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Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC

Swiss Cooperation Programme in the **Mekong Region** 2022–26

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Foreword

Switzerland is a committed and trusted development partner in the Mekong region. With cooperation programmes in Cambodia and Laos running for the past 9 and 16 years respectively, it aims at supporting these two countries, and the broader region, in their efforts to achieve their development priorities.

Over the past two decades, Cambodia and Laos have made substantial progress in poverty reduction and social development. Yet they still face urgent challenges on their path to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. In particular their young population needs to be trained to be able to enter the labour market, climate change exacerbates pressure on natural resources, and citizens still need more opportunities to effectively engage in planning and decision-making processes. These challenges have been further amplified by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Under its overall objective of "*enabling people, in particular young people, women and disadvantaged groups in Laos, Cambodia and the Mekong region to be more prosperous, resilient and better included in development processes*", the new Swiss Mekong Region Cooperation Programme 2022–25 will provide expertise in three domains: inclusive economic development, climate change and natural resource management, and good governance and citizen participation.

Within these priorities, and in line with the agenda to Leave No One Behind, Switzerland will pay special attention to disadvantaged groups in the fight against poverty. At the same time, it will set a stronger focus on climate change adaptation.

Switzerland's renewed commitment for the period 2022–25 will be guided by both the countries' ambitions to leave the group of Least Developed Countries and the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Bern, December 2021

Patricia Danzi
Director General

Note: The Cooperation Programme was extended by one year in November 2025.

1. Context analysis

The Mekong River is the longest river in Southeast Asia. From its source in the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau it flows for 4,350 kilometres across southern China, Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam before finally reaching the sea. Also called the 'Mighty Mekong', it is the world's largest inland freshwater fishery, and around 70 million people depend on the river for their livelihoods.

Switzerland has been involved in international cooperation work in the Mekong region for decades. Its international development programmes are divided into three separate strategies: Swiss Cooperation Programme Myanmar 2019–23, Swiss Cooperation Programme Vietnam 2021–24, and the Swiss Mekong[1] Region Cooperation Programme 2022–26 (MRCP). The MRCP has a country focus on the Lao People's Democratic Republic (hereinafter referred to as Laos) and on the Kingdom of Cambodia (hereinafter referred to as Cambodia). In addition, it includes regional projects with either a broader Mekong outreach or an ASEAN-wide coverage. This strategic vision is aligned with and reflects the Mekong region's de facto geographic, political and economic interdependency, in particular in the context of the ASEAN. Furthermore, Switzerland has also been an active Sectoral Dialogue Partner of the Association for Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) since 2016.

The Mekong region is endowed with important assets: diverse natural resources offering potential for people's livelihoods (e.g. agriculture, tourism), a young population creating an opportunity to realise a demographic dividend, a combined annual GDP of around USD 600 billion and an important geostrategic corridor in the Indo-Pacific between China and India. As a consequence, the region has had impressive economic growth rates and made progress in poverty reduction over the past two decades. However, the CLMVT countries are now facing various challenges that directly affect the region's prosperity.

Regional challenges

Firstly, the **COVID-19 pandemic** has led not only to a health crisis, but also a social and economic crisis all around the world. Indeed, the almost complete closure of these countries for extended periods has had a hugely negative impact on the economic growth and outlook of the region, and the virus has not stopped at the borders. COVID-19 vaccination rates vary significantly from country to country. Reaching herd immunity in the whole region will remain an ongoing process stretching well into the period covered by the MRCP. Furthermore, the pandemic-induced economic contraction will likely set back socioeconomic progress for years to come.

Secondly, the CLMVT countries share thousands of kilometres of common borders. **Migration** presents a major challenge and – if managed sensibly – an opportunity, for the region. It is estimated that four to five million migrant workers work in Thailand, mainly from Myanmar, but also Cambodia and Laos. While a part of Thailand's economy depends on foreign workers, numerous families in Myanmar, Cambodia and Laos depend on these remittances. However, COVID-19 has disrupted the pre-pandemic patterns of migration by forcing thousands of migrants to go back to CLM, thus depriving the migrants of their livelihoods and creating major work shortages in Thailand. The social and economic consequences will be felt well into the period covered by the MRCP.

Thirdly, Southeast Asia is one of the world's regions most affected by **climate change**. The Mekong region is one of the most resource-rich and biodiverse areas in the world with high carbon-storage value. Natural resources are crucial to people's predominantly rural livelihoods. This involves a high level of exposure to climate risks. The Global Climate Risk Index 2021 shows that two Mekong countries (Myanmar and Thailand) were amongst the top ten countries globally most affected by extreme weather events between 2000–19, whereas Cambodia ranks 14 and Laos 52 for the same period. With rising global temperatures, the Mekong region is experiencing more frequent and severe droughts, floods and high intensity tropical storms, which adversely impact lives and livelihoods. Other environmental concerns are linked to strong urbanisation, deforestation, burning methods in agricultural fields, which are contributing to air pollution. The impacts of climate change will be at the core of the MRCP.

1 The Mekong region for the purpose of the MRCP 2022-26 comprises Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Vietnam and Thailand (the CLMVT countries), whereas ASEAN has 10 member states (CLMVT + Singapore, Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei). Timor-Leste, the 11th Southeast Asian country, is not member of ASEAN.

Villagers discussing community forestry as a response to the impact of Covid-19 on their livelihoods, Preah Vihear province. Cambodia. Photo © RECOFTC

Finally, the situation in **Myanmar** has had an impact on its neighbouring countries and the other ASEAN member states. COVID-19 has spread fast in the country and across its borders to countries such as Thailand. The political situation after the military takeover of the government in February 2021 has also had an impact. These crises are affecting millions of citizens in Myanmar, which is worrisome and poses a challenge to neighbouring countries and to the ASEAN.

Cambodia and Laos

The **political context** in Cambodia and Laos is hindering the development of good governance and citizen participation. Civil society is closely monitored and human rights, particularly political and civil rights, remain limited. A tense political situation led to deterioration in the multiparty system in Cambodia, with the main opposition party banned from political activities and thus not able to run for the communal elections in 2022 and general elections in 2023. As for Laos, Party Congress and parliamentary elections were held in 2021 without changes in the power structure. One of the priorities under the MRCP is focusing on increasing citizen participation and reinforcing local governance.

Both Laos and Cambodia have **economic development** potential rooted in their diverse assets and their geographical location in mainland Southeast Asia. Their economic strategy builds on an extractive economy (e.g. mining, hydropower, monocultures and timber), with limited ability to create decent employment at scale in Laos, while in Cambodia the garment and services industry are the biggest contributors to GDP. Agriculture remains an important provider of jobs (Laos: 65%, Cambodia: 32%), although its contribution to GDP is relatively modest (Laos: 30%, Cambodia: 20%). Micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) make up 90% of the private sector actors in Laos and are often informal in both countries, making them highly vulnerable to economic shocks. Both Cambodia and Laos have had a relatively high Gini index in 2021 (Laos: 36.4%, Cambodia: 37.9%), highlighting important inequalities in terms of distribution of wealth.

The **pandemic** has led to negative GDP growth following steady 6-7% annual growth in the past 20 years. This economic slowdown has affected state fiscal income in Laos and Cambodia, reducing the provision of public services and the capacity to support the private sector and people's livelihoods. Both countries are expected to return to positive modest economic growth rates from 2021 onwards, although activity will remain subdued compared to historic trends. Jobs and incomes lost because of the pandemic will take years to recoup.

The two countries wish to attract more diversified FDI. Cambodia ranks 144 and Laos 154 out of 190 countries in the Ease of Doing Business Index (WB, 2020). Chinese FDI alone surpassed all other FDI sources combined. This growing dependence on Chinese loans and FDI to keep the economy afloat and to finance large-scale infrastructure projects gives rise to fears of loss of sovereignty over strategic assets and a widening debt trap.

Laos and Cambodia have made significant progress in terms of **poverty reduction** with the poverty rates falling to around 18% in pre-pandemic times (2019) from poverty rates of almost 50% in the 1990s (WB, ADB 2021). At the same time, many households which managed to escape poverty have remained highly vulnerable, hovering just marginally above the poverty line. COVID-19 has thrown many people back into poverty with estimates of an additional 0.5 million poor in Cambodia and 0.3 million in Laos (WB, 2021). The pandemic has unfortunately in many ways become an inequality multiplier: access to education during lockdowns has been a challenge for poorer households throughout the region, the effects of which are likely to be compounded over time, resulting in reduced human capital within the region. In Cambodia harsh lockdowns have led to food shortages. While such shortages have in particular affected steadily growing peri-urban and urban areas, poverty remains predominantly a rural phenomenon, with 85% of the poor living outside of towns and cities.

In terms of **gender equality** both Laos and Cambodia as well as the Mekong region in general have made progress over the past decade, with Gender Inequality Indices just marginally behind the global average (UNDP, 2021). Nevertheless, there are still significant gender gaps in Laos, Cambodia, such as unequal access to public services (for instance education and TVET), women underrepresented in leadership positions in the government (at around 5%) and widespread violence against women. While both countries have relatively advanced legal frameworks in place to protect the rights of women and men, more efforts are needed to ensure enforcement. This is exacerbated for ethnic minority women and women from different religious groups and has further been aggravated by COVID-19 which has disproportionately affected women. Similarly, poorer people, ethnic and religious minorities, smallholder farmer groups and migrants are at increased risk of social exclusion, in particular, during the current crisis. While they are recognised as key target groups in national Leave No One Behind (LNOB) strategies and debates, advocating for their inclusion is more important than ever in the short and medium term as governments prioritise relaunching the economy over social public expenditures.

As for **climate change**, its effects amplify regional cross-border challenges, such as the transboundary water governance of the Mekong River. Changing water flow regimes, reduced sediment loads and loss of valuable wetlands influenced by logging, mining, mono-cropping and unsustainable hydropower development are amongst the key issues affecting the downstream Mekong farming and fishery communities of Southern Laos, Northern Cambodia and the Mekong Delta in Vietnam. The challenge is the low capacity of the institutions and communities to address the effects.

Many of the above-mentioned challenges and opportunities are reflected in the **development priorities** of the region. Laos plans to graduate from the Least Developed Country (LDC) category by 2026 and has outlined its priorities in the 9th National Socio-Economic Development Plan (9th NSEDP 2021–25). The NSEDP contains six strategic pillars, including a focus on the development of human capital through skills development, strengthening environmental protection and sustainable natural resource management and a more efficient public administration contributing to better quality services for its citizens. In Cambodia, the Rectangular Strategy Phase IV (2018–23) provides the main strategic framework to be on track to graduate from LDC status by 2024. At the heart of the strategy is an accelerated governance reform with improved service delivery and accountability and it specifically targets the strengthening of human resources through better health services and skills and the development of a more inclusive and sustainable society. On a regional level, the Work Plan (2021–25) of the Initiative for ASEAN Integration (IAI), which aims to increase the CLMV countries' participation in ASEAN, provides the main strategic framework for alignment. The challenge will be to bridge the gap between the stated policies and strategies on paper and institutional capacities and building strong political will be required for their implementation.

