



M&E and Reporting Framework

- 1. Regular reporting aligned with project implementation cycles**
- 2. M&E and Reporting roles: UNESCO, executing entities, and national agencies**
- 3. Responsibilities distributed across regional and national levels**
- 4. Reporting supports coordination, accountability, and learning**

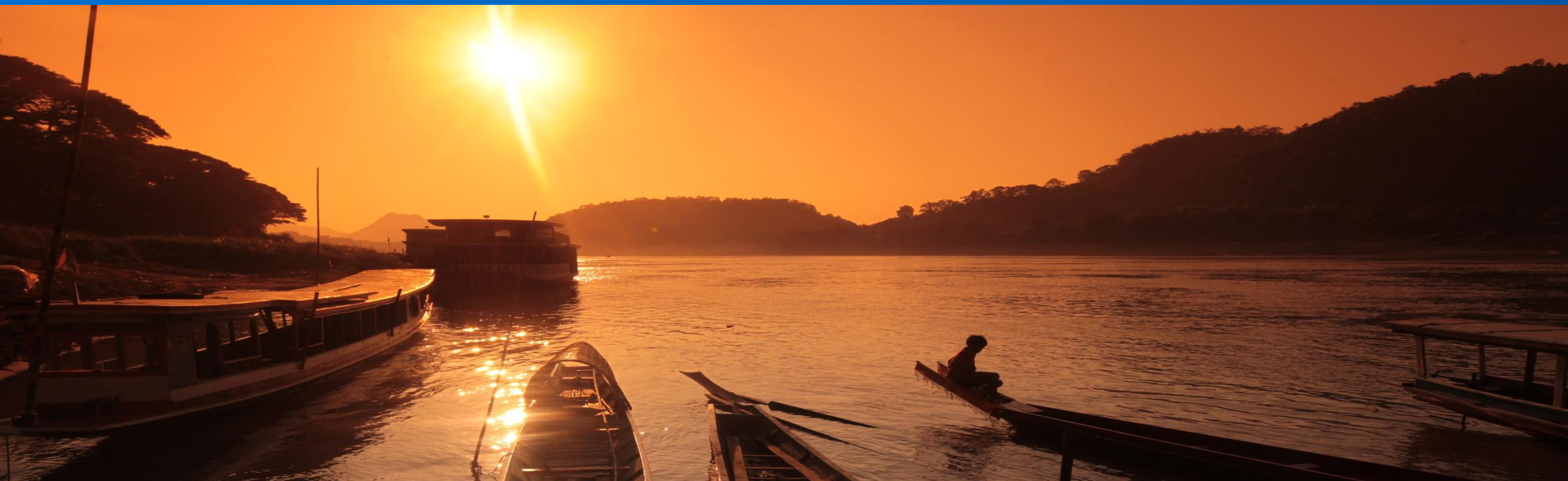
Data Flow and Compliance

- 1. Data collected at national and pilot levels**
- 2. Information consolidated at regional level**
- 3. Reporting flows from national to regional to Implementing Entity to Adaptation Fund**
- 4. Compliance aligned with project requirements and reporting standards**
- 5. Monitoring supports performance tracking and accountability**

Session 3 – Summary of Key Points for Confirmation

- 1. Reporting schedule and requirements are clearly understood**
- 2. Roles and responsibilities for reporting are agreed**
- 3. Data flow and compliance approach are confirmed**

Session 4 – Governance and Implementation



Governance and Implementation Framework

- 1. Project governance led by Project Steering Committee**
- 2. UNESCO as Implementing Entity with overall oversight**
- 3. Executing Entities providing technical and regional support**
- 4. National Agencies responsible for country-level implementation**
- 5. Governance ensures accountability and strategic direction**



Responsibilities and Coordination

- 1. Responsibilities distributed across implementing, executing, and national levels**
- 2. Regional coordination ensures consistency across countries**
- 3. National implementation ensures relevance to country contexts**
- 4. Coordination framework supports information flow and joint delivery**

