



Terms of Reference for

Impact Evaluation of Sweden's Support to Stockholm Environment Institute, Asia Centre and the Sustainable Mekong Research Network (SUMERNET) in Southeast Asia from 2005 to 2026

(version: 6 March 2026)

1. Introduction

Sweden has been a long-term strategic partner of the Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI), providing sustained support to SEI Asia and, since 2005, to the **Sustainable Mekong Research Network (SUMERNET)**, for which SEI Asia serves as the implementing partner and host of the network secretariat, with SEI as a consortium member. Over more than two decades, this support has enabled SEI and its partners, through the network model, to strengthen research capacity, generate policy-relevant knowledge, foster regional cooperation, and promote inclusive and sustainable development across Southeast Asia.

Sweden's support for SEI, including SUMERNET has been channeled through several Swedish development cooperation and research strategies over time, most recently:

- **The Strategy for Sweden's Development Cooperation in Research for Poverty Reduction and Sustainable Development (2022–2028), and**
- **The Strategy for Sweden's Regional Development Cooperation with Asia and the Pacific Region (2022–2026).**

As these strategies near completion, Sida has identified an opportunity to commission a **formal, independent evaluation** to capture the longer-term results, outcomes, and impacts of Sweden's support to SEI, in general, and SUMERNET, in particular, in Southeast Asia, and to generate structured learning to inform future programming and final strategy reporting.

2. Evaluation objective:

2.1 Overall Purpose

The purpose of the evaluation is to assess the results, outcomes, and longer-term contributions of SEI as a knowledge-to-policy actor in Southeast Asia, and to examine the role and added value of Sweden's support over the period 2005–2026. The evaluation focuses in particular on Sida-supported regional initiatives and activities relevant to research and development cooperation, including the development and maintenance of a home-grown regional research network that strengthens research capacity, science-based decision-making, and inclusive, rights-based, and locally led science–policy partnerships addressing transboundary water cooperation, climate adaptation, and environmental governance in Southeast Asia.

The evaluation places specific emphasis on behavioural and institutional outcomes enabled through Swedish support, including changes in how SEI develops itself and operates as a regional intermediary, how boundary and strategic partners engage in policy processes, and how these partnerships influence decision-making in policy and practices.

2.2 Specific Objectives

The evaluation will focus on:

1. **Institutional Strengthening and Capacity Development for Research to Policy and Practice**

Examine how Sida's support to the SUMERNET programme has: 1) strengthened SEI's capacity and institutional position as a research institute based in the region and, 2) contributed to developing capacities of local and regional research institutions and researchers in Southeast Asia.

2. Research-to-Policy-and-Practice Impact

Evaluate how and to what extent SUMERNET supported initiatives have contributed to effective translation of scientific evidence into usable knowledge, tools, and decision-making across Mekong countries.

3. Future Direction and Sustainability of the Network Model

Identify the niche and comparative advantages of SEI Asia and SUMERNET that can be used for fundraising and building new partnership for sustainability and longer-term impacts of the network, including at global level, as well as from regional and national levels in the Mekong region.

3. Intended Users and Use of Findings

3.1 Primary Intended Users

- SEI (Asia Centre and Global Management Team)
- Sida (Headquarters and Embassies in Mekong region)
- Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs

3.2 Secondary Intended Users

- SUMERNET, Adaptation Research Alliance (ARA) and other relevant programme & network partners
- Other development partners engaged in research-for-development and regional cooperation
- Current and potential funders of a science to policy and practice network, including at global level, as well as from regional and national levels in the Mekong region.
- Research/academic institutions & civil society organisations in the region (including past grantees)
- Government authorities in Southeast Asia

3.3 Intended Use

The purpose or intended use of the evaluation is to

- Input to Sida's final reporting on relevant strategies
- Institutional learning and strategic reflection for SEI, including SUMERNET
- Informing future programme design, cooperation modalities and new regional partnerships, including the private sector and young professionals.
- Documentation of long-term partnership approaches and achievements to enhance SEI's regional comparative advantage, to be utilised in identifying new partnership and strengthening SEI's portfolio for fundraising purposes.