2. Swiss foreign policy objectives in the Mekong region and contributions by other development partners

The Swiss Foreign Policy Strategy 2020–23 and the Swiss International Cooperation Strategy (IC Strategy 2021–24) define the main Swiss interests and policy objectives in the Asia region, and by extension in the Mekong countries: their path towards progress should remain stable, building on a socially inclusive, environmentally sustainable and peaceful development. These interests are translated into the present MRCP, the Swiss Cooperation Programme Myanmar 2019–23 and the Swiss Cooperation Programme Vietnam 2021–24. The recently adopted Swiss China Strategy 2021–24 and the planned Southeast Asia Strategy 2023–26 (to be released in 2022) complement Switzerland's strategic approach in the region.

What Switzerland brings to the region is a mix of specific knowledge (vocational training, interdisciplinary work for sound decision-making, dam safety) and working modalities that link the different levels together, so that the policy dialogue is rooted in field experience, keeping in touch with the realities of people targeted by the programmes. Given its long-term commitment, Switzerland is a trusted partner that local actors appreciate for its reliability and expertise in the context of intervention and its ability to engage at regional, national and sub-national level. Switzerland also uses a good mix of implementation modalities including SDC-funded mandates, contributions to other bilateral and multilateral programmes and organisations, as well as the ability to work with other whole-of-government-approach (WOGA) part-

Swiss Foreign Minister's visit to the Lao Red Cross managed quarantine centres for migrant returnees, Vientiane, Laos. Photo © Lao Red Cross

ners. Finally, Switzerland actively contributes to development partner coordination to strengthen development effectiveness in line with the Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation (GPEDC).

Switzerland puts emphasis on close **bilateral, regional and multilateral relations** and proactively advocates for peace, stability and democracy in the region. Democratic state-building is considered a precondition for more inclusive development and creates an enabling environment for local as well as Swiss companies within the region. Switzerland wants to contribute to safer and more prosperous regional labour migration opportunities through vocational and technical training. Switzerland sees clear scope for better linkages between international cooperation, investment opportunities and the Swiss private sector, for instance in the fight against climate change (e.g. green finance, clean technology) and in strengthening the sustainability of global supply chains. It aims to catalyse such interlinkages and leverage the resources of different partners to contribute to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and Paris Agreement (climate change) in the Mekong region and beyond.

ASEAN is a key regional partner for Switzerland. Based on its renewed **Sectoral Dialogue Partnership,** Switzerland engages in political, security, economic and socio-cultural collaboration on issues like human rights, climate change, humanitarian aid, trade and vocational education. With a regional humanitarian hub in Bangkok and the commitment from the SDC's Global Programmes, Switzerland recognises the importance of managing key issues increasingly through a regional and global perspective. Consequently, Switzerland works with a whole-of-government approach (WOGA) using the comparative advantages of its different actors in a synergetic and mutually reinforcing manner, capitalising on the triple nexus between humanitarian aid, development cooperation and peace policy in the region.

A range of **Swiss NGOs** are present in the Mekong region with their own programmes and as implementers of Swiss government funded mandates. They will be important dialogue partners throughout the MRCP period. Switzerland's Official Development Assistance (ODA) support in Laos and Cambodia has contributed to creating strong relationships with key ministries. Switzerland is thus well accepted and recognised as a trusted partner by the government and civil society organisations thanks to the long-term cooperation in both countries. In Cambodia, the continuing support to the Kantha Bopha Hospitals plays a key role in developing trust with authorities and creating goodwill with the public back in Switzerland.

Switzerland is a medium-sized bilateral development partner in Cambodia and Laos. In both countries it takes part in the **EU joint programming** and has established partnerships with the International Financial Institutions (IFI) and the United Nations (UN) System. According to current projections, ODA support to Laos and Cambodia will remain stable, but its source and nature may change over time with the increased weight of regional development partners, in particular China. The impacts of COVID-19 on development funding cannot yet be fully foreseen, but certain reductions from bilateral development partners are possible. The EU has, for instance, reduced its allocation for Laos in the 2021–25 period by 30% compared to the previous period. The withdrawal of bilateral engagement by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) from Laos by 2023 is noteworthy, as it has implications for GIZ, one of the SDC's key partners, in terms of governance, inclusive economic development, and natural resources. Although Germany will remain in Cambodia, Sweden is closing its embassy but will maintain a presence in the form of a Section Office managing its ODA to Cambodia with an exclusive focus on civil society, human rights, democracy, and the rule of law.

Processes and platforms for **donor coordination and harmonisation** exist in both countries, where the UN Resident Coordinators play an important role, but the governments take limited ownership of the implementation of agreements reached in the meetings held locally. While in both countries government-led technical Working Groups (WGs) exist, they have little influence on policy and mainly serve as information forums. Although China is the main development actor, it does not participate in donor coordination, and other important Asian actors, such as Vietnam or Thailand, remain passive in these processes.

The **Swiss private sector** is active in the Mekong and broader ASEAN region. Switzerland was the ninth biggest source of foreign direct investment (FDI) flows into ASEAN countries in 2019 and 2020 and the biggest investor from Europe. However, the number of Swiss companies in Laos and Cambodia is limited.

3. Results of Switzerland's contribution in the Mekong region for the period 2018–21

The overall goal of the Mekong Region Strategy (MRS) 2018–21 was to contribute to inclusive societies through equitable and sustainable development and democratic governance. It did this by engaging with individual project portfolios and results frameworks in Laos, in Cambodia and at a Mekong regional level through the three domains of governance and citizen participation (GCP), skills development and employment (SDE) and agriculture and food security (AFS). The overall budget envelope for the whole strategy period comprised CHF 146 million, spent through 26 larger development projects.

Overall, the results achieved under the MRS 2018–21 were good with the larger development projects mostly achieving their envisaged outcomes and being able to bring about real change in **people's lives and livelihoods** as illustrated by the following key figures:

- The GCP portfolio contributed to increased access to and utilisation of public services for more than 1.9 million people or an estimated 8% of the population in Laos and Cambodia combined.
- The SDE portfolio facilitated the access of 15,500 people, including more than 60% women, to skills development opportunities and supported more than 10,000 people – of whom almost 70% were women – in finding gainful self-employment.
- The AFS portfolio contributed to increased control over forest resources of around 1.8 million households (more than 30% of the population in Laos and Cambodia) and increased income and food security for more than 100,000 smallholders.

At an **institutional level**, the MRS achieved the following key results:

- The GCP portfolio contributed to improved capacity of public institutions leading to better outreach to constituents (e.g. one-window services), to more responsive delivery of public services and to strengthened organisational capacities of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs).
- The SDE portfolio supported capacity building of more than 1,600 government employees and teachers and facilitated the signing of more than 650 agreements with the private sector for collaboration in more inclusive development efforts.
- The AFS portfolio strengthened teacher capacities at 5 agricultural colleges and supported 13 provincial authorities in using better community land use planning processes and tools.

In terms of **policy level changes**, Switzerland was instrumental in achieving the following:

- The GCP portfolio contributed to more evidence-based and inclusive policymaking through the introduction of mechanisms for improved access to socioeconomic information and data, accountability, transparency and through maintaining some space for civil society.
- The SDE portfolio contributed to the development of a range of policies and normative frameworks (e.g. TVET law in Laos, Recognition of Prior Learning system in Cambodia).
- Through the AFS portfolio the SDC contributed to the Cambodian horticulture policy, to more gender-sensitive extension services in Laos and managed to ensure that biodiversity and green agriculture became priorities in the national strategies of both countries.

At regional level: through programmes including the Mekong Region Land Governance (MRLG), the Mekong River Commission (MRC) and the Regional Labour Migration Programme (Promise), Switzerland contributed to the preparation and adoption of regional guidelines and policies, for instance relating to water management, vocational education and training, and land and forest management, such as the Guidelines on Responsible Investment in Agriculture or Agroforestry. It became clear that while the nation-state remains the organising principle in Southeast Asia, regional projects with credible institutions, such as ASEAN and the Mekong River Commission (MRC), add value, as these institutions can set standards and foster peer learning.

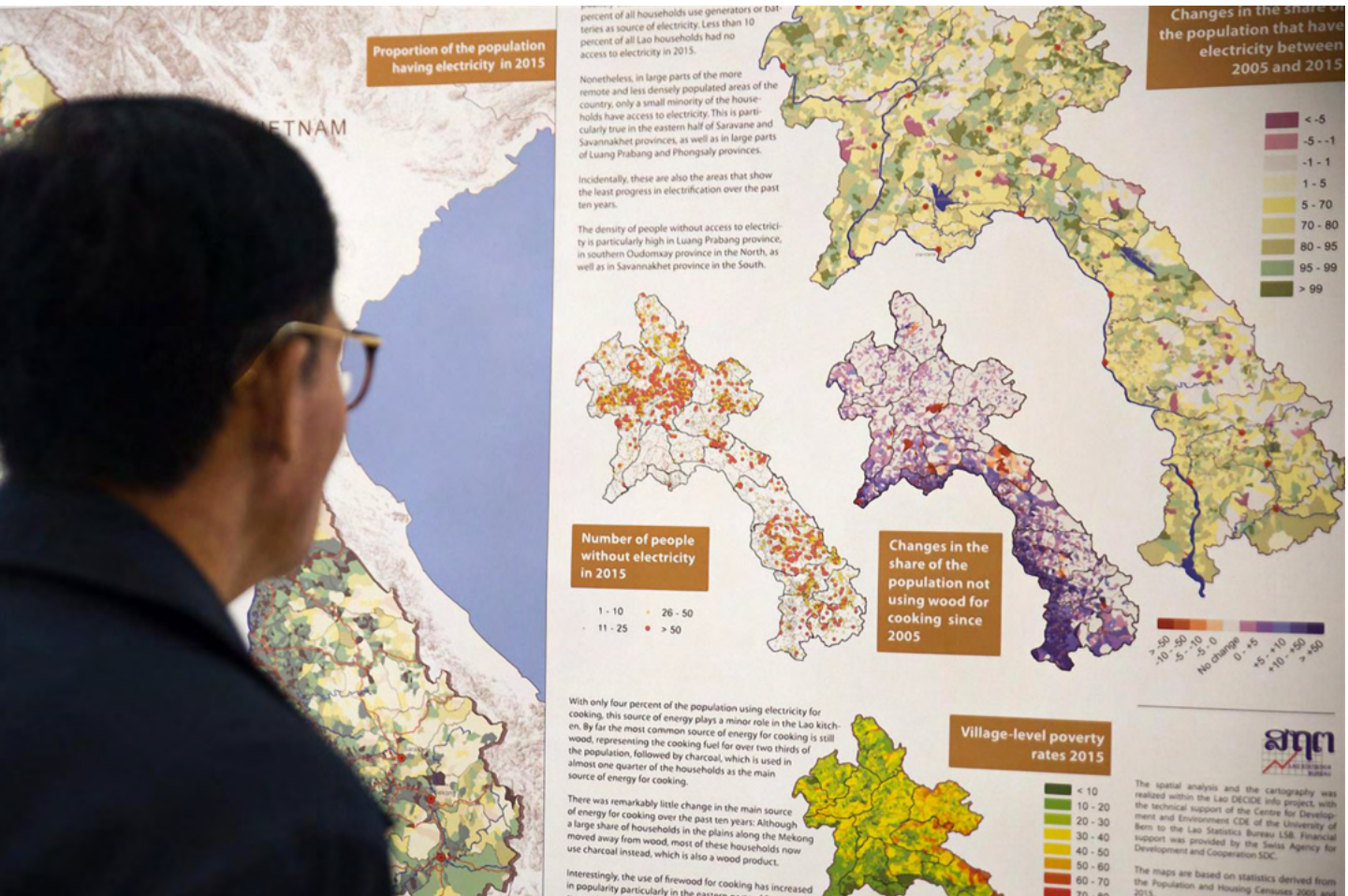
A recent **external evaluation** of the MRS 2018–21 shows very positive results although not all quantitative targets set have been achieved: the challenges of working in remote rural provinces in the northern parts of Laos and Cambodia, characterised by limited economic activity and growth potential, as well as sparse educational infrastructure and institutional capacity were underestimated. The impacts of COVID-19 slowed down programme implementation and caused fewer results to be achieved, as the development progress of many of the SDC's target groups stalled. Wherever possible, the SDC tried to cushion such effects through targeted short- and medium-term support, for instance through cash-for-work programmes or through the delivery of more online support services.