Session 4 – Summary of Key Points for Confirmation

- 1. Governance structure is accepted by all partners**
- 2. Roles and responsibilities are defined**
- 3. Coordination mechanisms are agreed for implementation**

INCEPTION WORKSHOP | 20 MAY 2026 | ONLINE

Groundwater resources in the Greater Mekong Subregion: Collaborative management to increase climate change resilience

Cambodia · Lao PDR · Thailand · Vietnam

Dr. Songyang WU, Regional Expert

CCOP Technical Secretariat (CCOP-TS) - Project Executing Entity (EE)



ADAPTATION FUND



unesco





SESSION

04

Governance & Implementation



CCOP-TS Role in Regional Coordination

Executing Entity — technical alignment and operational continuity across four countries

WHAT CCOP-TS BRINGS

60 Years of regional geosciences cooperation in East & Southeast Asia

16 Member countries — incl. all GMS states

4 Participating countries with active CCOP focal points



Project Execution

Project Director (CCOP-TS Executive Director) and Chief Technical Advisor (CTA); Secretariat for the PSC



Regional Coordination

Convene partners across Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, Vietnam; maintain Community of Practice (CoP); align with UNESCO, IGRAC, IWMI



Technical Alignment

Harmonised methodologies and templates; consistent data and reporting standards across pilots; quality assurance



Working with National Agencies & Technical Teams

CCOP-TS will apply a structured but flexible engagement model, recognising significant differences in national capacity and institutional context across the four countries.

Cambodia

MoE / DGE

- Co-facilitate community consultations with provincial groundwater teams;
- CCOP-TS staff embedded in joint field assessments at Pilot 2 and Pilot 3 (tbc).
- Leverage UNESCO Cambodia office for institutional liaison.

Lao PDR

MoNRE / DWR

- Capacity-building component prioritised early;
- Monthly technical calls to track progress and resolve data gaps;
- CCOP-TS to facilitate triangular cooperation with DGR Thailand for Pilot 1

Thailand

MoNRE / DGR

- DGR as regional lead for data harmonization methodology;
- CCOP-TS to facilitate triangular cooperation with DWR Lao PDR for Pilot 1;
- Leverage CCOP-KIGAM infrastructure already established with DGR.

Vietnam

NAWAPI

- NAWAPI leads Mekong Delta component; CCOP-TS provides coordination bridge;
- Quarterly reporting structure agreed with NAWAPI to align with national M&E;
- Leverage UNESCO Hanoi office for institutional liaison.



Operational Coordination Mechanisms



Interaction Formats

- Monthly technical calls: CCOP-TS ↔ national focal points;
- In-person/Virtual PSC meetings, twice per year;
- 4 Country workshops (Year 1);
- Field visits: CCOP-TS + UNESCO joint monitoring visits.

Communication Flows

- Single online project workspace for document sharing (UNESCO SharePoint/drive);
- Standardized progress report templates;
- Field Visit Reports within 1 month of each visit;
- Real-time issue escalation protocol: national → CCOP-TS → UNESCO/PSC.

Working Modalities

- National focal point designated per country (technical + admin);
- Joint technical working groups per pilot area (bilateral countries);
- CCOP-TS CTA as day-to-day technical coordinator across countries;
- Annual Work Plan co-developed with all national partners.



Ensuring Effective & Consistent Implementation

01 Harmonised Methodology

- Single agreed methodology for aquifer inventory and vulnerability assessment;
- Harmonized monitoring protocols: standard parameters, measurement frequencies, data formats across all pilot sites;
- Shared GIS platform for data submission and cross-country comparison;
- Annual methodology review session to address divergence and update protocols.

02 Structured Oversight

- CCOP-TS CTA reviews all technical outputs before submission to UNESCO;
- Semi-annual compliance checklists against ESP and gender commitments;
- Inception Report as the binding reference for all annual work plans;
- Mid-term evaluation as go/no-go checkpoint for remaining activities.

