Mekong Thought Leadership and Think Tanks Network

Mekong Think Tanks Program Design Document

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SUMERNET

SEI Stockholm Environment Institute

Mekong Thought Leadership and Think Tanks Network

Mekong Think Tanks
Program Design Document

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And
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For Submission to Mekong-Australia Partnership – Water, Energy, Climate (MAP-WEC) Program, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Australian Government, Australia

Cover photo: Woman crossing bamboo bridge on Nam Song River, Vang Vieng, Lao PDR
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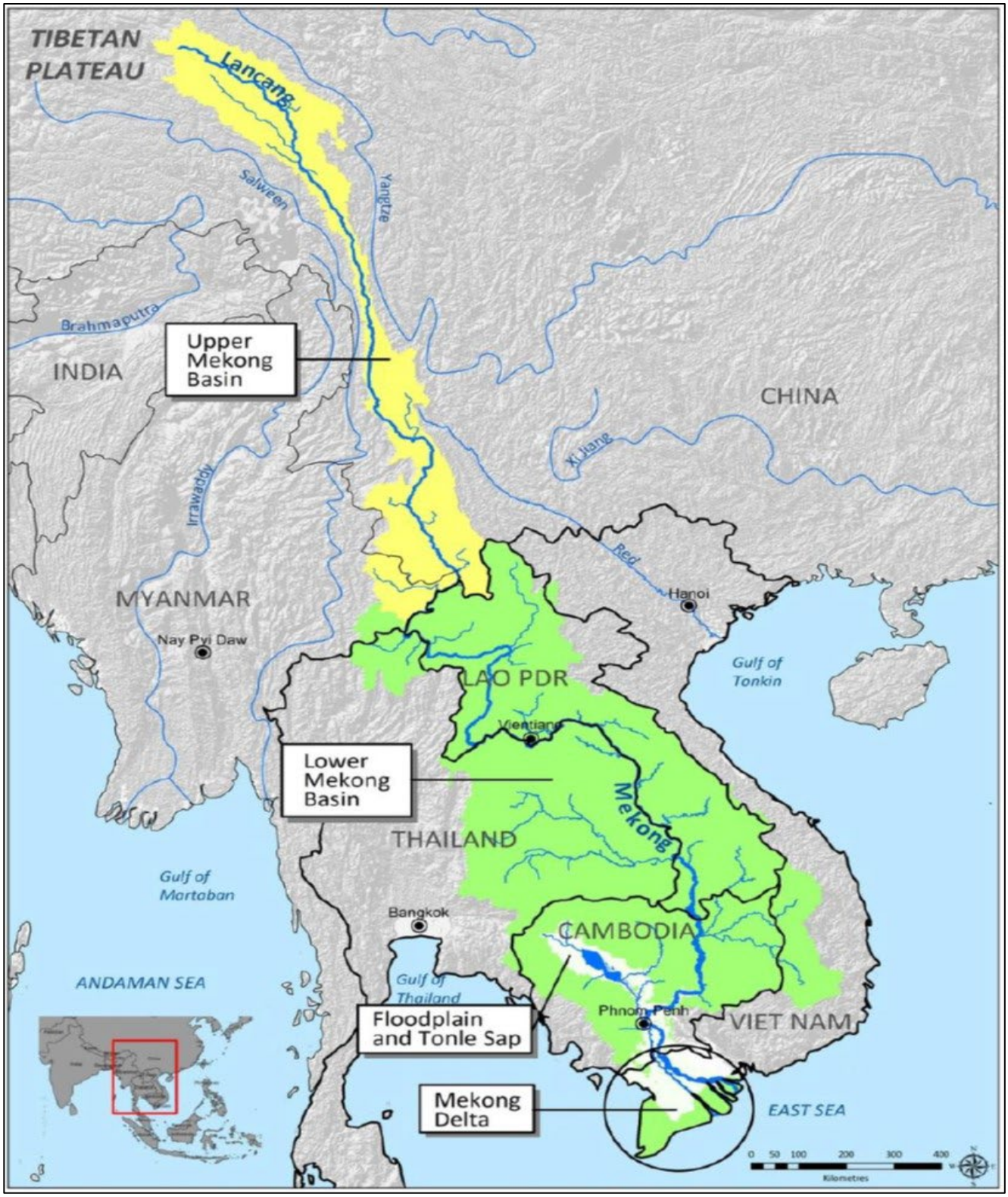

Figure 1. Map of Mekong River Basin.

Source: Mekong River Commission. (2019). State of the Basin Report 2018

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Acronyms

AIT	Asian Institute of Technology, Thailand
AUD	Australian Dollar
CDRI	Cambodia Development and Research Institute
CMU	Chiang Mai University, Thailand
COVID-19	Corona Virus Disease 2019
CU	Chulalongkorn University, Thailand
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
ERI	Energy Research Institute, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand
GEDSI	Gender Equality, Disability, and Social Inclusion
GHG	Green House Gases
GMS	Greater Mekong Subregion
GMSARN	Greater Mekong Subregion Academic and Research Network
IFReDI	Inland Fisheries Research and Development Institute, Cambodia
IP	Intellectual Property
IPAM	Institute of Policy and Management
ITC	Institute of Technology Cambodia
IWCAN	International WaterCentre Alumni Network
KBPIO	Knowledge Based Policy Influence Organisation
LFA	Logical Framework Approach
LMPPI	Lower Mekong Public Policy Initiative
M-POWER	The Mekong Program on Water, Environment and Resilience
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
MFU	Mae Fah Luang University, Thailand
MRC	Mekong River Commission
MRCS	Mekong River Commission Secretariat
MSU	Maha Sarakham University, Thailand
NAFC	Northern Agricultural and Forestry College, Lao PDR
NAFRI	National Agriculture and Fisheries Research Institute, Cambodia
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
NIER	National Institute for Economic Research, Lao PDR
NUOL	National University of Laos, Lao PDR
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
OM	Outcome Mapping
PA	Program Advisor
PS	Program Secretariat
PSC	Program Steering Committee
RP	Resource Person
RUPP	Royal University of Phnom Penh, Cambodia
SEI	Stockholm Environment Institute
SET	School of Engineering and Technology, AIT, Thailand
SPP	School of Public Policy, Chiang Mai University, Thailand
SUMERNET	Sustainable Mekong Research Network

SYN	SUMERNET Youth Network
TEI	Thailand Environment Institute
ToC	Theory of Change
UC	University of Canberra, Australia
UNSW	University of New South Wales, Australia
USER	Unit for Social and Environmental Research, Chiang Mai University, Thailand
VNMC	Vietnam National Mekong Committee
WASI	Western Highlands Agriculture and Forestry Science Institute, Vietnam
WEC	Water, Energy, Climate Change
WLE Mekong	Water, Land and Ecosystems Mekong
WWF	World Wildlife Fund

Executive Summary

The Mekong Region has been facing sustainability challenges related to water, energy and changing climates. There are also inequities in the rapid development in the region, in which local communities have benefited little from this development, with the poorest and most vulnerable bearing the brunt of these changes due to their close connection to, and dependency on, natural resource. In addressing these inequities, and towards ensuring that no one is left behind, there is a need for clear and actionable evidence-based development options along with tangible solutions that would support positive changes in policy and practice for sustainable futures for all.

The Mekong Think Tanks Program supported by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Government of Australia, aims to work together with national, and regional knowledge-based policy influence organisations (KBPIOs), including think tanks, to enhance their effectiveness and inclusiveness in policy engagement. This will be combined with communications based on high quality research, practical advice generated by the program, and cross-learning among relevant organisations in the region as well as drawing upon relevant Australian and other expertise and experiences in water security, energy security and climate change mitigation and adaptation.

The Mekong Think Tanks Program will achieve this through supporting and facilitating evidence-based research and analysis, engagement with regional and national KBPIOs, effective dialogue with decision makers and professional development for agents of changes in the Mekong Region.

The Program will deliver high quality, inclusive research and policy advice on the governance, socio-economic values, benefits, and risks associated with water, energy, and the environment as a means of achieving resilience to future climates at the regional and national levels. This research will also strive to address gender and social inclusion in all research projects, while at the same time provide gender support and capacity development to all research teams. This is aimed at enhancing inclusiveness of the research and policy advice created by the Program.