The three **transversal themes** of gender equality, governance and climate change were consistently mainstreamed throughout all major projects, contributing to greater participation by women, better resilience and improved governance at all levels. More could have been achieved in terms of more transformative gender impacts by better using existing gender analysis for monitoring, steering and learning.

A range of important **lessons learned** will influence the strategic orientation of the new MRCP:

- The overall orientation and results achievement of the MRS have been positive but could be strengthened by leveraging synergies between individual projects within a thematic area, between different domains and between the different countries and within the region.
- The sustainability of results could be increased by further investing in the institutional capacity of and working more through Laotian and Cambodian public sector, private sector and CSO change agents.
- The MRS results framework and related steering, learning and accountability processes were too complex and need to be simplified to increase efficiency and effectiveness.

Agricultural Census mapping for policy-makers and citizens. Photo © CDE



4. Implications for the Mekong Region Cooperation Programme 2022–26

The MRCP builds on the solid foundations created through MRS 2018–21, responds to the main context developments, and is aligned with development strategies both in Switzerland and in the Mekong region (see chapters 1–3).

What has been retained:

- The thematic portfolio remains relevant, so a level of continuity is key to further strengthening the sustainability of current results.
- The focus on disadvantaged groups, in particular poor people, women, ethnic and religious minorities, migrants and smallholder farmers, and aligning to the Leave No One Behind (LNOB) agenda remain highly relevant in the current context.
- Switzerland will continue to seek alliances with other DPs to strengthen its policy dialogue.

What is new:

- The COVID-19 pandemic has considerable impacts for the Mekong region and recovery will influence the region throughout the MRCP period. Supporting the COVID-19 recovery at all levels is built transversally into the MRCP.
- Climate change, both in terms of adaptation and mitigation, is given greater prominence in the MRCP and a dedicated area created. This is aligned with regional needs and priorities, as well as Swiss policy objectives.
- An understanding of young people and women not only as key target groups, but as key change agents for a more inclusive development, further shapes the MRCP, which applies a more transformative approach to tackling the underlying causes of gender inequality.

In terms of how Switzerland will work in implementing the MRCP, the following aspects are paramount:

- There is room to strengthen coherence and focus between different projects, between thematic portfolios, between countries and the region and between different Swiss WOGA partners to leverage results for the MRCP.
- For this to take place, the results framework has been simplified so that it genuinely reflects the regional aspect of the programme and shows the synergies between the portfolios.
- While the SDC's main mandate is to contribute to inclusive development in Laos and Cambodia, working at regional level is key to strengthening the results achieved at national level. Many issues are global or regional by nature and best addressed at regional level.
- The MRCP will strengthen its work even more through public sector, private sector and CSO national change agents to ensure greater sustainability of results.

Switzerland will maintain an important role in the testing of innovative approaches to inclusive economic development (IED), climate change and natural resources management (CCNRM) and governance and citizen participation (GCP). Its proven ability to engage in a bottom-up manner and reach out to disadvantaged target groups through the creation of institutional and individual capacities, through spaces and platforms for exchange, dialogue and collaboration at sub-national, national and regional levels, while upholding key principles of good governance, gender equality and social inclusion, will remain at the core of its value proposition.

Online interview of an indigenous young man for social media content, Cambodia. Photo © BBC Media Action

5. Priorities and objectives

The priorities and objectives for the MRCP are oriented towards the Sustainable Development Agenda 2030, Switzerland's International Cooperation Strategy 2021 – 24 and the main regional and national development frameworks (see chapter 1). They are built on the opportunities provided by a region that is strongly interconnected in economic, political and social terms, by a wealth of natural resources providing opportunities for sustainable economic development and by an increasingly digitally literate young population willing to contribute to inclusive development.

The main challenges the MRCP intends to address are a currently weak inclusion of disadvantaged groups into societies, a lack of shared prosperity for many people in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and limited resilience to economic crisis and to shocks induced by climate change

The overall goal of the MRCP is therefore to 'enable people, in particular young people, women and disadvantaged groups in Laos, Cambodia and the Mekong region to be more prosperous, resilient and better included in development processes.

Cooperative member harvesting organically-grown carrots, Xiengkhouang Province, Laos. Photo © GIZ-CEGGA/ Phoonsab

Vocational training center, Preah Vihear, Cambodia.
Photo © Swisscontact

Swiss portfolio outcome 1: inclusive economic development (IED) portfolio

People in the Mekong region, in particular young people, women and disadvantaged groups[2] in Cambodia and Laos, have better quality employment and income and are more resilient to economic crises.

Three outcome statements will support the achievement of the IED SPO, namely:

- → Outcome statement 1: People[3] have improved skills and are more employable.
- → Outcome statement 2: Public and private institutions and civil society organisations provide better quality vocational skills development (VSD), employment support and business development services.
- → Outcome statement 3: Policymakers develop and implement, based on evidence and multi-stakeholder consultations, gender-responsive and inclusive policies on VSD, MSME development and decent work together with the private sector and civil society.

The Swiss IED portfolio will work along the full spectrum between VSD and employment. It will do so by strengthening skills, employment support and MSME development services. This will contribute to the reinstatement, retention and creation of employment and self-employment and ensure that people can enter the job market and recover from the COVID-19 induced crisis. By working in a market-oriented manner, the Swiss portfolio will contribute to the country/regional level outcome of achieving *"… full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value".*

The portfolio will build on its strengths in VSD at national and regional level (including ASEAN), but increase its efforts on the demand side to stimulate employment opportunities in key sectors (e.g. agri-business, small-scale manufacturing, tourism) and contribute to safer and more prosperous regional labour migration opportunities. COVID-19 recovery support for MSMEs will remain an important element throughout the MRCP. The portfolio will increasingly explore options to engage with the private sector in innovative ways, for instance in relation to social entrepreneurship or potential areas of collaboration, e.g. in climate finance with the Swiss Investment Fund for Emerging Markets (SIFEM) with 13 active investments in Cambodia, mostly in the micro-finance sector serving MSMEs. Expertise from the SDC Competence Centre for Private Sector Engagement will be accessed to further operationalise this. This shift towards IED will come to fruition by the second part of the MRCP. The budget for the IED portfolio will amount to amount to CHF 46 million for the MRCP period with a decrease from CHF 14.2 million per year in 2022 to CHF 10 million per year in 2025.

2 For the purposes of the MRCP, the term 'disadvantaged group' means population groups which are disadvantaged or discriminated against because of their poverty status, gender, age, ethnicity, religious affiliation, and/or physical and mental ability.
3 People in all outcome statements always refer to the formulation as detailed in the SPOs.

Safety assessment of the Nam Kham 2 Dam, Laos.
Photo © Dr Patrice Droz

Swiss portfolio outcome 2: climate change and natural resource management (CCNRM) portfolio

People in the Mekong region, in particular young people, women and disadvantaged groups in Cambodia and Laos are more resilient to climate change and disasters, have more secure and equitable access to natural resources (land, forest and water) and manage them sustainably.

Three outcome statements will support the achievement of the CCNRM SPO, namely:

- → Outcome statement 1: People[4] are more resilient to climate change and disasters, have more secure and safe access to natural resources, as well as better control over natural resources.
- → Outcome statement 2: Public, private sector and civil society organisations (in particular CBOs) are providing more responsive climate change adaptation and mitigation, as well as natural resource management support services.
- → Outcome statement 3: Policymakers develop and implement policies, rules and regulations which increase people's access to and control over natural resources and improve climate change adaptation and mitigation.

The CCNRM portfolio is a new portfolio combining programmes from the former agriculture and food security area and some projects from the governance and citizen participation area dealing with the management of natural resources. This allows complex issues to be tackled through a multi-sectoral approach. It will work to build the capacity of public, private and CS actors at sub-national, national and regional level on issues related to CCA, CCM and sustainable NRM. In particular, community forestry will contribute to the all-important carbon sinks. It will generate research-based evidence on CCNRM, help raise awareness, empower rights holders, and feed experience into policy dialogue. It will engage closely with smallholder farmers and private sector actors to facilitate increased adoption of internationally agreed agro-ecological principles[5]. It will also maintain demining activities in Cambodia and increase its engagement related to dam safety and river usage in Laos, as these are crucial aspects of securing safe access to natural resources and safety for the rural population. Through this, the CCNRM portfolio will contribute to the country/regional level outcome "… *people are more resilient to climate change and disasters and have more secure and safe access to and control over natural resources*"

As many of the CCNRM portfolio topics are global, regional and transboundary in nature, collaboration with other DPs, regional initiatives and institutions is crucial. Key regional partners, such as the Mekong River Commission (MRC) and the Regional Community Forestry Training Center (RECOFTC), are important for the achievement of results in this portfolio. High quality expertise will be provided by the SDC humanitarian aid hub in Bangkok and Global Programmes.

The budget for the CCNRM portfolio amounts to CHF 46.5 million for the MRCP period with an increase from CHF 10.5 million in 2022 to CHF 12.5 million in 2025.

4 See footnote 3

5 The 13 agroecological principles include: recycling, input reduction, soil health, animal health, biodiversity, synergy, economic diversification, co-creation of knowledge, social values and diets, fairness, connectivity, land and natural resource governance, participation.

Health check at Kantha Bopha Hospital, Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Photo © Kantha Bopha Hospital

Swiss portfolio outcome 3: governance and citizen participation (GCP) portfolio

People in the Mekong region, in particular young people, women and disadvantaged groups in Cambodia and Laos, benefit from responsive public service delivery and actively engage in local and national governance processes.