4. Scope of the Evaluation

4.1 Thematic Scope

The evaluation will primarily cover SUMERNET partners and initiatives. It will cover other Sida-supported initiatives where there are clear overlaps with SUMERNET that contribute to:

- Water, climate, and transboundary environmental governance,
- Policy-relevant research and effective model(s) of science–policy interface, including research and capacity enhancement,
- Enhanced uptake of equity, inclusion and youth engagement and leadership.

4.2 Geographic Scope

- Cover Southeast Asia’s **Mekong Region, particularly** Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Myanmar.

4.3 Temporal Scope

- **2005–2026**, reflecting the establishment of SUMERNET and the full duration of Sweden’s support to the initiatives and activities under review. This also coincides with Sweden’s various strategies in the region.

5. Evaluation Questions

The evaluation will answer the following potential questions:

Evaluation Category	Questions
Institutional Strengthening and Capacity Development for Research to Policy and Practice	1. How has Sida’s support to the SUMERNET: 1) strengthened SEI’s capacity and institutional position as a research institute based in the region and 2) contributed to developing capacities of local and regional research institutions and researchers in the listed Mekong countries, including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research implementation and facilitation • Policy engagement • Regional partnership, network development, cross-country collaboration
Contribution to Impacts other than research capacity	2. What are the direct and indirect impacts of the SUMERNET network achieved through Sida’s direct support to SUMERNET or other overlapping areas, in the identified thematic areas?
Future Directions & Sustainability of the Model Network	3. What lessons and recommendations can be drawn to inform future donor engagement and funding opportunities, including not only those from the international aid but also other funding sources that are available at domestic, regional, and global levels, for SEI Asia, SUMERNET?

Note: The evaluation questions will be further refined in the start-up meeting with the evaluation team, SEI, and Sida during the inception phase.

6. Expected Outputs and Deliverables

Indicative outputs include:

1. Inception report

2. Draft evaluation report
3. Final evaluation report (including executive summary and recommendations)
4. Presentation of findings to Sida and SEI
5. Optional learning or synthesis brief (that may be useful for the public).

7. Timeline (Indicative)

The evaluation will commence by **beginning of April 2026** and be completed by **end of June 2026**.

Activities	Timing
1. Start of Implementation	Week 1 April 2026
2. Inception phase	Week 3 April 2026
3. Inception report & meeting to discuss the inception report	Week 4 April 2026
4. Data collection & analysis	Week 4 April-Week 3 May 2026
5. Draft report	Week 3 May 2026
6. Meeting to discuss draft report	Week 4 May 2026
7. Final report	Week 1 May 2026
8. Dissemination Seminar	Week 2 June 2026

8. Budget for the Evaluation

Summary of estimated cost breakdown:

Category	Total Amount	Remarks
Evaluation Service	500,000 SEK	
Personnel Cost	400,000 SEK	Evaluator Team: Personnel Cost
Direct Cost	100,000 SEK	This is an indicative budget for direct costs required for the evaluator to perform the assignment, e.g., for travel costs, interviews, audit etc.

9. Ethical Considerations

The evaluation will comply with Sida and SEI's ethical standards, data protection requirements, and principles of confidentiality and informed consent.

10. Team composition and skill requirements for the Evaluation Partner

SEI welcomes proposals from qualified and independent evaluation teams consisting of a Team Leader and one to three additional team members. The evaluation team is expected to demonstrate strong regional experience, methodological expertise, and the ability to deliver a high-quality participatory evaluation process.