This Program will create opportunities for KBPIOs to engage with policy stakeholders by organising regional and national policy forums. These forums will be the platforms for KBPIOs in deliberating high level issues around governance, development, and equity in water resources, energy, and the environment within the context of climate change, utilising the research supported by the Program.

The Program also acknowledges the rise of new generation of researchers and policy influencers. The Program views that investing in young professionals working in research and policy engagement is essential to enhancing their capacity in the production and promotion of practical and sustainable solutions. Therefore, besides addressing capacity of KBPIOs, the Program will also deliver capacity building activities for young professionals, through fellowships and trainings, while continuously supporting opportunities for cross-learning and knowledge sharing among KBPIOs and young professionals.

Through these efforts of enhancing roles and capacities of KBPIOs and young professionals to perform effective and inclusive policy engagement and communications, the Mekong Think Tanks Program aspires to contribute to the long-term goal of improvement and a more equitable water and energy security, adaptation and mitigation to climate change in the Mekong Region for the benefit of all, especially the marginalized, vulnerable and at-risk communities.

1. Background

1.1 Development issues

Over the past three decades the Mekong Region has benefited from unprecedented economic development and social transformation, although wide differences still exist among and within countries and sub-populations. These changes have been at the expense of natural resources and local communities combined with growing levels of social and economic inequality.

The proportion of each country's population living in multi-dimensional poverty highlights these stark divisions. Thailand has the lowest proportion at just 0.8% of its population and Vietnam, 5.0%. In contrast, the figures are 34.9% for Cambodia, 38.3% for Myanmar and 40.5% for Laos[1]. the COVID-19 pandemic [2]and associated economic downturn has worsened levels of inequality and poverty with this situation being further challenged by the impacts of climate change.

The increasing demand for water and energy for socio-economic development is leading to more resource competition among different development sectors both nationally and between the Mekong countries. The Mekong Region faces numerous development challenges influenced by climate change and the pandemic, including national and global food security associated with sea level rise in the mega-deltas of Asia, triggering new poverty traps amidst emerging and growing hotspots of hunger and poverty, to tensions and conflicts over transboundary water resources.

The Mekong Think Tanks Program will address the challenges related to water and energy in the context of climate change impacting the most vulnerable and marginalized in society in Mekong countries. This will be achieved through evidence-based research and analysis, engagement with regional, national, and local policy influencing organisations and effective dialogue with decision makers.

Water insecurity in the major river basins in the Mekong Region has significant implications for national and regional development through: changed river flows and fluctuations of water level associated with the construction and operation of large water storage and diversion infrastructure for hydropower and irrigation; increased frequencies of droughts and changing flood patterns due to climate change; and the overexploitation of natural resources and habitat destruction. Combined, these have contributed to a decline in the functionality of aquatic ecosystems (including natural wetlands and rice agro-ecosystems) and the services that they provide while worsening forest and land degradation. These have resulted in a decline in the productivity of capture fisheries important for the nutrition and the livelihoods of people throughout the region; and declining productivity of land resources and their ability to buffer extreme events. The poorest and most vulnerable bear the brunt of these changes due to their close connection to, and dependency on, natural resources.

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[1] UNDP 2018. Human Development Indices and Indicators 2018 Statistical Update. Accessed 26 August 2022. http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/2018_human_development_statistical_update.pdf.

[2] https://blogs.worldbank.org/opendata/impact-covid-19-poverty-and-inequality-evidence-phone-surveys. Accessed 26 August 2022

Rapid changes in the growth and affordability of individualistic and off-grid renewable energy production systems holds both significant risks and opportunities. Hydropower assets may become stranded assets as demand declines whilst the emergence of off-grid renewable energy systems such as solar, supports opportunities in providing affordable energy to the poorest, marginalised, and vulnerable that have yet to benefit from access to energy. Furthermore, off-grid and individualistic approaches to renewable energy production provides resilience in the face of a changing climate that are not dependent on centralized energy production systems. Managing these competing elements within the energy sector will require innovative policies and governance systems.

The security of energy and water resources in a changing climate is also closely connected to changing landscapes and the related need to better manage carbon sequestration and the impacts of methane and N2O emissions from agricultural landscapes. Transformations in agricultural and forest landscapes in favour of multifunctional land-climate systems that manage carbon fluxes and incorporate carbon removal solutions as well as evolving mitigation and adaptation actions, will present both challenges and opportunities that require highly interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary capacity across a wide range of stakeholders.

1.2 The role of knowledge-based policy influence organisations in the Mekong Region

In addressing the multi-faceted ecological and development challenges facing the Mekong Region, enormous contributions have been made by the emergence of local, national, and regional knowledge-based policy influence organisations (KBPIOs)[3], in the generation of research results and studies to address the dearth of knowledge that informs the decision-making process. So far, this evidence-based knowledge has had limited influence in policy formulation and practice in part due to: research design and questions asked to meet the needs of policymakers and the political environment in which they operate; the knowledge production process (e.g. quality, independency, inclusiveness); communicating messages (e.g. accessibility, language, terminology); and willingness of policy actors to take up research findings (e.g. power relations and special economic interests).

Think tanks, which are a type of knowledge-based policy influence organisation (KBPIO), are entities and organisations that generate evidence-based knowledge, comment, analyse, or propose policies that aim to influence policy processes at various levels.

Demand by policymakers for policy advice from think tanks has in general increased in some Mekong countries. The roles, capacities and influencing capabilities of national think tanks are diverse. Some provide advice through commenting on draft policy documents when invited, while others go as far as drafting policy and regulations. Some think tanks produce high quality research and provide critique to

[3] Wellstead, A.M., Howlett, M. (2022). (Re)Thinking think tanks in the age of policy labs: The rise of knowledge-based policy influence organisations. Australian Journal of Public Administration, 81, 224-232. 10.1111/1467-8500.12528. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/1467-8500.12528

formal government policy, while many think tanks struggle to work collectively to address complex problems[4].

At a regional level, there are no long-term independent regional bodies that clearly identify as thought leaders and think tank networks bridging science and policy in the Mekong Region. Regional networks that in part attempt to fill this void, that have emerged in recent years include: M-POWER, WLE Mekong, SUMERNET, LMPPI, and GMSARN. The M-POWER, LMPPI and WLE Mekong while creating positive outcomes particularly on capacity building and dialogues (through WLE fora), were transient initiatives that did not continue after 2016, 2017 and 2019, respectively. SUMERNET (established in 2005) continues to remain active as the only long-term regional research network that has continued with building scientific research, multi-stakeholder engagement, capacity building and a sense of regional ownership.

Recently, there is a tendency to expand the role of conventional think tanks towards 'think and do tanks' that encapsulate the notion of young thought leaders and engaging with the next generation of policy makers across sectors towards practical and sustainable solutions.

Accordingly, there is a compelling case for the development of regional networks or an alliance of 'think and do tanks', engaging not only with the formal think tanks but also other types of KBPIOs that address development challenges in the Mekong Region through several complementary means, including:

- **Evidence Based Knowledge** generated through policy-oriented research, analysis and advice on the governance, socio-economic values, benefits, and risks associated with water, energy, and the environment as a means of achieving resilience to future climates.
- **Fora** for deliberating high level issues around governance, development, and equity in water resources, energy, and the environment within the context of climate change.
- **Partnerships** to strengthen knowledge generation and information exchange that is inclusive and driven by a continuum of perspectives.
- **Emergence** of a stronger regional entity or network of thought leaders and existing think tanks providing policy solutions for water, energy, and climate sustainability challenges.

Two overidding challenges for future regional network or alliance of KBPIOs are:

1. Create and pursue opportunities for integrated and cohesive policies and programs for the management of, and responses to, water, energy and climate, particularly where nexus points intersect within and across jurisdictions. In many cases, avoiding a silo-based approach to these issues will lead to improved outcomes.
2. Seek ways in which future networks or alliances can work with existing think tanks and other relevant KBPIOs to effectively engage with decision-makers at the national level, while still emphasising the benefits that can be derived from a whole-of-Mekong perspective. In this regard, there may be opportunities to champion "best practice national initiatives" across the Mekong Region.