Three outcome statements will support the achievement of the GCP SPO, namely:

- → Outcome statement 1: People[6] effectively engage in planning and decision-making processes at local and national level.
- → Outcome statement 2: Public institutions at all levels provide responsive (public) services, including health services in Cambodia, in an inclusive and accountable manner.
- → Outcome statement 3: Policymakers and relevant government authorities draw up inclusive and gender-responsive policies and plans, based on evidence and consultations, and effectively translate them into practice.

The Swiss GCP portfolio will continue continue using a rights-based approach. It will empower people to effectively participate in planning and decision-making processes at the local and national level by building the capacity of change agents in the public sector and in civil society. It will create spaces and platforms for exchange at all levels, enable duty bearers to deliver services according to their mandate, and allow people to access and benefit from good public services through financial and technical support. It will help build the capacities of health service providers, in particular linked to the Kantha Bopha hospitals in Cambodia, municipal services and public information services. The GCP portfolio will continue to push for a more enabling environment for CSOs and support them in performing key advocacy and service functions. At the local level in particular, the portfolio will continue the co-financing of socioeconomic infrastructure and community-led development work. Thereby, the GCP portfolio will contribute to the country/regional level outcome, which is for *"all people in Cambodia, Laos and the Mekong region, in particular people from disadvantaged groups, to increasingly benefit from responsive public service delivery (including health services) and to engage effectively at the local level in planning and decision-making processes" (contributing to SDGs 1,5,10,16).*

The GCP portfolio will capitalise on collaboration with other DPs within the framework of EU joint programming in both countries and use different modalities, such as pool funding with other donors and multi-donor trust funds with the WB.

The budget for the GCP portfolio will amount to CHF 40 million for the MRCP period with a slight decrease from CHF 11 million in 2022 to CHF 9 million in 2025.

6 See footnote 3.

Three transversal themes and outcomes

Father and child in a Healthy Family Model Village, Houaphan Province, Laos. Photo © ENUFF

Tea farming on hillsides to increase income and reduce soil erosion. Photo © / Helvetas

→ **1. Gender equality and social inclusion (GESI):** special emphasis will be placed on young people, women and disadvantaged groups, their access to and control over economic and natural resources, as well as their decision-making power over the management of such resources. Efforts will be made to place gender equality and ethnic diversity more prominently into policy and stakeholder dialogue.

→ **3. Climate change adaptation and mitigation (CCA and CCM) and disaster risk reduction (DRR):** increasing awareness of and capacity for CCA, CCM and DRR at all levels and in all portfolios will guide the implementation of this transversal theme and ensure the resilience of the populations as well as the sustainability of the results. CC issues are placed in policy and stakeholder dialogues related to inclusive economic development, natural resource management and governance service delivery.

Introducing Social Accountability posters. Photo © World Vision

Practising hygiene standards in vocational training for tourism and hospitality sector, Laos. Photo © Skills for Tourism Project

→ **2. Good governance:** a rights-based approach and conflict-sensitive programme management are at the core of operationalisation of good governance. The focus is on enabling rights holders to claim their rights with regard to basic services, political participation, economic and natural resources at local, national and transnational levels, while at the same time strengthening duty bearers to provide quality services in a transparent and accountable manner.

Support for COVID-19 recovery will, in addition to the above transversal themes, guide implementation of all interventions throughout the portfolio, as the recovery phase will remain a key context feature throughout the MRCP period. Transversal themes are consistently applied throughout the programme management cycle and form an integral part of the Cooperation Programme Monitoring System and its processes.

Geographically, Laos and Cambodia are the focus for MRCP, while the Mekong region, including CLMVT and ASEAN, provide important regional anchors, in particular in their role of leveraging more inclusive development of Laos and Cambodia and supporting their integration into the wider region. At sub-national level there is no explicit geographic focus in either Laos or Cambodia. Interventions are rather driven by the presence of the MRCP's target groups or the geographic remit of the SDC's co-funding partners. A strong presence in rural areas and at both national and sub-national levels will remain important, while engaging increasingly along the rural-urban spectrum following a clear urbanisation trend in the region. In both countries a stronger decentralisation of the SDC's engagement is important (e.g. from province to district).

To complement the above thematic portfolios, targeted support will be given to cultural activities in line with the SDC Culture and Development Policy. Furthermore, the following SDC units will be involved under the umbrella of the MRCP: Humanitarian Aid through its hub in Bangkok and the Global Programmes on Climate Change and Environment, Water, Food Security, as well as Migration and Development. Collaboration with SECO through its presence in Vietnam will be leveraged whenever possible (e.g. collaboration with ASEAN). Of particular relevance will be the coordination with the SDC Cooperation Pro- gramme in Myanmar and humanitarian aid activities related to the political crisis in Myanmar, as this will influence Laos, Cambodia and the Mekong region in a variety of ways (e.g. COVID-19 prevention, refugee streams).

6. Management of programme implementation

The management of the MRCP is oriented towards **continuity**, as a large part of the MRCP budget is committed to ongoing projects with existing partnerships. The overall budget amounts to CHF 133.7 million with CHF 46 million allocated to IED, CHF 46.5 million to CCNRM, and CHF 40 million to the GCP portfolio. Geographically, CHF 59 million is allocated to Laos, CHF 46.5 million to Cambodia, and CHF 28.2 million to regional projects. Human resources will remain largely the same over the MRCP period. The programme is managed out of the Swiss cooperation offices in Laos (lead) and Cambodia in close collaboration with the humanitarian hub in Bangkok[7]. Staff capacities are built to reflect the MRCP's new priorities in terms of climate change, the application of transversal themes, and engagement with different partners, such as the private sector and young people, as change agents.

The MRCP will **strengthen coherence** between individual projects, thematic portfolios, countries and the region. This will result in better **use of synergies** throughout the region, leading to higher development effectiveness. It will also involve greater complexity and transaction costs, which need to be resourced appropriately, for instance by creating opportunities for regional exchange and learning.

In terms of partnerships, a range of mechanisms will be used. For **project implementation**, the SDC will predominantly work through private sector and civil society partners or change agents at sub-national, national and regional level. These partners will be identified proactively based on their incentives, capacities and influence. Accordingly, capacities will then be further developed to enable partners to become independent agents of systemic change in the long term. This is in line with the recommendation of the external evaluation of the previous Mekong Region Strategy, which underlined the need to work more through others and to coach them accordingly.

In terms of development partners, existing **partnerships** will largely be maintained and strengthened, notably collaboration within the framework of EU joint programming, collaboration with key regional institutions, such as the MRC, and collaboration with ASEAN. Partnerships with the IFIs and the UN system will be maintained and strengthened to the extent that they contribute to the MRCP's objectives and allow Swiss results to be leveraged. New engagements, for instance with the private sector, will be further assessed throughout the MRCP period, using the expertise of the SDC's Competence Centre for the Engagement with the Private Sector (CEP). For climate change, regional and joint DP initiatives will be used.

The MRCP will maintain a mix of **aid modalities** with mandates allowing for strong Swiss visibility and expertise, contributions to other DP programmes and contributions to international organisations, such as the IFIs and the UN system and to local and regional organisations. This allows Switzerland to generate its own evidence and feed it jointly with others into policy dialogues, while adequately managing financial and institutional risks. The use of newer, innovative modalities will be further explored throughout the MRCP period.

Key **objectives for the management** are to ensure a clear focus on LNOB groups, an increased commitment to climate change and a strong appropriation of transversal themes throughout the programme. The management aims to maintain and further strengthen high quality human resources in line with the above priorities, while ensuring a healthy work-life balance for staff members. The SDC will be able to punch above its financial weight throughout MRCP implementation by playing an important role as policy advocate, strengthening the sustainability of results by working more through change agents, and using synergies better throughout the programme.

7 The role, functions and scope of this hub will be reviewed and will most likely include provision of thematic expertise for the region. The management set up of the MRCP will also be reviewed to take into account the SDC's organisational changes.

Principles for strengthening coherence and synergies throughout the Mekong region in MRCP:

Regional projects need to respond to a regional development challenge or respond to a request from a regional institution.

Regional projects must contribute to at least one of the following:

a) Setting/revising regional standards/policies and supporting their implementation at national level (implementation can be assured by complementary national projects)
b) Exposing countries in the region to other countries' approaches and experiences (peer exchange).

Both regional and country-level projects have to complement each other to enhance development effectiveness in one of the following ways:

a) Regional projects should explicitly complement country-level projects, even if a regional project already includes country-level interventions
b) Country-level projects should gain from standards setting and peer learning from regional projects/institutions.

Lao Red Cross welcomes returned migrants. Photo Lao Red Cross

7. Strategic steering

Strategic steering comprises the monitoring of the MRCP for **steering, learning and accountability** purposes (towards stakeholders in the country, SDC head office, the FDFA, Swiss Parliament and Swiss taxpayers) and makes use of standard SDC management tools. The purpose is to keep track of programme relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability and enables the SDC to practise adaptive management based on changes in the context and scenarios. While all staff members are involved in the strategic steering process, overall responsibility lies with the Swiss Cooperation Office (SCO) management.

Monitoring for strategic steering, learning and accountability purposes takes place at five different levels:

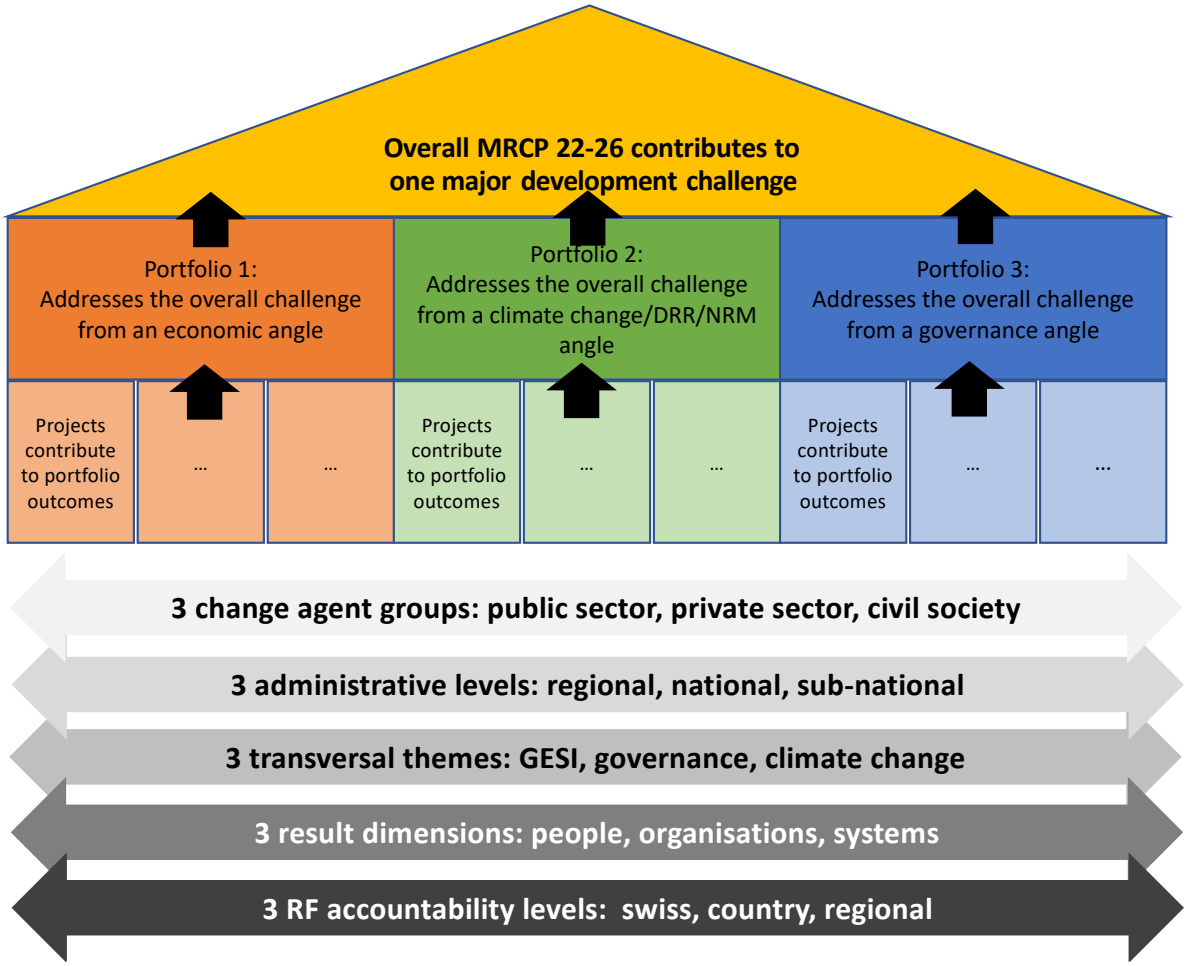
1. The **monitoring of programme context** developments, trends and scenarios (MERV): the MERV is the primary instrument to capture context information, is conducted annually, and feeds into annual reporting. Context monitoring takes place in each project in collaboration with different partners including other SCOs, embassies in the region and other Swiss WOGA partners in a continuous manner and influences programme steering.
2. The **monitoring of individual projects**: this is mainly done by the project implementers, but the SDC's team has an important role to ensure coherence and learning between projects and the overall portfolio. Important for this is the alignment of project logical frames to the results framework (RF) of the MRCP, ensuring, for instance, that the same indicators are used wherever possible. Project monitoring takes place at different times, including during regular field visits and partner events, but is designed to feed into the SDC's annual reporting cycle in an optimal manner to allow for meaningful results aggregation.
3. The **monitoring of Swiss portfolio results**: this is at the core of the annual reporting cycle and assesses the results achieved at overall portfolio level. For the MRCP, this process combines, for the first time, results for Laos, Cambodia and the region within the same RF. As far as possible, Aggregated Reference Indicators (ARIs) and Thematic Reference Indicators (TRIs) are used to allow for meaningful aggregation.
4. The **monitoring of country/regional results** and the establishment of the Swiss attribution: this takes place in parallel with the monitoring of the Swiss portfolio results and focuses on establishing a reasonable contribution logic between the Swiss portfolio and the national/regional outcomes. For the MRCP, national results for Laos and Cambodia as well as regional results are combined into the same outcome statements.
5. The **monitoring of management performance**: management monitoring focuses on the efficiency and effectiveness of the SCOs and compliance with aid modalities and principles, cooperation with partners, allocation of financial resources, transversal themes and the use of synergies across the MRCP. The implementation of the MRCP will be flexible enough to adapt swiftly to changing contexts by reallocating resources to specific geographical areas, reorienting project activities or engaging more deeply with the most suitable actor to address a given new situation.

Appendix B contains the **results framework** for the MRCP which is oriented towards pragmatism, simplification, and standardisation, as illustrated in Appendix A. While a joint monitoring framework and system between Laos, Cambodia and the region will lead to more coherence within the MRCP, it is important that the necessary time and capacity-building amongst SDC team members and partners takes place to ensure the highest quality.

A late mid-term review of the MRCP is planned to take place in Q4 of 2024 to inform decisions for a future engagement in the Mekong region.

Appendices

Appendix A: Programme architecture and management set-up



Overall MRCP 2022-26 architecture

The MRCP forms one coherent programme that addresses one major development challenge for the Mekong region which can be described using the following 7*3 formula:

1. The overarching development challenge is addressed through an economic, climate change/DRR/NRM and governance angle (3 portfolios) which are connected and interlinked.
2. The overall programme, the portfolios and the projects (3 instruments) are interlinked.
3. For all interventions change is brought about by 3 different agents: public sector, private sector and civil society, which are all boundary partners of the MRCP.
4. The portfolios intervene at 3 administrative levels (sub-national, national and regional) in a complementary and reinforcing manner.
5. The 3 transversal themes of gender and social inclusion, governance and climate change further strengthen these interlinkages and aim to achieve transformative changes throughout.
6. The aim is to achieve results at the level of people, at the level of organisations, and at the level of systems as a whole (3 results dimensions).
7. Results are reported on 3 accountability levels: Swiss, country and regional.

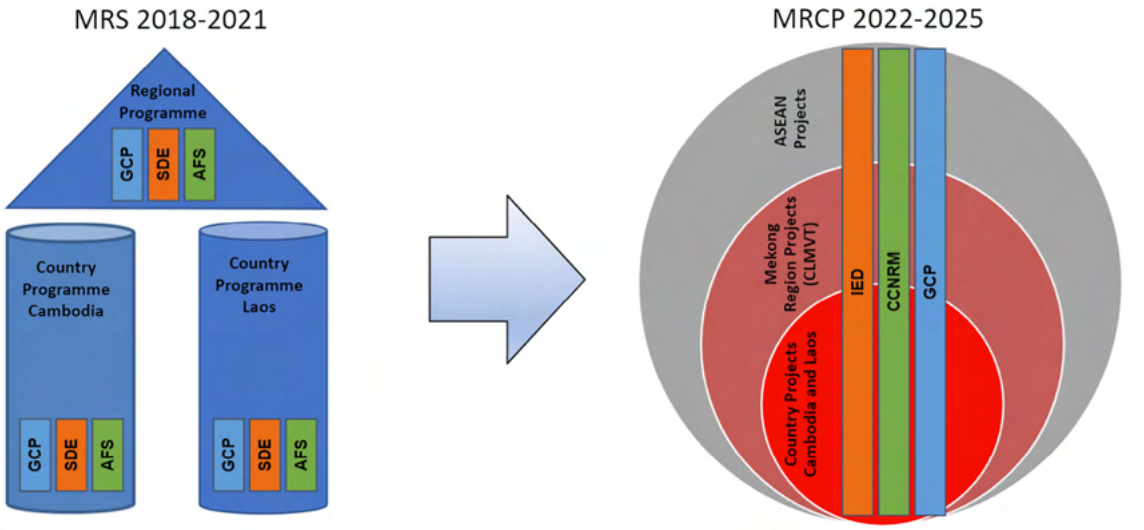
1 goal for the MRCP 22-26

1 Swiss portfolio outcome 1: inclusive economic development			1 Swiss portfolio outcome 2: climate change & natural resource management			1 Swiss portfolio outcome 3: governance & citizen participation		
Linking to 1 IC objective and max 2 sub-objectives			Linking to 1 IC objective and max 2 sub-objectives			Linking to 1 IC objective and max 2 sub-objectives		
1 Swiss Outcome Statement People - Max 2 indicators	→	1 Regional/country statement with focus on changes at the level of people - Max 2 indicators for Region - Max 2 indicators for Laos - Max 2 indicators for Cambodia	1 Swiss Outcome Statement People - Max 2 indicators	→	1 Regional/country statement with focus on changes at the level of people - Max 2 indicators for Region - Max 2 indicators for Laos - Max 2 indicators for Cambodia	1 Swiss Outcome Statement People - Max 2 indicators	→	1 Regional/country statement with focus on changes at the level of people - Max 2 indicators for Region - Max 2 indicators for Laos - Max 2 indicators for Cambodia
1 Swiss Outcome Statement Institutions - Max 2 indicators	→		1 Swiss Outcome Statement Institutions - Max 2 indicators	→		1 Swiss Outcome Statement Institutions - Max 2 indicators	→	
1 Swiss Outcome Statement Policies/EE - Max 2 indicators	→		1 Swiss Outcome Statement Policies/EE - Max 2 indicators	→		1 Swiss Outcome Statement Policies/EE - Max 2 indicators	→	

In summary for the whole MRCP 22-26

- 1 goal
- 3 Swiss portfolio outcomes
- 9 Swiss outcome statements (people, organisations, policies)
- 18 Swiss portfolio indicators
- 3 regional/country outcome statements (possibly similar formulation as people outcome statement in Swiss portfolio)
- Max 18 indicators for regional/national outcomes (possibility to cluster the 6 indicators in each portfolio into 2 main indicator groups)
- No separate outcome statements for transversal themes: Transversal themes are integrated in all outcome statements and indicators and form also part of the management performance indicators

Appendix C: Overall MRCP 2022-26 results framework architecture



Programme and portfolio set-up: changes from the MRS 18–21 (3 thematic portfolios with separate projects in each country and in the region) to the MRCP 22–26 (3 joint thematic portfolios throughout the region)

Appendix B: Results framework

Swiss Portfolio Outcome 1: Inclusive Economic Development (IED)

People in the Mekong region, in particular young people, women and disadvantaged groups (poor people, ethnic and religious minorities, migrants, smallholder farmers) of Cambodia and Laos have better quality employment[8] and income and are more resilient to economic crises.