03 Adaptive Management

- Built-in flexibility in annual work plans for country-specific delays;
- Risk register maintained by CCOP-TS, reviewed at every PSC meeting;
- Country-level contingency budget for capacity support (avoiding one country falling behind);
- Lessons-learned sessions after each pilot phase to cross-pollinate good practice.

Thank you



ADAPTATION FUND

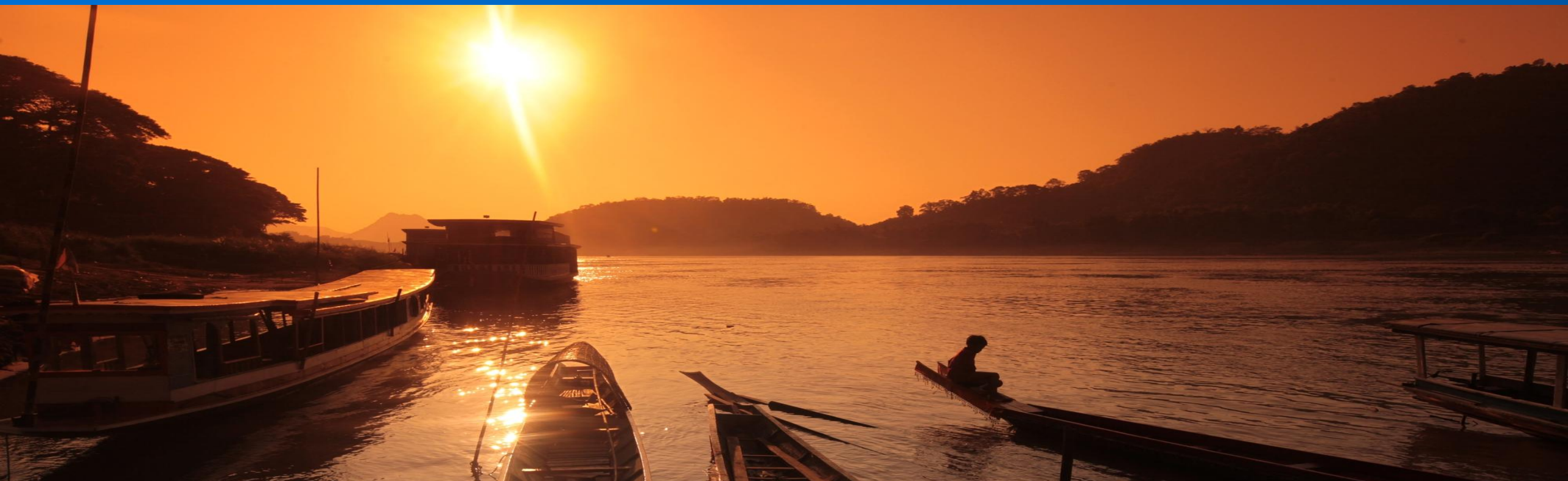


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Session 5 – Final Alignment and Readiness

20.05.2026



Session 5 – Key Points for Confirmation

- 1. Project readiness for implementation is confirmed**
- 2. No critical outstanding issues remain**
- 3. Implementation can proceed as planned**

AF Regional Inception Workshop — Opening Remarks

Marina Patrier, Deputy Director and Chief of Section for Education

Dear colleagues, distinguished partners, and representatives of Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Vietnam —

It is a great pleasure to welcome you to this regional inception workshop today.

Let me start with some data:

In 1950, around 62 million people lived across the Greater Mekong Subregion.

Today that number exceeds 233 million.

By 2050, it is projected to reach 372 million.

That is a sixfold increase in a single century — and it is still rising.

Naturally, water demand has grown.

Surface water has received the most attention.

But a considerable share of the region's communities — many of them low-income, many in rural areas — depends on groundwater for drinking, for farming, and for daily survival.

Transboundary groundwater reserves are under growing pressure. This is the key challenge this regional initiative is designed to address. This is where knowledge of sustainable production is limited, and management capacity is fragmented.