[4] Datta, A. & Mendizabal, E. (2017). Political and economic transition in Vietnam and its impact on think tank traditions. On Think Tanks Working Paper 2. On Think Tanks. Accessed on 26 August 2022. https://medium.com/@info_92670/political-and-economic-transition-in-vietnam-and-its-impact-on-think-tank-traditions-381ffd8ef303.

2. Goal and Objectives

The development issues described in the previous section have been the subject of numerous studies undertaken by research and academic communities in the Mekong Region. These studies are based on scientific methodologies that consider relevant factors contributing to evidence-based knowledge generation to support the development of water and energy resources in the region and inform decision making processes. Selected studies have had a focus on policy or practice, as well as addressing the impacts and needs of the vulnerable, marginalised, and at-risk communities in the Mekong Region. The impact of such knowledge has been limited in bridging the science and policy divide. It is well recognized that there are many kinds of knowledge, of which research- and evidence-based knowledge is just one. What is often missing in the process of influencing the policy arena is the development of compelling and persuasive strategies for knowledge sharing. It is argued that if science is to address this output-outcome gap, it must be delivered by someone and in some way that is considered trustworthy and acceptable by the decision makers.

Trust and transparency are key attributes critical in developing and maintaining partnerships and legitimacy that is needed for think tanks to effectively engage in policy arenas. Developing trust is often a function of leadership, the main components of which are modesty, an ability to listen and patience. A good track-record is also important to sustained credibility. One example is SUMERNET, that over the course of 17 years as a regional research network, has championed these principles that have been invaluable in building the diversity and credibility of its membership.

In an ideal world, think tanks which are a type of KBPIOs are institutions that take on the role of bridging science and policy through generation of policy-relevant analysis, analysis of existing knowledge, and formulation of relevant policy recommendations for policy stakeholders. This program's definition of think tanks and KBPIOs as articulated previously, will form the focus of this initiative and the program will address specific needs relevant to the context of local (grass-root and civil society organisations), national and regional network or alliance of KBPIOs in the Mekong Region that include:

- **Need to strengthen the knowledge and connections** of formal and informal national think tanks (and other forms of KBPIOs) across sectors, countries and locations, so they can perform their roles more effectively in advising on complex national and regional issues related to water, energy and climate. This would in part be achieved through research on existing policy to identify policy gaps and the extent to how and which existing policies address the needs of vulnerable groups in different settings (urban and rural) or locations (upstream or downstream, or highland or lowland, etc.) as well as the structural dimensions (root causes) of persistent inequalities that drive vulnerabilities.
- **Need to catalyse and leverage existing capacity within and across KBPIOs** to stimulate enhanced delivery of water, energy and climate outcomes and impact in the Mekong Region. This would be achieved through a mutual learning environment based on knowledge exchange, recognising both First Nations and bottom-up demand driven needs.
- **Need to develop a regional platform for networking with KBPIOs** across the Mekong Region, Australia and others and be a host for an independent regional network or alliance of think-and-do tanks. This would be achieved through increased opportunities for policy dialogues and engagement through informal and formal forums including regular Mekong Regional fora. The initiative will focus on examining how policy ideas travel, the role of policy narratives/discourses

and ways that science is used in policy formulation along with the limits and merits of co-production of knowledge for policy.

- **Need for greater engagement with diverse young professionals of all genders** across sectors to enhance their understanding and awareness on their roles as current and future agents of change to improve policy and practice, by performing policy mapping and analysis, policy engagement and deliberation and communications.
- **Need to look beyond the Mekong Region for best practices.** The initiative will place greater emphasis on public policy science, methods and research that will directly seek practical solutions for vulnerable groups on ground.
- **Need to integrate inclusive approaches in knowledge production and policy deliberation** that places gender and social equality at the core of regional network or alliance of think-and-do tanks' activities engaging stakeholders across sectors, locations and countries on water, energy and climate issues. This will be achieved through innovative, and effective communications and media relations including emphasis on aspects of policy communications, to build outreach and strategically share high quality research and policy advice. High quality flagship publications about and by Mekong KBPIOs are expected to be produced for dissemination among the program's audiences and the general public.

The long-term goal and objectives are laid out below by the program to address these needs.

2.1 Long-term goal

The long-term goal of the program is to:

Contribute to improved and more equitable water and energy security, adaptation and mitigation to climate change in the Mekong Region for the benefit of all, especially the marginalized, vulnerable and at-risk communities.

2.2 End of Program Outcome

The program will be able to contribute to this long-term goal, if the following outcome is achieved:

Water, energy and climate research and policy interfaces are robust and more inclusive, resulting in more effective and equitable policies, which are cross-sectoral, informed by evidence, and are responding to the needs of vulnerable groups.

2.3 Objectives

The intermediate objective will be to develop a regional network or alliance of KBPIOs that, through the implementation of program activities, intends to:

1. Strengthen the **role and effectiveness of national and regional KBPIOs in engaging with national and regional policy processes** on water and energy security and climate change mitigation and adaptation.
2. Strengthen the **role and capabilities of national and regional KBPIOs in inclusive knowledge co-production processes** by engaging with stakeholders across sectors, locations and countries on water, climate and energy issues and their interlinkages.
3. Enhance the **capacity for networking of national and regional KBPIOs** and build the **capacity of young professionals in delivering research and communicating and engaging with policy processes**.

The theory of change (TOC) of the Mekong Think Tank program depicts the relationships among these goal and objectives, which is available as **Annex A**.

3. Implementation Arrangements

To address complex development issues and achieve the program objectives, there will be a need to ensure not only technical competency across the water, energy and climate domain, but also draw upon key insights and connections that the consortium offers to support the program. The program partnership comprises 25 organisations, including 8 consortium members: SEI, USER, UC, CDRI, NUOL, TEI, IPAM, IWCAN, and 17 counterparts: UNSW, RUPP, ITC, IFReDI, NAFRI, NAFC, NERI, GMS Centre of MSU, MFU, SET of AIT, ERI, SPP of CMU, VNMC, Viet Insight, WASI, MRCS, WWF Regional Asia-Pacific Office from 4 Mekong countries and Australia to support the implementation of the program activities. The full list of organisations, address and focal points is attached as **Annex B.**

3.1 Common beliefs and working principles

1. The program is limited in time and budget, however, **positive results from the program will be maintained beyond the current lifespan**, through integrating program activities and results into long-term initiatives at national and regional level through consortium team members. At the regional level, SUMERNET would be a natural home of the proposed program as the network has a focus on strengthening knowledge-based policy processes as its goal. SUMERNET comprises over 500 members from 200 organisations and continues to be relevant and active, not only because of the generous support of several funders, but through the intellectual and resource contributions of all network members. **Sida, the main funder of SUMERNET, has expressed a strong interest to cooperate with DFAT, SEI and other consortium members** through the current phase of SUMERNET 4 All and other programs that Sida supports to ensure long-term benefits for the Mekong Region.
2. The program **builds on the knowledge, lessons learned, and partnership** generated from past initiatives, including but not limited to Australian supported M-POWER, WLE, Shaping Mekong Regional Architecture programs, bilateral/regional investments by Mekong Posts-2021 that our consortium members and counterparts have engaged with in the past.
3. The program values **regional ownership and home-grown leadership of the program**, while welcoming and appreciating the strong partnership and support from Australia, Sweden and other countries offer to Mekong people.
4. The program, through trainings and fellowship grants, **seeks to support young professional development** as they are **our agents of change** who will determine the future of the Mekong Region.
5. The program **seeks synergies and welcomes opportunities to cooperate with other relevant initiatives** to increase the value of time, effort and money and maximize possibility for positive change.
6. The program **prioritizes integration of gender and social equality across all program activities through the collection of disaggregated data and gender mainstreaming approaches.**

3.2 Key roles and responsibilities

The partner organisations and associated personnel contribute through the following roles in the program's governance:

- **The Program Steering Committee (PSC)** consisting of 9 members including a representative from each of the 8 consortium members (SEI, USER, UC, CDRI, NUOL, TEI, IPAM, and IWCAN) and one representative from DFAT, providing strategic advice to the Program Secretariat, monitoring, and oversight of program implementation. The PSC is chaired by SEI Asia's Centre Director.
- **The Program Secretariat (PS)** is hosted at SEI Asia (Bangkok), as the consortium lead, ensuring effective program management, and MEL for long-term sustainability. The Secretariat comprises the Program Director, Program Manager, Program Assistant, 4 Component Leaders and co-leaders, Communications Specialist, Communications Coordinator, Research Coordinator, Fellowship Coordinator, MEL Specialist and Gender Advisor.
- **Program Advisors/Resource Persons (PA/RP)** are individuals or experts from institutes associated with the program as consortium members (co-applicants) or counterparts.