Contributing to Sub-Objective:

→ *IC Objective A: Contributing to sustainable economic growth, market development and the creation of decent jobs (economic development)*
- *IC Sub-objective 2: Promoting innovative private sector initiatives to facilitate the creation of decent jobs (link with SDGs 4, 5, 8, 10)*

(1) Swiss portfolio outcomes	(2) Contribution of Swiss programme Describe how (1) contributes to (3)	(3) Country/region development or humanitarian outcomes
Outcome statement 1.1 (people) People[9] have improved skills and are more employable. **Indicator 1.1.1:** Number of persons (m/f, LNOB group) enrolled in new or better vocational) skills development[10] (***IED ARI 1***) • Baseline [2021] 67,684 (m 29,729; f 36,955; LNOB 47,725) • Target value [2025] 290,000 (m 180'000; f 110,00; LNOB 135,000) **Indicator 1.1.2:** Number of persons (m/f, LNOB group) having new or better employment[11] (***IED ARI 2 / MRG TRI 1***) • Baseline [2021] 44,834 (m 20,661; f 24,174; LNOB 43,872) • Target value [2025] 224,000 (m 113,000; f 111,000; LNOB 219,000) **Outcome statement 1.2 (organisations/institutions)** Public and private institutions and civil society organisations provide better quality vocational skills development (VSD), employment support and business development services.	**Attribution logic:** • The CH portfolio contributes to improved policies and services, which strengthen relevance, quality and accessibility of VSD, employment & income opportunities. • It will coherently work on employment/income generation, VSD as well as the transition from VSD to employment while mainstreaming gender, good governance and CC/DRR, and ensure social inclusion. • CH will work in a needs-based and demand-oriented manner focusing on strengthening public, private and CSO change agents within the respective economic systems (e.g. sub-national, national and regional) to enable them to sustainably perform their roles.	**Outcome statement (people level)** By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value (SDG 8.5). **Aspect 1: Income Cambodia**: Monthly minimum wage for garment and textile sector in USD • Baseline [year]: 192 (m: 192; f: 192) • Target value [year]: tbd • Means of verification: MoLVT **Laos**: Average hourly earnings of female/male employees, by sector and age group in Lao Kip and extrapolated to monthly wage in USD (8 hour work day, 24 days a month) • Baseline [2019] • Target value: N/A • Means of Verification: Voluntary National Review of SDG Indicator 8.5

Sector	Hourly wage LAK average	Hourly wage LAK men	Hourly wage LAK women	Monthly USD average
Agriculture	LAK 7'907	LAK 9'735	LAK 6'078	USD 152
Industry	LAK 8'489	LAK 6'571	LAK 10'407	USD 163
Service	LAK 8'544	LAK 11'487	LAK 5'601	USD 164

[8] Employment includes self-employment

[9] People in the Mekong region, in particular women, young people and disadvantaged groups (poor, ethnic and religious minorities, migrants, smallholder farmers) in Cambodia and Laos

[10] Vocational skills development (VSD) encompasses all organised learning processes for the development of technical, social and personal competencies and qualifications that contribute to the sustainable long-term integration of trained people in decent work conditions in the formal or informal economy, either on an employed or self-employed basis.

[11] Increase/change in income is an element of better (self)employment

Indicator 1.2.1: Number of public, private and CSO service providers with increased capacity for IED (VSD, employment support, BDS/SME) service provision

Baseline [2021] 1,545 (public 220; private 1,257; CSO 68)

Target value [2025] 3,800 (public 600; private 3,000; CSO 200)

Indicator 1.2.2: Number of public, private and CSO service providers contributing to relevant skills development and other IED services, disaggregated by 3 categories: public, private, CSO.

(***IED TRI 2*** *covers the companies. Data for the other categories will also be reported.)*

- Baseline [2021] 1,229 (public 173; private 1,034; CSO 22)
- Target value [year] 3,600 (public 700; private 2,800; CSO 100)

Outcome statement 1.3 (policy)

Policy makers develop and implement, based on evidence and multi-stakeholder consultation, gender responsive and inclusive policies on VSD, MSME development and decent work together with the private sector and civil society.

Indicator 1.3.1: Number of IED relevant legal frameworks, policies and guidelines developed or revised, also taking into account key aspects of governance and CC/DRR.

- Baseline [2021] 24
- Target value [2025] 52

Indicator 1.3.2: Effectiveness of existing or newly adopted regional and national legal frameworks, policies and guidelines in the field of IED (with examples of implementation).

- Baseline [2021] 10
- Target value [2025] 34

- This will help CL and the Mekong region to achieve their ambitions with regard to productive employment and decent work.
- CH builds on its strength of generating evidence at various levels (micro, meso and macro) and feeding it into policy debates.

Conducive factors:

- Willingness of Cambodia and Laos for LDC graduation and commitment to inclusive economic development and employment and human resources development as reflected in national strategies as well as at ASEAN level.
- Regional integration and connectivity drive; trade, labour force mobility, transport (such as e.g. regional railway in Laos)
- Demographic dividend (young people)
- Digital innovation and increased awareness of the importance of digital skills (reinforced by COVID-19 pandemic).

Adverse factors:

- COVID-19 socio-economic impacts; loss of jobs, closure of MSMEs, limited fiscal revenues, reduction of contribution from key sectors to GDP (e.g. tourism, manufacturing, construction).
- Limited power of economy to create jobs at scale (MSMEs, informality), in particular in 'SDC provinces'
- Low reputation of TVET and barriers to women in accessing TVET and employment support services

Risks (e.g. country and context risks):

- MMR political and humanitarian crisis and regional spillovers
- Debt trap and dependency on neighbouring countries (e.g. Laos)

Aspect 2: Employment Indicator: Employment rate

Cambodia

- Baseline [2020]: 88%
- Target value [2023]: 94%
- Means of Verification: NSDP 2019– 23, p. 264

Laos

Baseline [2020]: 80%

Target value [2025]: 85%

Means of verification: 9th NSEDP

Aspect 3: **Skills development Indicator**

Cambodia:

Share of TVET graduates that found employment within the

first 3 months of graduation

- Baseline [2020]: 73%
- Target value [2023]: 75%
- Means of Verification: Cambodia SDG 2016– 30, indicator 4.3) and MoLVT JMI report

# of students enrolment in TVET programme (15 to 24 years old) by sex

- Baseline [2021]: 22,300 (m: 16,725, f: 5,575)
- Target value [2025]: 227,500 (m: 170,625; f: 56,875)
- Means of Verification: MoLVT report

Laos:

Level of government expenditure to sector development (allocation of state budget to TVET institution)

- Baseline [2021]: LAK 245,803 million (USD 24.5 million)
- Target value [2025]: LAK 250,573 million (USD 25 million)
- Means of verification: NSSDP 2021–25

(4) Lines of intervention (Swiss programme)

Theory of change

If the Swiss IED portfolio works along the full spectrum between the world of VSD and the world of employment by…

- strengthening skills development, as well as employment support services and business development services (BDS)
- working in a market-oriented manner through public, private and CSO change agents at sub-national, national and regional level
- consistently mainstreaming the transversal themes of gender, good governance and climate change/DRR as well as ensuring social inclusion and if the Swiss IED portfolio contributes…
- to employment opportunities, employment retention, reinstatement and creation of jobs and ensures…
- that people are optimally prepared and can transition into such employment opportunities,

then the people have better quality employment and income and ultimately will become more resilient, prosperous, and included in society overall.

Main lines of intervention

- Continuous market assessment to identify bottlenecks which impede poor people to access skills, jobs and markets
- Demand-driven VSD for young people, women and disadvantaged groups (TVET, IVET, VSD) with strong focus on private sector (e.g. WBL)
- Employment support services to facilitate transition from VSD to employment for young people and reintegration of returning migrants
- Entrepreneurship support for young people / BDS support for MSMEs incl. agribusiness
- Policy advocacy on IED issues, e.g. on integration of WBL into formal TVET systems, on safer migration, on recovery of MSMEs in agro-food and tourism sectors (COVID-19), on regional economic integration, on rural employment, digital skills, green skills and jobs, green extension services in agriculture, diversification of skills development options for women
- Strengthening coordination and dialogue between public sector and private sector at sub-national, national and regional levels
- Targeted COVID-19 recovery support
- Innovative ways of engaging with the private sector (e.g. social entrepreneurship, SIINC, SIFEM)

Sectors of engagement: TVET (covering various sectors), agriculture, tourism, construction, manufacturing, labour migration

Transversal themes:

Gender equality/GESI

- Special focus on young people, women and disadvantaged groups and their access to and control over economic resources and services, as well as on increasing their confidence and decision-making power (e.g. access to market for ethnic minorities; women's entrepreneurship; women and men in non-traditional occupations). Partner capacities are built with regard to GESI.

Good governance:

- Good governance is applied transversally to engagement with institutions (e.g. service providers, government agencies), but also at the level of sub- national, national and regional economic governance (e.g. public-private sector dialogue). A conflict-sensitive programme approach will be applied throughout all projects and set 'do no harm' as the minimum standard.

Climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction

- CCA, CCM and DRR are transversally integrated into the IED portfolio. In VSD, green skills are specifically incentivised, whereas change agents are incentivised to green their own management processes and practices. CC issues will be advocated for in policy debates and discussions at sub-national, national and regional levels.

(5) Resources, partnerships (Swiss programme)

Planned financial resources (CHF million)

2022	2023	2024	2025
14.25	11,75	10	10

If available/appropriate: information on co-financing

Coordination/co-financing with other international donors: EU, LUX, BMZ

Other aspects of partnership (nexus, joint results, complementary support)

- Linkages between Swiss NGOs, Swiss businesses and SDC will be further explored, specifically in Cambodia
- EU joint programming and collaboration with specific EU member states strengthened: collaboration between Luxembourg and Switzerland in skills for tourism (Laos), Switzerland and Germany in TVET (Laos), Ministry of Economy and Finance in Skills Development Fund (Cambodia)
- Ways of partnering with new donors/partners fostering South-South cooperation and potential of new instruments, such as pool funds with other donors, multi-donor trust funds with the WB (Laos), will be explored / TICA (regional programme)
- Nexus approach: several projects are being affected by the MMR crisis > implications are to be discussed and taken into account
- Further explore innovative ways of engagement with the private sector (across the portfolio boundaries)

Human resources

- Laos: 1 Swiss (50%) and 1 NPO
- Cambodia: 1 Swiss and 1 NPO

Swiss Portfolio Outcome 2: Climate Change and Natural Resource Management (CCNRM)

People in the Mekong region, in particular young people, women and disadvantaged groups (poor people, ethnic and religious minorities, migrants, smallholder farmers) of Cambodia and Laos, are more resilient to climate change and disasters, have more secure and equitable access to natural resources (land, forest and water) and sustainably manage them.