Evolving climate conditions, including longer dry seasons, intensifying droughts, more erratic surface flows, are adding to the demands on resources that are still not fully understood or consistently managed.

UNESCO is ready to join forces with you for this initiative.

It reflects our mandate to advance science-based, cooperative approaches to sustainable development, and it sits directly within our commitments under SDG 6 on clean water and SDG 13 on climate action — where commitment must now become concrete action.

I want to emphasize **three things** as we begin.

The first is shared direction.

The five components of this initiative — assessment and monitoring, priority use and stakeholders, management tools, regional coordination, and capacity building — they are all interconnected.

It is important that together as partners we move toward the same goal.

Today's workshop is about building that alignment.

The second is impact at scale.

The pilot areas are where results will be generated, but the ambition is also regional.

Every deliverable should be designed with that wider application in mind.

The third is knowledge sharing.

Transboundary governance is technically complex. To support this, knowledge sharing built collectively and peer-learning are critical elements.

This workshop is the first step in advancing this knowledge sharing.

I thank the project team and all partners for the work and regional cooperation that has brought us to this point.

I encourage active engagement and wish you productive exchanges in today's discussions

Thank you.

AF Regional Inception Workshop - Closing Remarks

Flavio Bonetti, Head of Office, UNESCO Phnom Penh

Distinguished colleagues, partners, and representatives of Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Viet Nam,

Thank you all for your active participation and engagement today.

This workshop was designed as a starting point, and it has fulfilled that role well. We are leaving not only with a clearer understanding of the project, but with something more important: a shared sense of direction and a set of practical next steps.

Throughout the discussions, three elements stood out.

First, alignment.

We have reviewed and refined the first annual work plan, clarified roles and responsibilities, and strengthened our common understanding of how the five components fit together. This alignment is essential. Without it, progress will remain fragmented.

Second, realism.

We have been candid about constraints: data gaps, capacity limitations, and the complexities of transboundary coordination. This honesty is not a weakness. It is the foundation for credible implementation.

Third, commitment.

The quality of the discussions reflects a genuine willingness to work together. This project depends on cooperation across institutions, across disciplines, and across borders. What we have seen today gives confidence that this cooperation is achievable.

Let me emphasize what comes next.

The workshop outputs must now be translated into action. The agreed work plan, the monitoring and reporting arrangements, and the governance structure are not simply documents. They are operational tools. Their value will be determined by how consistently they are applied.

The pilot areas will be where results are demonstrated, but their purpose is larger. They must serve as models that can be scaled and adapted across the region. This requires discipline in implementation and clarity in documenting lessons learned.

Most importantly, we must maintain the trust that has begun to take shape here. As noted at the start of this workshop, transboundary management is as much about confidence as it is about technical solutions. Sustained communication and transparency will be critical.

UNESCO remains fully committed to supporting you in this process, in close coordination with our executing partners and national agencies.

Let me close by thanking all partners for your contributions, your openness, and your professionalism.

This is the end of the workshop, but it is the true beginning of the work.

Thank you.



Paul Pavelic



Songyang_Wu_CCOP



NAWAPI-MAE VIETNAM



Tarik Hassan UNESCO



UNESCO HAN



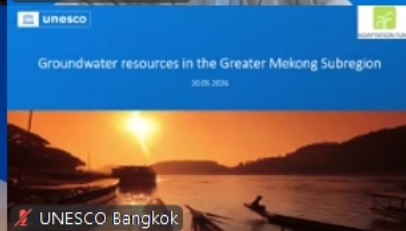
Sucharit Koontanakulvong



Marivic Uzarraga CCOP



Sinxay Vongphachanh



UNESCO Bangkok



MoE, Cambodia



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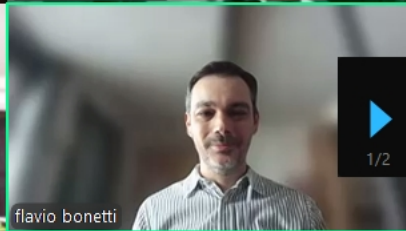
Elisabeth Lictvout - IGRAC