The program governance structure is represented in the following diagram:

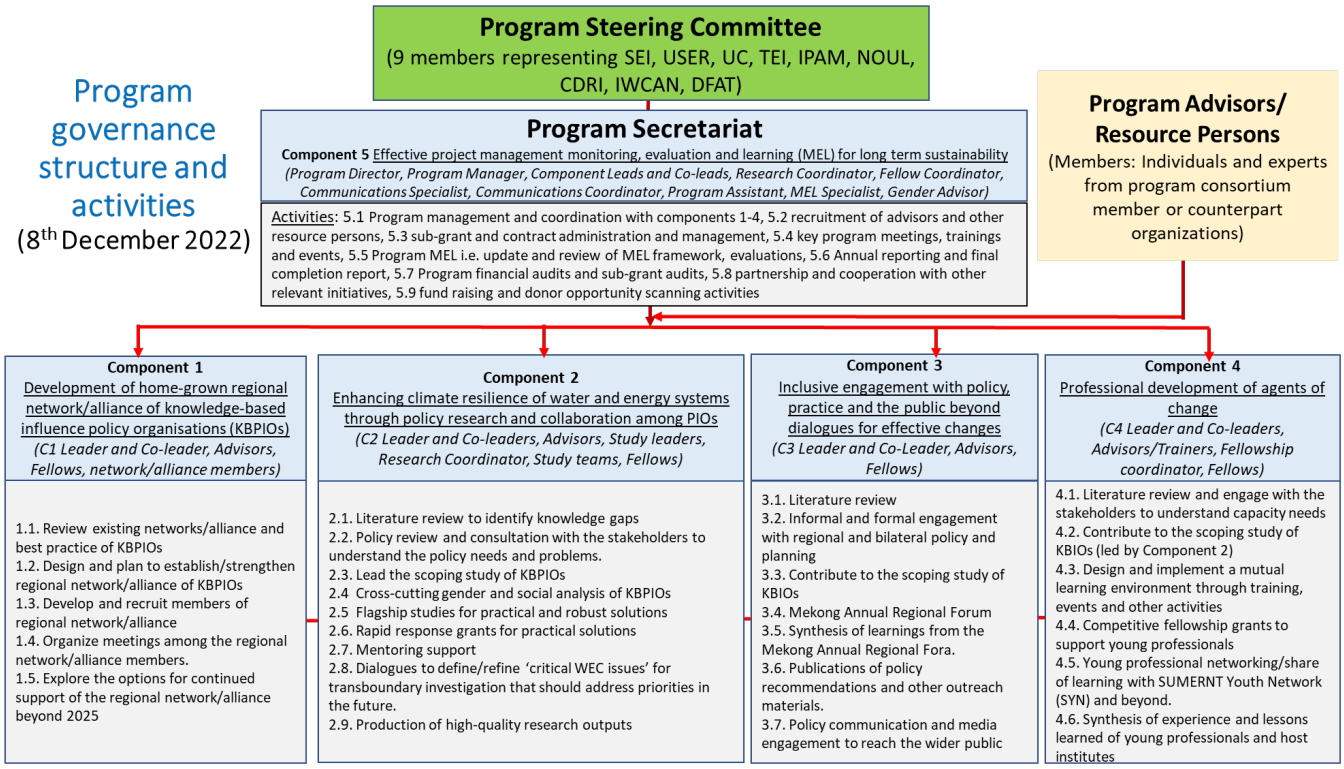


Figure 2. Program Governance Structure and Activities

Key personnel roles and short profiles are listed in **Annex C**. These might be adjusted during the contract negotation processes between SEI with the individuals and partner organisations, which will formally begin once the program design is approved by DFAT.

3.3 Direct and indirect beneficiaries

1. Direct Beneficiaries

Direct beneficiaries (referred to as "**boundary partners"**) are institutions or individuals whom the program intends to work with, and engage directly, through different activities to influence their change of behaviours, capacities, attitude, practice, and relationships.

1) National KBPIOs

The national KBPIOs of the Lower Mekong Region countries (Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, Vietnam) have been selected as there is a need to strengthen the knowledge, capacity, connections across sectors, countries, and locations, in order to perform their role in advising on complex national and regional issues related to water, energy and climate effectively. These include the following groups:

- *Formal think tanks*: think tank institutions that are registered as permanent bodies at the national level that perform public-policy research, analysis, and engagement on a regular basis with national policy stakeholders or policy making processes.
- *Informal think thanks*: institutions, associations, the private sector, and individuals that are not identified/registered as think tank but perform public-policy research, analysis and/or engagement on a regular or ad-hoc basis with national policy stakeholders or policy making processes.
- *Other organisations* that use knowledge to influence policy directly through policy stakeholders or the public e.g. media.

2) Mekong regional KBPIOs

These are institutions or associations or networks with regional operational scope, whether formally identified as a think tank, that perform public-policy research, analysis and engagement on a regular or ad-hoc basis with regional and national policy stakeholders or policy making processes. The consortium assessed that there is a need to develop a regional platform for networking or alliances with KBPIOs across the Mekong Region, Australia and others and be a host for independent/neutral regional network or alliances of 'think and do tanks' to discuss regional issues over the long-term. SUMERNET fits within this description, therefore is included within the category.

3) Young professionals of all genders in four Mekong countries (Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, Vietnam). These are professionals who are not more than 35 years old, with professional experience of at least 2 years. The background of these young professionals can be from research/academic, public sector or civil society including the media. There is a need to enhance their understanding and awareness on their roles and building their capacity to improve policy and practice through their work.

2. Indirect beneficiaries:

Indirect beneficiaries are institutions or communities or individuals whom the direct beneficiaries will engage with in policy dialogues and deliberations. These indirect beneficiaries are:

1) Policy makers of all genders at local, national and regional levels.

2) Private sector entities relevant to the development issues related to water, energy, and climate.
3) Civil society organisations (including NGOs) and activists, particularly those representing marginalized, vulnerable, and at-risk groups.
4) Women, men, and people of nonbinary genders in the Mekong Region, in particular members from marginalized, vulnerable, and at-risk communities and groups.

3.4 Strategic cooperation and alignment with SUMERNET

Building on 17 years experience working in the region with more than 500 network members , SUMERNET will be natural home of the Mekong Think Thanks Program. The SUMERNET Steering Committees (SSC) are well aware of the program design and will support the implementation of the program. Positive results of the program will be maintained as part of the network even beyond the program lifetime.

To maximize value of program money for the benefit of people in the region, the program team will seek to cooperate and align with SUMERNET activities strategically in following ways:

- The program will cooperate with SUMERNET for possible knowledge exchange and sharing and joint activities e.g. regional forum/dialogues, communications, capacity building, fellowship activiites, strategic policy engagement.
- The program will consider applying or adapting relevant guidelines earlier developed by SUMERNET for the program implementation as appropriate.
- Since the objectives of the program and SUMERNET are highly relevant to each other, all program team members are part of SUMERNET network, some program members are currently serving as SSC, for effective management of Mekong Think Tanks Program and SUMERNET network, the PSC and SSC may be merged in the future. The current program could be considered as a transition period to assess the possibility in close consultation with Sida, DFAT and current members of PSC and SSC. Areas to consider for this include but not limited to e.g. role, responsibility, regional ownership, country representation, membership selection/election process of the steering committee.