Contributing to Sub-Objective:

→ *IC Objective B: Addressing climate change, disaster risk and its effects and manage natural resources sustainably (environment)*
- *IC Sub-objective 3: Addressing climate change, disaster risk and its effects (link with SDGs 6, 7, 11, 12, 13)*
- *IC Sub-objective 4: Ensuring the sustainable management of natural resources (link with SDGs 6, 12, 15)*

(1) Swiss portfolio outcomes	(2) Contribution of Swiss programme Describe how (1) contributes to (3)	(3) Country/region development or humanitarian outcomes
Outcome statement 2.1. (people) People[12] are more resilient to climate change and disasters and have more secure and safe access to natural resources as well as better control over natural resources. **Indicator 2.1.1:** Number of persons (m/f, LNOB group) benefiting from concrete climate change adaptation measures (CCE ARI 1), including disaster risk reduction measures, disaggregated by gender and ethnic groups • Baseline [2021] 71,233 (m 32,242; f 38,991; LNOB 6,593) • Target value [2025] 188,000 (m 91,000; f 97,000; LNOB tbd) **Indicator 2.1.2:** Number of smallholder farmers, who have secure land tenure/land rights (AFS TRI 4), landmine cleared land, disaggregated by gender, ethnic groups • Baseline [2021]: Land rights: 78,700 (m 38,860; f 39,840); Mine cleared: 1,143,927 (m 617,737; f 526,190) • Target value [2025]: Land rights: 1,080,000 (m 620,000; f 460,000); Mine cleared: 1,274,000 (m 688,000; f 586,000)	**Attribution logic** (horizontal): • The CH portfolio contributes to enhancing people's resilience to climate change and disasters and more secure/safe access and control over natural resources through an integrated approach on three levels addressing people, institutions and policies. • Natural resource governance is improved by constructively creating a space for collaboration with public, private and civil society change agents and promoting participatory mechanisms. • People are empowered to access and sustainably manage available natural resources through awareness raising, capacity development and implementing concrete adaptation measures with a specific focus on LNOB and engaging in remote areas.	**Outcome statement (people level)** People are more resilient to climate change and disasters and have more secure and safe access to and control over natural resources. **Aspect 1: Resilience of people to climate change Indicator region:** The degree to which the services of improved basin-wide flood and drought forecasting and early warning systems are being used by the responsible national agencies and other target users including disadvantaged groups (MRC) • Baseline [2021]: Regional flood and drought forecasting and early warning technology and services have gaps and are evaluated as unsatisfactory • Target value [2025]: Regional Flood and Drought Management Center services and products are evaluated on average as at least 'highly satisfactory' by national agencies and other users (through MRC's user satisfaction survey). • Means of verification: MRC's user satisfaction survey report

[12] People in the Mekong region, in particular women, young people and disadvantaged groups (poor, ethnic and religious minorities, migrants, smallholder farmers) of Cambodia and Laos

Outcome statement 2.2 (organisations/institutions)

Public, private sector and civil society organisations (in particular CBOs) are providing more responsive climate change adaptation and mitigation as well as natural resource management support services.

Indicator 2.2.1:

Number of public, private and civil society organisations (in particular community-based organisations) with increased capacity to deliver climate change (CC) and natural resource management (NRM) related services or implement CC and NRM-related plans.

- Baseline [2021]: 145 (public 70; private 14; CSO/CBO 61))
- Target value [2025]: 3,300 (public tbd; private tbd; CSO/CBO tbd)

Indicator 2.2.2: Number of systems ensuring that investments in disaster risk prevention and reduction enhance the resilience of persons, communities, countries and their assets, as well as the environment (DRR TRI 3)

- Baseline [2021]: 0
- Target value [2025]: 9

Outcome statement 2.3

Policymakers develop and implement policies, rules and regulations which increase people's access to and control over natural resources and improve climate change adaptation and mitigation.

Indicator 2.3.1: Effectiveness of existing or newly introduced national policies and legal frameworks in the field of climate change/environment and NRM (CCE TRI 1)

- Baseline [2021]: mean score 1.5
- Target value [2025]: mean score 2.5

Indicator 2.3.2: Number of good quality DRR, CCA or NRM laws/policies/guidelines developed and adopted ('good quality' refers to policies being evidence- based, gender-responsive and developed through a multi-stake-holder process).

- Baseline [2021]: 3
- Target value [year]: 27

- CH relies on its potential to achieve social, institutional and technological innovation and builds on its strength of creating synergies, generating context- specific evidence and feeding it into policy dialogue at sub-national, national and regional levels.

Conducive factors:

- National policies and laws aiming towards green growth and sustainable development emerging.
- Other DPs high interest and additionally available climate finances
- Mix of Swiss modalities to address key change agents

Adverse factors:

- Current economic development pathways relying heavily on non- sustainable NR extractions
- Difficulty of substantially influencing the national political agenda
- Missing downwards accountability; focus on short-term rent-seeking
- Missing voice of the disadvantaged, social exclusion and shrinking space for civil society

Risks:

- Continuously aggravating impact of CC, increasing climate risks and natural hazards
- Deterioration in the political, economic and social context
- Further increase of political and economic influence of several countries in the region, and linked conflicts around land rights and other natural resources exploitation.

Indicator Cambodia:

Percentage of communes/Sangkat vulnerable to climate change

- Baseline [2017]: 42%
- Target value [2023]: 35%
- Means of Verification: NSDP 2018–23

Indicator Laos: Number of disaster risk reduction strategies (provincial, district and village level)

- Baseline: Provincial (2), district (0), village (0) in 2020
- Target: Provincial (10), district (20), village (80) in 2025 (9th NSEDP)
- Means of verification: 9th NSEDP

Aspect 2: Improved and secured access to natural resources

Indicator Region:

ASEAN Guidelines for Customary Tenure recognition developed and adopted

- Baseline [2021] 0
- Target value [2025]:1
- Means of verification: ASEAN Guidelines

Indicator Cambodia:

Number of communities with management plan and access to financial support

- Baseline [2018]: 85 communities with management plan and 21 communities for access to financial support
- Target value [2023]: 115 communities with management plan and 51 communities for access to financial support
- Means of verification: (ASDP and JMI-TWG Forestry Reform 2019–23)

Indicator Laos:

1.6 million land parcels to be registered or titled by 2025

- Baseline [2020] 1.5 million land parcels registered and titled
- Target value [2025] 3.1 million land parcels registered in Laos
- Means of verification: 9th NSEDP

(4) Lines of intervention (Swiss programme)

Theory of change

If the Swiss CCNRM portfolio works on…

- capacity building of public, private and civil society institutions at sub-national, national and regional level on issues related to climate change mitigation, adaptation and the sustainable management of natural resources, in particular water, land and forest
- enabling them to…
- live up to their responsibility to provide secure and equal rights over natural resources to the communities
- provide secured and safe access to natural resources for the rural population and Switzerland further engages…
- in research-based evidence generation on CCNRM, awareness-raising and empowerment of rights holders and feeds experiences into inclusive and gender-responsive policy dialogue at all levels,
- closely with smallholder farmers and private sector actors to facilitate a more sustainable use of agro-ecological approaches and facilitates the introduction of DRR Measures,

then people are more resilient to CC and disasters, have more secure and equitable access to and control over natural resources (land, forest and water) and manage them sustainably and ultimately will become more resilient, prosperous, and included in society overall.

Main lines of intervention:

- Combining co-creation of research-based evidence on CCNRM with capacity-building of institutions and an active engagement in policy advocacy and dialogue.
- Foster and support transdisciplinary multi-stakeholder platforms and spaces for dialogue to improve natural resources governance at sub-national, national and regional levels.
- Foster close cooperation between communities, governments and regional institutions to improve secure access of communities to water resources, land and forest.
- Awareness-raising and empowerment of rights holders, especially smallholder farmers and the private sector actors (MSMEs), to increase the use of agro-ecological approaches and apply more sustainable natural resource management practices.
- Mainstreaming nature-based, community and national CCA/DRR solutions.
- Support in strengthening national dam safety regulatory and institutional frameworks and in developing law enforcement capacities in Laos.
- Contribute to demining in Cambodia

Sectors of engagement: Water and energy, small water irrigation, land, agriculture, horticulture, fisheries, forestry, land mines, WASH, and nutrition

Gender equality/GESI

- Special focus on women and disadvantaged groups regarding access to and control over natural resources (e.g. joint land title, women members and leaders in community-based NRM groups) as well as on increasing their participation and power in decision-making on natural resources management.

Good governance:

- Transboundary water governance and water diplomacy is an important component of the portfolio.
- Focus is both on national and local institutions applying good governance, incl. rule of law, principles and on people and communities having access to (legal) information (rights-based approach).
- Community-based NRM groups as basic democratic entities are supported in the development of inclusive management plans and in advocating for their rights and for the sustainable use of natural resources.

Climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction

- Improving water management and dam safety for reduced flood incidences and early warning systems as well as drought mitigation measures.
- Increasing awareness and knowledge of climate change and NRM issues (CEDRIG tool) across the three portfolios.

(5) Resources, partnerships (Swiss Programme)

Planned financial resources (CHF million)

2022	2023	2024	2025
10.5	11.5	12	12.5

If available/appropriate: information on co-financing

- Coordination/co-financing with other international donors: World Bank, BMZ, LUX, DFAT, Sida (plus other DPs co-financing MRC through Basket and Earmarked Funds)

Other aspects of partnership (nexus, joint results, complementary support)

- Implementing partners: Helvetas, LEI/GRET, CDE/UniBern, MRC, Oxfam, RECOFTC, WWF, NTFP-EP, CEPA, SNV, HALO Trust, FAO, and other sectoral ministries in Laos and Cambodia
- Close coordination with the HA hub in Bangkok and SDC Global Programmes and their supported partners will continue and be strengthened

Human resources

- Laos: 2 Swiss and 5 NPOS working 50% on CCNRM and 50% on GCP/IED
- Cambodia: 1 Swiss and 2 NPOs

Swiss Portfolio Outcome 3: Governance and Citizen Participation (GCP)

People in the Mekong region, in particular young people, women and disadvantaged groups (poor, ethnic and religious minorities, migrants, smallholder farmers) in Cambodia and Laos, benefit from responsive public service delivery and actively engage in local and national governance processes.

Contributing to Sub-Objective:

- *IC Objective D: Promoting peace, the rule of law and gender equality (peacebuilding and governance)*
- *IC Sub-Objective 10: Promoting good governance and the rule of law and strengthening civil society (link with SDG 1, 5, 10, 16)*

(1) Swiss portfolio outcomes	(2) Contribution of Swiss programme Describe how (1) contributes to (3)	(3) Country/region development or humanitarian outcomes
Outcome statement 3.1 (people) People[13] effectively engage in planning and decision- making processes at local and national level. **Indicator 3.1.1:** Number of people (m/f, LNOB group) participating in and influencing public service provision, decision-making and budgets in their localities (disaggregated by gender, ethnicity) (***GOV ARI 1***) • Baseline [2021]: 30'339 • Target value [2025]: 244'000 **Indicator 3.1.2 (Qualitative):** Proportion of women with a positive perception of their influence in decision-making in political, economic and public life at all levels • Baseline [2021]: 32% • Target value [2025]: 67%	**Attribution logic** (horizontal): • The CH portfolio contributes to empowering people to participate effectively in planning and decision-making processes at the local and national level through awareness raising, strengthening civil society, capacity building in the public sector and policy dialogues to create space for all. • This is being achieved by bringing public, private and civil society change agents together and engaging at sub-national and national level in a complementary manner and by consistently applying the transversal themes gender, governance, disaster risk reduction and climate change. • Through financial and technical support duty bearers are enabled to deliver public services according to mandate and allowing the people to access and benefit from good quality public services. • CH builds on its strength of creating synergies, generating context-specific evidence and feeding it into policy dialogue at sub-national, national and regional levels.	**Outcome statement (people level)** People increasingly benefit from responsive public service delivery (including health services) and engage effectively at the local level in planning and decision-making processes. **Aspect 1**: Increased participation of people, in particular women and disadvantaged groups, in governance processes at local, sub-national and national level **Indicator Cambodia**: Percentage of women in city, district and Khan management / decision making / leadership positions. • Baseline [2021]: 17.8% • Target value [2023]: 25% • Means of Verification: NCDD report by MoI **Indicator Laos**: Percentage of women in decision making positions/leadership positions in government sector by levels (village, district, province, and central)

[13] People in the Mekong region, in particular women, young people and disadvantaged groups (poor, ethnic and religious minorities, migrants, smallholder farmers) of Cambodia and Laos

Outcome statement 3.2 (organisations/institutions)

Public institutions at all levels provide responsive (public) services, including health services, in an inclusive and accountable manner.