Required qualifications	Desired qualifications
<p>Implementing Organization:</p> <p><i>The evaluation shall be conducted by an independent and qualified organization (firm, institute, or consortium) with demonstrated expertise in development evaluation and environmental governance in Southeast Asia. The organization should meet the following requirements:</i></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be legally registered and have a proven track record of delivering high-quality evaluations for international development partners, preferably including Sida or comparable bilateral/multilateral donors. • The implementing organization must be independent and must not be a public or government entity registered under Cambodian law, including ministries, state agencies, or other government-affiliated institutions. • Demonstrate institutional experience in evaluating long-term development cooperation programmes, particularly in the areas of climate change, environmental governance, water security, and research-policy engagement. • Show capacity to undertake participatory and utilization-focused evaluation approaches, including engagement with diverse stakeholders across multiple countries and sectors. • Have strong operational presence and networks in Southeast Asia, with demonstrated ability to coordinate fieldwork, stakeholder consultations, and data collection in at least three Mekong countries. • Possess adequate institutional systems for quality assurance, ethical evaluation practice, and safeguarding of sensitive information and data. • Demonstrate the ability to mobilize a multidisciplinary evaluation team with expertise in qualitative and quantitative methods, gender equality and social inclusion, and policy analysis. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have documented experience applying OECD-DAC evaluation criteria and producing evaluation reports that meet international quality standards. • Have prior experience conducting evaluations commissioned by Sida, SEI, or other Nordic/international development agencies. • Strong institutional competence in applying mixed methods approaches, including outcome harvesting, contribution analysis. • Established partnerships or operational reach across multiple Mekong countries, enabling efficient stakeholder engagement and fieldwork coordination.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have sufficient logistical and administrative capacity to deliver the assignment within the required timeframe, including organizing in-person meetings and regional consultations as required. 	
<p>Team Leader</p> <p><i>The Team Leader will have overall responsibility for the evaluation design, implementation, quality assurance, and delivery of key outputs. The Team Leader is expected to meet the following qualifications:</i></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be based in Southeast Asia, with strong contextual understanding and real work experience in the Mekong region. • Have a minimum of 10 years of relevant professional experience in evaluation, environmental governance, climate resilience, or related development fields in the region. • Provide recent references and/or work samples (within the last three years) from similar or relevant evaluation assignments. • Have documented experience in leading participatory evaluation processes involving multiple stakeholder groups. • Demonstrate a strong track record in designing and conducting in-depth qualitative interviews, as well as designing and analysing stakeholder surveys. • Must have full professional working proficiency in English. • The Team Leader must not be a current employee of SEI, nor have been employed by SEI within the past 12 months prior to the launch date of this call, in order to ensure independence and avoid conflicts of interest. • Must be available to participate in an in-person start-up meeting in Bangkok and an in-person meeting to present the inception report. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong familiarity with Sida’s results framework, evaluation principles, and OECD-DAC criteria application in practice. • Experience conducting longitudinal or ex-post impact-oriented studies is considered a merit. • Demonstrated leadership experience in complex multi-country or regional evaluations involving diverse stakeholders. • Familiar with the work of SEI, SUMERNET, and/other other relevant Sida supported partners/initiatives. • Fluency in one or more Mekong region languages (Khmer, Lao, Thai, Vietnamese, etc.) is a strong asset.
<p>Team Members</p> <p><i>Team members will support data collection, analysis, and stakeholder engagement and support administrative/coordinating tasks. Team members are expected to meet the following qualifications:</i></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be based in the Southeast Asian region. • Have at least three years of experience conducting similar assignments, including programme evaluations, research, or 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complementary thematic expertise in areas such as climate resilience, natural resource governance, gender equality and social inclusion, or policy engagement.

<p>analytical work in development and environmental fields.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have experience engaging with diverse stakeholders and independently conducting interviews and consultations. • Demonstrate documented experience in analysing qualitative and/or quantitative data. • At least one team member should have working proficiency in one or more Mekong region languages to support effective local engagement. • Must not be current employees of SEI, nor have been employed by SEI within the past 12 months prior to the launch date of this call, in order to ensure independence and avoid conflicts of interest. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience conducting longitudinal or ex-post impact-oriented studies is considered a merit. • Experience supporting qualitative fieldwork and quantitative survey implementation in Southeast Asia. • Familiar with the work of SEI, SUMERNET, and/other relevant Sida supported partners/initiatives • Strong analytical skills in synthesizing evidence from multiple data sources, including document review, interviews, and stakeholder consultations. • Ability to engage effectively with government agencies, civil society, academia, and community-level stakeholders. • Fluency in one or more Mekong region languages (Khmer, Lao, Thai, Vietnamese, etc.) is a strong asset.
--	---

The evaluation team is expected to plan for the following key engagement moments:

- An in-person start-up meeting in Bangkok.
- An in-person meeting to present and discuss the inception report.
- A final meeting to present the evaluation findings and final report (in-person or remote, to be confirmed).