3.5 Activities and implementation schedule

Program activities are arranged into 5 program components, which are closely linked with each other to maximise the effectiveness and impacts of the program implementation.

To contribute to ambitious goal and achieve objectives of the program, long-term commitment and active particpation of KBPIOs and other policy actors are critical. To understand their work, approaches and needs in the context that they operate within, and get their buy-in, the program team will spend time at the beginning of program to consult with the stakeholders and review the literatures as part of the scoping study of KBPIOs and gender and social inclusion analysis. The results from these studies will inform the design and implementation of program activities in the coming years.

Details of the program components are described below.

1. **Component 1: Development of home-grown regional network/alliance of KBPIOs**
   - **Activities:**

1.1. Work closely with Component 2 on the review of existing networks/alliance in term of structures/functions and best practice of KBPIOs in the region as part of the scoping study of KBPIOs (led by Component 2)

1.2. Draw inspiration from the SUMERNET and other relevant experiences based on Activity 1.1 in consideration of "Do No Harm" approach and 'cross-cutting social and gender analysis' to design the regional network/alliance of KBPIOs. More details on the plan to establish/strengthen network/alliance will be prepared in consultation with the partners who have actively driven that network and alliance building in the past.

Considering the sectors in focus of the program, tentative name of this network/alliance could be "Water, Energy, Climate Alliance Network (WECAN)." Whether this WECAN will be separated from SUMERNET, be a part of SUMERNET, or an evolution of SUMERNET, we will determine during this activity period.

1.3. Develop regional network/alliance of KBPIOs and recruit its members.

1.4. Organize and facilitate meetings twice a year among the regional network/alliance members for networking and cross-learning

1.5. Explore options jointly with Component 5 for continued support of the regional network/alliance beyond 2025

- **Directly contributing to Objective 3**: Enhance capacity for networking and cross-learning among regional and national KBPIOs and capacity of young professionals as agents of change in delivering research, policy engagement and communications. **Indirectly contributing to Objective 1 and 4.**
- **Outputs:** Design of regional network/alliance of KBPIOs on WEC led by Mekong people, regular meetings of the regional network/alliance, sustainability plan for the regional network/alliance beyond 2025.
- **Strategies:** Integration of an intersectional gender lens (considering other forms of marginalization such as ethnicity, class, age, or disability as well as, and in relation to, gender) in each of the above, in particular, assessing and guiding regional network/alliance's composition and governance towards best practices for inclusion, diversity and gender. This will include and respond to early program analysis to identify barriers to participation. Use the connections and convening power of the consortium team who serve as national think tanks of the governments in four countries (CDRI, NERI, NAFRI, TEI, IPAM, VNMC) or the MRC Secretariat. Build on existing research, partnership and governance structure of SUMERNET to host regional networks/alliances beyond the program period. Ensure engagement with young professionals and external stakeholders with the aim to influence policy agendas.

2. Component 2: Enhancing climate resilience of water and energy systems through policy research and collaboration among PIOs

- **Activities:**

2.1. Literature review to identify knowledge gaps

2.2. Policy review in each country covering both key policy documents and consultation with stakeholders (with Component 3) to understand policy needs and problems

2.3. **Scoping study of KBPIOs** to understand the current situation e.g. how have different types of KBPIOs in the Mekong Region addressed issues of water, energy and climate and their interlinkages? What are the common practices of influential KBPIOs in different

countries and issue areas? What are relevant existing networks/alliances and their structures/functions that can further build on?

2.4. **Cross-cutting social and gender analysis** to understand how KBPIOs address gender and social equality concerns in their work. This will inform the design and implementation of Gender and Social (including Disabilities) Inclusion Strategy within the program. The Strategy is a living document that will be regularly reviewed and updated as necessary

2.5. Commissioning and implementation of four flagship research studies for practical and robust solutions. All flagship research projects will be designed to complement each other, providing more opportunities to learn, under what conditions and which issue areas, particular strategies of KBPIOs are effective. To provide some focus and level of comparability, the **four flagship projects** will share one common objective of improving understanding of how climate resilience of specific water and energy systems may be enhanced through policy research and collaboration among KBPIOs. Other objectives will be specific to each project, for instance, identifying or generating promising transformative pathways. The specific policy issues and study designs of each flagship project will be developed in close collaboration with partner organisations and selected other KBPIOs

Examples of possible policy issue areas are:

- household water and energy insecurities in marginalized communities;
- policy environment for inclusive development of renewable energies; and
- governance of large-scale water and energy infrastructure projects.

In general, all flagship research studies will fulfil the following conditions.

- Inform specific policy/planning processes in two or more Mekong countries and/or at the regional level
- Address issues of significant interest to all countries in the Mekong Region
- Integrate gender and social inequality concerns for the whole period of project, from the design to implementation and until completion of research projects
- Address the climate resilience of water or energy systems
- Deliver high quality research outputs
- Deliver policy recommendations for practical solutions
- Work directly with KBPIOs using knowledge co-production process
- Direct or indirect beneficiaries of the study include the marginalized, vulnerable and at-risk communities
- May host the fellow(s) as part of the project team
- Can be completed within 1.5 years

Selection of research topics, policy issues and above conditions for flagship will be finalised considering inputs from future stakeholder consultations and approval by the PSC, prior to the start of the studies.

2.6. **Commissioning and implementation of 7 rapid response grants** for practical solutions to address urgent WEC policy issues that will directly contribute to ongoing planning or decision-making processes at national level. Similarly, to the flagship research studies,

the rapid response grants will address improving understanding of how climate resilience of specific water and energy systems may be enhanced, in this case through reinterpreting, sharing and using existing policy research to engage governments, the public and stakeholders.

In general, rapid responses grants will need to fulfil following principles. All of these will be finalised considering the inputs of the stakeholders and approval process of the PSC prior to a start of the study.

- Target to inform specific policy/planning processes directly at national level
- Address the climate resilience of water or energy systems.
- Deliver policy recommendations for practical solutions
- Integrate gender and social inequality concerns for the whole period of the project, from the design to implementation until completion.
- Work directly with KBPIOs using knowledge co-production processes
- Direct or indirect beneficiaries of the study include the marginalized, vulnerable and at-risk communities
- May host the fellow(s) as part of the project team
- Can be completed within 1 year

2.7. Mentoring support including provision of guidance and resources for effective gender and social equity within the given activities

2.8. Dialogues with regional network/alliance members and regional and international experts to define/refine 'critical WEC issues' for transboundary investigation that should address priorities in the future

2.9. Production of high-quality research outputs including but not limited to manuscripts for peer review publications

- **Directly contributing to Objective 2:** Strengthen the role and capability of national and regional KBPIOs in inclusive knowledge co-production processes by engaging stakeholders across sectors, locations and countries on water, energy and climate issues and their interlinkages. **Indirectly contributing to Objective 1 and 3**.
- **Outputs:** Scoping study of KBPIOs, Gender and Social (including Disabilities) Inclusion Strategy of the program, rapid response studies, independent flagship studies**,** manuscripts from flagship studies for submission to peer review publication, policy recommendations.
- **Strategies:** We will draw upon the experience from SUMERNET in administering and mentoring of research and rapid response grants; the technical capacity and network of consortium teams including SUMERNET, and IWCAN; encapsulate SUMERNET guidelines on ethics, gender and social equality integration, conflict sensitivity, and environment; and draw on the strong research capacity of USER, SEI, WWF, UC, IWCAN, UNSW, and other members

3. Component 3: Inclusive engagement with policy, practice and the public beyond dialogues for effective change.

- **Activities:**

3.1. Literature review to identify the policy gaps

This literature review will focus on understanding the current policy processes with respect to water, energy and climate change in the four countries; map out co-dependencies, identify the state and non-state actors that are currently involved in the policy processes. It would also attempt to identify available opportunities/spaces for policy engagement or even identify the lack of it. Through an in-depth understanding of each country's policy landscape, it will provide guidance on devising strategies for policy engagement at national and sub-national level. This scoping of policy gaps will be complemented by the "Scoping study on KBPIOs that address water, energy, and climate issues in the Mekong Region".