Indicator 3.2.1: (%) of people satisfied with public service provision, including health services, in SDC intervention districts/provinces (disaggregated by gender, age and ethnic origin) (***FCHR TRI 3 / HLT TRI 2/3***)

- Baseline [2021]: 45%
- Target value [2025]: 57%

Indicator 3.2.2: Number of civil servants (disaggregated by gender) with strengthened capacity to provide quality services to citizens

- Baseline [2021]: 54
- Target value [2025]: 17'700

Outcome statement 3.3 (policy)

Policymakers and relevant government authorities elaborate inclusive and gender responsive policies and plans, based on evidence and consultations and effectively translate them into practice.

Indicator 3.3.1: Number of gender responsive policies and plans developed and adopted, based on evidence and multi-stakeholder consultations (use this indicator as transversal indicator for all portfolios)

- Baseline [2021]: 12
- Target value [2025]: 115

Indicator 3.3.2: Number of civil society organisations that contribute to multi-stakeholder dialogue or to the respect for human rights (***FCHR ARI 1***)

- Baseline [2021]: 224
- Target value [2025]: 1'400

Conducive factors (e.g. reform, third party support):

- Public administrative (and Public Finance Management) reform (Laos) and decentralisation/de-concentration reform (Cambodia)
- Long and trustful partnership with state partners in Laos.
- Existing counterparts/actors at the provincial, district and commune/village levels
- Strong civil society in Cambodia
- Digital governance picking up speed in both countries
- European joint programming > partially harmonised development agenda

Adverse factors (e.g. restrainers of change):

- Lacking decentralisation of resources and very limited capacities at sub-national levels
- COVID-19 pandemic hampering the overall economic development and further exacerbating tight public sector resources.
- No checks and balances in Cambodia and only incipient in Laos at parliamentary level; downward accountability is missing to a large extent.
- Limited space for civil society and in general limited civil and political rights.

Risks (e.g. country and context risks):

- Cambodia: freedom of expression and civic space will be even more limited in the run- up to the local elections 2022 and national elections 2023
- Laos: debt trap, land grabbing issues and high dependency on neighbouring countries and ODA.
- Digitalisation: high risk of data inaccuracy, misuse and misinterpretation.
- Restrictions and further limitations of space for CSOs

- Baseline: village 10.72%, district 11.73%, province 19.62%, central 23.63% (2018)
- Target value: village ≥10%, district ≥20%, province ≥20%, central ≥30%
- Means of verification: 9th NSEDP/MoHA report

Aspect 2: Improved access to quality basic services

Indicator Cambodia:

Share of total out-of-pocket health expenditure paid by households, expressed as a percentage of total current expenditure on health

- Baseline [2016]: 60%
- Target [year]: tbd
- Means of verification: Cambodia Socio- Economic Survey

Indicator Laos:

Number of one-stop service centres (district level and province level) established

- Baseline: 43 (2020)
- Target: 58 centres (2025)
- Means of verification: 9th NSEDP/MoHA report

(4) Lines of intervention (Swiss programme)

Theory of change (vertical)

If the Swiss GCP portfolio continues to ...

- empower people to effectively participate in planning and decision-making processes at the local and national level through capacity-building of change agents in the public sector and in civil society
- create spaces and platforms for exchange and dialogue at all levels
- enable public institutions/duty bearers to deliver public services according to their mandate, allowing the people to access and benefit from good quality public services, including health, through financial and technical support,

and if Switzerland engages in ...

- awareness creation and policy advocacy and dialogue on key issues, such as decentralisation, gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) and environmental and social standards amongst public, private sector and civil society actors alike

and if the portfolio continues in particular at the sub-national level with ...

- co-financing socio-economic infrastructure and community-led development work
- as well as consistently applying GESI, governance, DRR and climate change as transversal themes,

then the people will benefit from responsive public service delivery, will be empowered to actively engage in local and national governance processes and ultimately will become more resilient, prosperous, and included in society overall.

Main lines of intervention

- Capacity building of duty bearers and empowering the right holders on national and sub-national (local) levels, including CSOs, using a rights-based approach.
- Strengthening of local level bottom-up approaches through financial support, guidance and technical capacity-building, implementing a strategic approach to widening the spaces for participation and strengthening the relations between the people and the local authorities.
- Strengthening institutional capacity of the parliament and civil society.
- Enhancing people's participation and promoting exchange and dialogue, as well as policy advocacy (providing space and platforms for stakeholder dialogues; co-chairing of the Governance Sector Working group, etc.).
- Working with media and new ways of communication for raising awareness and dialogue on local, national, and regional level.
- Access to better health services and availability of reliable health care is a special focus in Cambodia.
- Making best use of synergies among projects and across portfolios, e.g. on natural resources governance.

Sectors of engagement: public administration and finances, water, agriculture and public service delivery in health, education, solid waste management, general information.

Transversal themes:

- Specific improvement of expertise (capacity building) of officials, partners and stakeholders related to the transversal themes (gender equality, governance and climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction) are built into the projects.

Gender equality/GESI

- Ensuring a specific focus on gender equality and ethnic diversity in policy dialogue, including in project/programme monitoring and reporting.
- Using an LNOB approach where all interventions target the most disadvantaged
- Disaggregated data will be used wherever possible and available and existing GESI analysis will be better integrated into projects

Climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction

- Natural resource management (especially water and land governance) and DRR and CC aspects are specifically addressed when it comes to improved service delivery at local level.
- Public infrastructure financed under SDC projects should be disaster proof and gender and socially responsive

(5) Resources, partnerships (Swiss programme)

Planned financial resources (CHF million)

2022	2023	2024	2025
11	10.5	9.5	9

If available/appropriate: information on co-financing

- Implementing partners: GIZ, LUXDEV, Oxfam, International Rivers
- Coordination/co-financing: EU, Germany/BMZ, Luxembourg, DFAT (water governance)

Other aspects of partnership (nexus, joint results, complementary support)

- Close collaboration with and active engagement in the SDC Gender, Governance and CHR networks to support mainstreaming of TT and the implementation of the portfolio
- European joint programming and collaboration with specific EU member states continued (EU, Luxembourg, Germany/BMZ)
- Further collaboration with the Swiss Parliamentary Services will be established
- Ways of partnering with new donors fostering South-South cooperation and potential of new instruments, such as pool funds with other donors, multi- donor trust Funds with the WB, will be explored
- Potential of digitalisation will be further explored and partners who manage and use this potential sensibly (e.g. census and statistics in Laos) identified

Human resources

- Laos: 1 Swiss and 3 NPOs work 50% on GCP (and 50% on CCNRM)
- Cambodia: 1 Swiss and 2 NPOs (100% each)

The above Results Framework reflects the current assessment of baselines and targets for the MRCP 2022–25, based on an analysis of the results achieved at the end of the Mekong Regional Strategy 2018–21 that were used as baselines for the MRCP 2022–25 when there was continuity in the indicators. In the case of new indicators, the baseline indicated is 0. The targets may be amended after the Mid-term review of the MRCP, considering the additional information available after the planning of new phases and programmes in 2022 and 2023 on the one hand, and on the evolution of the context in the Mekong Region that could affect the implementation of the whole programme. This evolution could either enable SDC to be more ambitious or on the contrary force SDC to be more modest in possible achievements, owing to the speed of the socio-economic recovery of the countries from the COVID 19 pandemic or other political or natural events affecting the context.

Appendix C: Financial planning

Swiss Cooperation Programme for the Mekong Region							
Duration of Cooperation Programme: 2022–26. Amounts in CHF							
Financial Year:	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**	**2025**	**2026**	**Total 2022–26**	**in %**
Inclusive Economic Development IED	14,250,000	11,750,000	10,000,000	10,000,000	10,124,860	56,124,860	34%
Climate Change and Management of Natural Resources CCNRM	10,500,000	11,500,000	12,000,000	12,500,000	10,422,650	56,922,650	35%
Governance and Citizen Participation GCP	11,000,000	10,500,000	9,500,000	9,000,000	8,933,700	48,933,700	30%
Other outcomes							
other Interventions	600,000	250,000	200,000	200,000	297,790	1,547,790	1%
Total budget allocation	**36,350,000**	**34,000,000**	**31,700,000**	**31,700,000**	**29,779,000**	**163,529,000**	**100%**
Laos	16,000,000	15,000,000	14,000,000	14,000,000	12,532,000	71,532,000	44%
Cambodia	13,000,000	12,000,000	11,000,000	11,000,000	11,039,000	58,039,000	35%
Mekong Regional	7,350,000	7,000,000	6,700,000	6,700,000	6,208,000	33,958,000	21%
Total budget allocation	**36,350,000**	**34,000,000**	**31,700,000**	**31,700,000**	**29,779,000**	**163,529,000**	**100%**

Appendix E: Map of the two priority countries Cambodia and Laos within the wider Mekong region

Appendix D: Abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AFS	Agriculture and food security
ARI	Aggregated Reference Indicator
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BMZ	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
CBO	Community-based organisation
CCA	Climate change adaptation
CCM	Climate change mitigation
CCNRM	Climate change and natural resource management
CEP	SDC Centre for the Engagement with the Private Sector
CLMVT	Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Vietnam and Thailand
CSO	Community services organisation
DPs	Development partners
DRR	Disaster risk reduction
EU	European Union
FDFA	Federal Department of Foreign Affairs
FDI	Foreign direct investment
GCP	Governance and citizen participation
GDP	Gross domestic product
GESI	Gender equality and social inclusion
GIZ	German Agency for International Cooperation
IC	International cooperation
IED	Inclusive economic development
IFI	International financial institution
INGO	International non-governmental organisation
LDC	Least developed countries
LNOB	Leave no one behind
MERV	Monitoring for development-related changes (German abbreviation)
MRC	Mekong River Commission
MRCP	Mekong Region Cooperation Programme
MRS	Mekong Region Cooperation Strategy
MSME	Micro, small and medium-sized enterprise
NRM	Natural resource management
NSEDP	National socioeconomic development plan
ODA	Official development assistance
RECOFTC	Regional Community Forestry Training Center
RF	Results framework
RPL	Recognition of prior learning
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SCO	SDC country office
SDE	Skills development and employment
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SECO	Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs
SIFEM	Swiss Investment Fund for Emerging Markets
SPO	Swiss portfolio outcome
ToC	Theory of change
TRI	Thematic Reference Indicator
TVET	Technical vocational education and training
UN	United Nations
USD	United States dollar
VSD	Vocational skills development
WB	World Bank
WG	Working group
WOGA	Whole-of-government approach

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