Mark Dubois



ounakone XAYVILIYA DWR Laos



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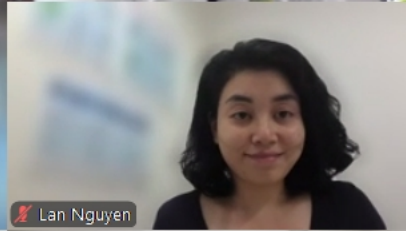
DGR-Thailand



Lan Huong Tran_UNESCO Vietnam



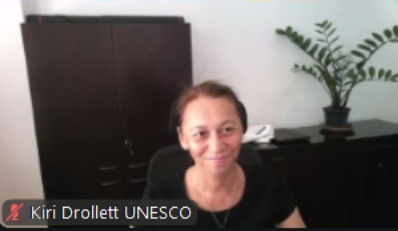
An Nguyen_UNESCO_HAN



Lan Nguyen



INT_Vie_Thanh (1)



Kiri Drollett UNESCO



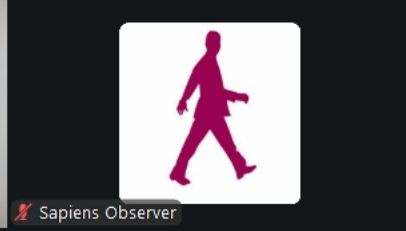
Jonathan Baker



LAO-EN Interpreter_Vilay



INT_VIE_Tai (2)



Sapiens Observer

AF Groundwater in GMS Roadmap – UNESCO (May 2026)

Reporting

Governance

Coordination

Implementation

Q1 2026	Q2 2026	Q3 2026	Q4 2026
<p>Inception extension clearance</p> <p>Country liaison</p> <p>Prepare inception meeting</p>	<p>Inception report</p> <p>Executing Entities coordination</p> <p>Inception meeting</p>	<p>Project Steering Committee (PSC) convening</p> <p>Cross-country exchanges</p> <p>Stakeholder engagement</p> <p>Groundwater Resource Assessment</p>	<p>PSC</p> <p>Regional data harmonization</p> <p>Stakeholders dialogues</p> <p>Gender platform</p> <p>Strengthening governance frameworks</p>
<p>Q1 2027</p> <p>PSC</p> <p>Monitoring design</p> <p>Environmental and Social Management Plan (ESMP) review</p> <p>Groundwater management scoping</p>	<p>Q2 2027</p> <p>Annual Project Performance Report (PPR)</p> <p>Annual financial reporting (AFR)</p> <p>PSC</p> <p>Regional workshop</p> <p>Procurement</p>	<p>Q3 2027</p> <p>PSC</p> <p>Implementation of groundwater management approaches</p>	<p>Q4 2027</p> <p>Mid-term evaluation report</p> <p>PSC</p> <p>Mid-term evaluation</p> <p>National workshops</p> <p>Mid-cycle technical review</p>
<p>Q1 2028</p> <p>PSC</p> <p>Network optimisation</p> <p>ESMP review</p>	<p>Q2 2028</p> <p>PPR & AFR</p> <p>PSC</p> <p>Community of practice</p> <p>Scenario testing</p>	<p>Q3 2028</p> <p>PSC</p> <p>Consolidation workshops</p> <p>Technical consolidation and policy alignment</p>	<p>Q4 2028</p> <p>PSC</p> <p>Gender platform review</p>
<p>Q1 2029</p> <p>PSC</p> <p>Exit coordination</p> <p>ESMP review</p> <p>Implementation of groundwater management approaches</p>	<p>Q2 2029</p> <p>PPR & AFR</p> <p>PSC</p> <p>Deep-dive review</p> <p>Draft regional strategies</p>	<p>Q3 2029</p> <p>PSC</p> <p>Closure coordination</p> <p>National validations</p>	<p>Q4 2029</p> <p>Final Project Report</p> <p>Final financial statement</p> <p>PSC</p> <p>Terminal evaluation</p>