As part of this scoping the focus would also be to review the presence/absence of regional institutions, mechanisms that influence decisions both regionally and impact nationally. This will help us identify the scope for evidence-based decision making that exists and/or facilitate the same as part of the alliance building role that this program focuses on.

The scope of the review will also identify most preferred means of communication used by policy makers and this may vary between countries and within country scales as well. Such a scoping would further inform the program's policy communications strategies and strengthen outreach and engagement between science and policy.

3.2. Work jointly with Component 2 on informal and formal engagement with regional and bilateral policy and planning related to water, energy, and climate relevant to flagship studies and rapid response grants to (1) understand policy needs and specific policy processes that the program should contribute to and (2) influence the policy changes

3.3. Contribute to the scoping study of KBPIOs (led by Component 2)

3.4. Organisation of Mekong Annual Regional Forum on the problems and practical and robust solutions in water-energy-climate change policies

3.5. Synthesis of learnings from the Mekong Annual Regional Fora

As part of this activity, the component will actively seek to engage with other regional initiatives. It would identify opportunities to co-organize sessions, facilitate conversations pertaining to water, energy and climate change and seek to engage with other multi-stakeholder processes, such as the SUMERNET Partners' Meetings/Annual Research and Policy Forums, Mekong Research Symposium, among others.

In the initial year, this program will familiarize, participate in other relevant national, regional initiatives and over time devise a strategy based on a thorough understanding of role and significance of the existing forums/initiatives. Over time program team will communicate, convene, and co-convene sessions/forums that thematically align and have potential to leverage policy significance and influence either regionally and/or nationally. The program will use such opportunities to convene forums that facilitate conversations between knowledge producers (typically researchers/other CSOs) and knowledge users (mostly policy makers, developers and CSOs); help identify gaps that policy makers would identify; so that the program can support and produce policy relevant research and share research findings from studies that are supported by the initiative.

Specifically, the program will closely align and work with SUMERNET to advance the work on water, energy and climate change; in the near term, the program will identify opportunities to participate and/or contribute to the upcoming Mekong Research Symposium, in March 2023 and also intends to reach out to the MRC Secretariat to assess opportunities to contribute to the international conference preceding the MRC Leaders' Summit.

3.6. Publications of policy recommendations and other outreach materials

3.7. Policy communication and media engagement to reach the wider public (website outreach, op-eds, blogs, social media, films, media workshops, etc.) following the strategic communications plan in **Annex D**. This working draft will be updated through consultations with the program consortium and other partners especially during the first six months of program implementation

- **Directly contributing to Objective 1:** Enhance the role and effectiveness of national and regional KBPIOs in the policy engagement process in the area of water security, energy security and climate change mitigation and adaptation.
- **Outputs:** Updated communications plan**,** Annual regional forum (inclusive of media involvement), synthesis, media fellowship, op-eds and news articles, blogs, films, practical guidelines on policy communications and strategic methods for influence.
- **Strategies:** Extensive experience in policy engagement, dialogues, and fellowship grants from WLE, M-POWER and SUMERNET. This is supported by the consortium's strong connections with various KBPIOs and policy actors.

4. Component 4: Professional development of agents of change.

- **Activities:**

4.1. Literature review and engage with the stakeholders to understand the capacity needs of agents of change including KBPIOs and young professionals

4.2. Contribute to the scoping study of KBPIOs (led by Component 2)

4.3. Design and implement a mutual learning environment which is based on exchange of knowledge, and a co-design systems approach that catalyses existing skills and strengths across the region and augments needs and gaps. This will be achieved through trainings, events and other capacity building activities based on the needs identified by activities 4.1 and 4.2 and other program components. Critically, capacity building will be focused on two scales (I) KBPIOs in region (beneficiaries) and (ii) individuals with capacity to directly contribute to Mekong KBPIO's delivery

4.4. Competitive fellowship grants (1-2 years duration) to support about **32 young professionals** in the Mekong Region. Fellowships will give priority to underrepresented actors e.g., women (at least 35% of recipients), minorities, people with disability, etc. The grantees can apply to work with any program components (1 to 5) considering their interest and background as well as the program's needs.

Mekong Think Tanks Program will launch few competitive calls during the program period.

- The first call to support **5-6 young fellows** who have an interest to engage in different studies, reviews, and analyses that will be conducted at early stage to guide the future program activities.
- The second call to support 1**4-15 young fellows** to engage with different program components and activities.
- The third call to support about **12 young female researchers** working on critical water, energy, and climate issues in the Mekong Region to engage with research and other relevant activities of the program. These fellows are financially supported by Building Human Capacity (BH) program of DFAT's MAP.

32 fellowship grants are considered as major contribution of this initiative. Building on precious experience of various fellowship programs under SUMERNET, M-POWER, and WLE programs, Mekong Think Tanks Program will ensure that: (a) the fellows don't work only on 'national projects'; (b) there is some skilled and committed mentoring and host institution; (c) accountabilities of fellows and mentors are clearly specified at early stage of the fellowship period; and (d) the fellows get to meet and have opportunity to develop mutually-appreciative working relationships and understandings through their participation in the program activities.

4.5. Young professional networking/sharing of learning with SUMERNET Youth Network (SYN) via annual young professional networking meeting and other activities

4.6. Synthesis of experience and lessons learned of young professionals and host institutes for co-designing future capacity building needs, aligning needs with opportunities and/or future funding. This synthesis will integrate a current social and gender lens, including structural dimensions with an explicit decolonial dimension

- **Directly contributing to Objective 3**: Enhance the capacity for networking among regional and national KBPIOs and capacity of young professionals as agents of change in delivering research, policy engagement and communications. **Indirectly contributing to Objective 1 and 2**
- **Outputs:** Fellowship grants, trainings, fellowship networking as part of SYN, synthesis report
- **Strategies:** A tailored strategy embedded with principles for gender and social inclusion will be taken, with particular attention to involving, building capacities and networks, and visibility of emerging women researchers, policy makers, media, and practitioners from the region, including from marginalized groups. Support to be provided by the academic program of UC and other institutes in Australia.

5. Component 5: Effective program management, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) for long-term sustainability.

- **Activities:**

5.1. Program management and coordination of tasks from program components 1-4

5.2. Recruitment of advisors and other resource persons

5.3. Sub-grant and contract administration and management

5.4. Organisation of key program meetings, trainings and events

5.5. Program monitoring, evaluation and learning i.e., update and review of MEL framework, program evaluations (midterm and final)

5.6. Annual reporting and final completion report
5.7. Program financial audits and sub-grant audits
5.8. Partnership and cooperation with other relevant initiatives
5.9. Fund raising and donor opportunity scanning activities

- **Directly contributing to Objective 4:** Perform effective program management, Monitoring Evaluation and Learning (MEL), strategic communications and partnerships for long-term sustainability. **Indirectly contributing to Objective 1, 2, and 3.**
- **Outputs**: Quarterly meeting with DFAT, PSC meetings twice a year, annual reports, final completion report, gender responsive MEL framework, audited financial reports of program and sub-grants, partnerships and cooperation.
- **Strategies:** Extensive experience in designing and implementing gender-responsive MEL framework and program management within SUMERNET 4 All and other regional programs.

The implementation schedule of the program activities can be referred in **Annex E.**

3.6 Meeting and timings

The program will hold the following meetings, trainings and fora:

1. **Mekong Regional Annual Forum**
   The purpose of this annual forum is to provide opportunities for regional policy engagement. During this forum, the Program and KBPIO members of the network/alliance will share relevant knowledge products and policy recommendations for considerations of policy stakeholders. The forum will also provide an opportunity for networking for enhancing partnerships and cooperation among KBPIOs, policy stakeholders and others. The Mekong Regional Annual Forum will be organised annually when possible linking to other key regional events, such as SUMERNET Annual Research and Policy Forums. Depending on the needs, simultaneous translation to Mekong regional languages will be arranged for specific forum sessions or events of interest, and relevant, to the wider public including participants not proficient in English.

2. **Regional network/alliance meeting**
   This meeting aims to gather all KBPIOs members within the network/alliance to share progress and findings of the research (flagship and rapid response studies). The meeting will also provide opportunities for cross-learning and partnerships or collaborations among KBPIO members. The program will facilitate any joint initiatives or activities as follow up to the meeting. The regional network/alliance meeting will be held twice a year, with one of the meetings organised as back-to-back with the Mekong Regional Annual Forum.

3. **Young professional networking meeting**
   This meeting will be attended by all current and previous fellows of the program, as well as members of the SUMERNET Youth Network. The main purpose of the meeting is to develop networking among program fellows, which could strengthen their capacity to perform effective knowledge-based policy engagement due to linkages with other fellows with different backgrounds (research, policy, media, etc.). Secondly, the fellows will have an opportunity to share their work to a wider audience, especially the SUMERNET Youth Network, to benefit from cross-learning. The young professional networking

meeting will be organised by the program once a year and back-to-back with the Mekong Regional Annual Forum.

4. **Trainings and workshops for capacity development**
   Program-sponsored trainings and workshops for capacity development will be organised throughout the year in both offline and online formats. There are standard trainings to be delivered for KBPIO members and young professional fellows to familiarise them with research and policy approaches, concepts, and tools that are referred to, and used within, the program. These standard trainings could include topics such as integration of gender and social equality (considering DFAT's GEDSI), policy engagement and infuence, communications and media outreach, Do No Harm approach, ethics, MEL, WEC interactions, and other topics that will be identified especially considering the needs of young professionals. The program may also identify additional topics or themes if needed.

5. **Strategic meetings**
   Strategic meetings are meetings at program level to discuss about strategic issues and direction of the program. These meetings include regular update meetings with DFAT (quarterly), program steering committee meetings (twice a year, one meeting is back to back with the Regional Forum), Program secretariat meeting (at least bimonthly with the possibility to have more based on needs) and other meetings for development of partnerships and collaborations with other initiatives.

The scheduling of these meetings can also be referred in the implementation schedule (**Annex E**).

3.7 Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

The Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Framework has been designed to monitor the progress of the program towards achieving its intended objectives, end of program outcome and to some extent the long-term goal, as elaborated in Section 2.

The MEL Framework is therefore established based on the Program Theory of Change (TOC) which elaborate on the pathway(s) for the program to achieve intended objectives, outcome and long-term goal.

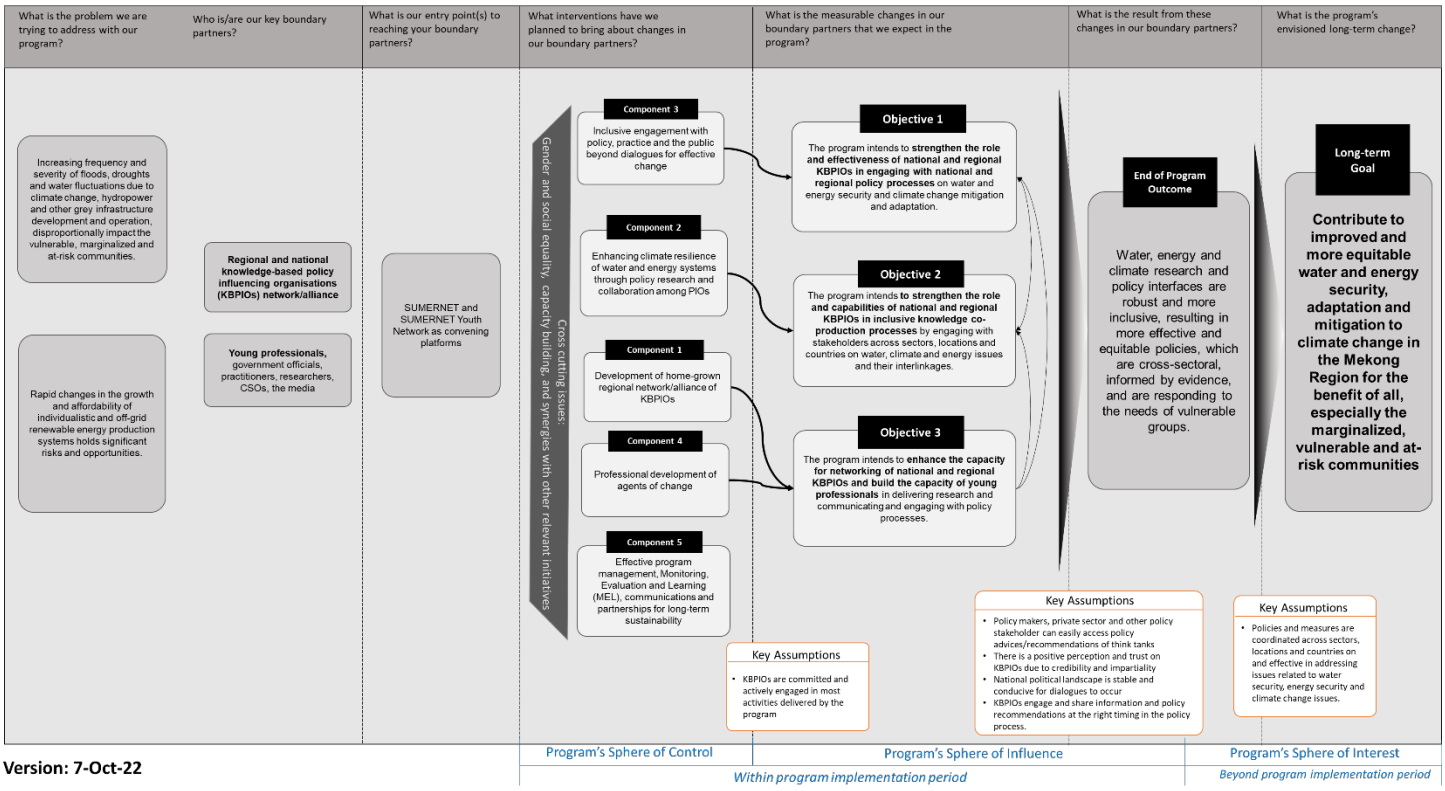


Figure 3. Mekong Think Tank Program Theory of Change

The above TOC diagram can also be found in **Annex A**.

- **How the end of program outcome will contribute to long-term goal:**

  Policy engagements performed by KBPIOs will be based on robust and cross-sectoral evidence generated from inclusive co-production processes under the program responding to the needs of vulnerable groups. These more robust and inclusive research and policy interfaces will in turn influence policy processes in the Mekong region related to water, energy and climate change towards development of improved and more equitable policies that will benefit all, especially vulnerable and at-risk communities.

  This contribution will occur under the **key assumption** that **policies are coordinated across sectors (water, energy and climate change), locations and countries**.

- **How program objectives will lead to end of program outcome:**
  If the program objectives are achieved, i.e.:
  - strengthened role and effective national and regional KBPIOs in engagement with national and policy processes;
  - strengthened role and capability of national and regional KBPIOs in inclusive knowledge co-production processes;
  - enhanced networking capacity of KBPIOs and capacity of young professionals research delivery, policy communications and engagement.

then these will lead to more robust and inclusive research and policy interfaces of water, energy and climate change sectors in the Mekong region.

This causality is possible with the following **key assumptions:**

- **Policy makers, private sector and other stakeholders can easily access policy advice/recommendations of think tanks.**
- **There is a positive perception and trust of KBPIOs due to credibility and impartiality.**
- **National political landscape is stable and conducive for dialogues to occur.**
- **KBPIOs engage and share information and policy recommendations at the right timing in the policy process**

The MEL Framework utilizes the **Logical Framework Approach (LFA)** to define and measure key indicators related to program objectives and end of program outcomes quantitatively. The MEL framework also specifies required disaggregation of data for each of the key indicators.

Besides quantitative measurements, the MEL Framework also utilizes the **Outcome Mapping (OM)** Approach in clearly identifying beneficiaries whom the program will influence towards defined behavioural changes (expressed in program objectives). Since the program acknowledges that behavioural changes happen gradually, the program also identifies early, midterm and end of program behavioural changes (progress markers) for each of direct beneficiaries. These changes will be measured using qualitative tool such as **Most Significant Change (MSC) technique**, through collection and analysis of stories from beneficiaries.

The MEL Framework is developed through **participation of the partner organisations and considering advice from Gender and Social Inclusion Advisor**. Therefore, the MEL Framework is currently a work in progress, and it will be **finalized within 6 months after the commencement of program implementation**.

The MEL Framework for Mekong Think Tanks Program is presented in full detail under **Annex F.**

The summary of MEL Framework which contains program objectives, end of program outcome and long-term goal, and corresponding key indicators (quantitative) and progress markers (qualitative), can be found in below table **(Table 1)**.

There are three distinct activities planned under MEL described as below:

1. Monitoring

Monitoring is a continuous activity performed by the program to track the progress for achieving program objectives through measurements of indicators. In monitoring activities, the program will collect necessary data from various sources which will be the evidence of the achievements of program objectives. Monitoring will also use qualitative data in the form of most significant change (MSC) stories from the direct and indirect beneficiaries as evidence of the progress markers to track the achievement of the program's objectives.

2. Evaluation

Evaluation is a systematic and objective assessment of the program on a periodic basis. Evaluation aims to provide credible evidence which can inform program management and highlight important development lessons. Within this program, there are two scheduled evaluations conducted by

independent evaluators to ensure objectiveness of the assessments: mid-term evaluation (fourth quarter of the second year) and final evaluation (the last quarter of the program). The schedules of evaluation are included within the program implementation schedule **(Annex E)**.

3. Learning

The activities and MEL framework of the program are learning-focused, meaning they are designed to meet the information needs of the Program Steering Committee, Program Secretariat and DFAT. The information generated by the program will be used to improve program implementation towards achieving objectives and contributing to the long-term goal of the program. The continuous learning will also enable the Program Secretariat to adapt to changes in its operational environment, allowing the program to keep on track towards achieving objectives. The learning within the program will occur especially with the following activities/events:

- **Regular debriefing meeting:** after key activities or events, the program encourages debriefing meetings, in which successes and lessons learnt will be discussed and documented. The debriefing notes will be made available for all Program Secretariat staff and Program Steering Committee.
- **Reflective session**: in the Program Secretariat and Steering Committee meetings, a reflective session will be integrated into the agenda to discuss key areas of success, lessons learnt and follow-up actions by the Program Secretariat.
- **Mid-term evaluation:** the program will use the lessons learnt and recommendations from the mid-term independent evaluation to plan follow-up actions to improve program implementation.
- **Final evaluation:** The findings and recommendations from the final evaluation will inform the design and implemetation of follow up programs activiteis beyond the current program phase.

*Table 1. Summary of Mekong Think Tank MEL Framework**

Level Code	Result level	Result statement	Beneficiaries expected for behavioural change	Expected behavioural change (Early)	Expected behavioural change (Midterm)	Expected behavioural change (End of Program)	Indicator No.	Indicators
0	Long-term Goal	**Contribute to improved and more equitable water and energy security, adaptation and mitigation to climate change in the Mekong Region for the benefit of all, especially the marginalized, vulnerable and at-risk communities.**					0	
1	End of Program Outcome	**Water, energy and climate research and policy interfaces are robust and more inclusive, resulting in more effective and equitable policies, which are cross-sectoral, informed by evidence, and are responding to the needs of vulnerable groups.**	National and regional Knowledge based policy influence orrganisations (KBPIOs)	National and regional KBPIOs use the information they gathered or generated from research to engage with policy processes.	National and regional KBPIOs influence the formulation of national and regional policy agendas in the Mekong region.	National and regional KBPIOs support the formulation of national and regional policy agendas in the Mekong region on water security, energy security and climate change mitigation and adaptation through robust and inclusive research and effective policy engagement.	1-1	Number of national and regional policy, practice, plan or action in the Mekong region on water security, energy security and climate change mitigation and adaptation supported with infromation gathered or generated from research
2.1.	Objective	The program intends to strengthen the **role and effectiveness** of **national and regional KBPIOs** in engaging with national and regional **policy processes on** water and energy security and climate change mitigation and adaptation.	National and regional Knowledge based policy influence orrganisations (KBPIOs)	National and regional KBPIOs strengthen their capacities to become effective partners in national and regional policymaking on water and energy security and climate change mitigation and adaptation.	National and regional KBPIOs communicate and engage in evidence-based dialogues of targetted national and regional policy processes.	National and regional KBPIOs influence the outcomes of targetted national and regional policy processes.	2.1-1	Number of policy processes wherein national and regional KBPIOs are part in their formulations as members, advisers, researchers, supporters or resource persons
2.2.	Objective	The program intends to **strengthen the role and capabilities** of **national and regional KBPIOs** in **inclusive knowledge co-production processes** by engaging with stakeholders across sectors, locations and countries on water, climate and energy issues and their interlinkages.	National and regional Knowledge based policy influence orrganisations (KBPIOs)	National and regional KBPIOs learn to design inclusive knowledge co-production processes.	National and regional KBPIOs produce high quality and inclusive knowledge.	National and regional KBPIOs use the insights from high quality and inclusive knowledge to inform policy discussions.	2.2-1	Number of policy-oriented knowledge products developed by national and regional KBPIOs to inform policy processes
2.3.	Objective	The program intends to **enhance the capacity for networking** of **national** and **regional KBPIOs** and build the **capacity of young professionals** in delivering research and communicating and engaging with policy processes.	National and regional Knowledge based policy influence orrganisations (KBPIOs) and Mekong's young professionals	National and regional KBPIOs express interest to form a network. Young professionals participate in capacity building activities (fellowships, trainings, mentoring, etc.) on research, policy engagement or communications	National and regional KBPIOs actively initiate and/or lead in networking activities. Young professionals apply learnings on research, policy engagement or communications that they obtained from the program in their project activities.	Network members coordinate and/or collaborate among themselves to influence policy processes. Young professionals contribute to the influencing of policy processes.	2.3-1 2.3-2	Number of collaborations of network members of national and regional KBPIOs to influence policy processes (beyond individual study/projects) Number of policy processes being contributed to by young professionals as members, advisers, researchers, supporters or resource persons

*) Detailed MEL framework is available as **Annex F**

3.8 Reporting and delivery schedule

The program will produce the following reports with corresponding delivery schedules:

1. Six-monthly activity report and financial report (non-audited): Every 1st April during 2023-2025.
2. Annual Progress Report: Every 1st October in 2023 and 2024.
3. Final Project Report: 31st January 2026.
4. Audited financial acquittal: 1st October 2024 (for the period of 1st July 2023 – 30th June 2024, together with Annual progress report) and 31st January 2026 (for the period of 1st July 2024 – 30th October 2025, together with Final Project Report).

4. Cross-cutting Issues, sustainability and risk

4.1 Do No Harm

The program will successfully ensure a Do No Harm approach through a combination of full program cycle strategies. This includes:

- In the early stages of the Theory of Change (ToC) development, the program team (including gender advisors) will apply an intersectional gender lens (following current best practices) to the ToC development. In particular, the team will make explicit gender and social equity-related assumptions and risks in the developing ToC.
- In the ToC and MEL development, the team will ensure that gender and social aspects, including potential risks of harm (especially to women and marginalized groups including Indigenous peoples, people living with disabilities and other groups) are flagged and included in the full ToC and appropriate indicators and methods included in MEL.
- Given the nature of the program, specific regional network/alliance of KBPIO appropriate strategy around do no harm (and conversely equitable benefit, including voice and capacities) will be developed. These will include implementing best practices on Intellectual Property (IP) and sharing and use of data, as well as safe, equitable and effective, involvement in KBPIOs processes, and effects of policy recommendations.
- The program will go through ethics review processes within SEI/ SUMERNET, including assessment and mitigation of potential harm.

Through past experiences within SUMERNET, SEI has been applying the “Do No Harm” principle to support its research partners through the provision of Conflict Sensitivity Guidelines and delivery of training workshops. SUMERNET has also developed an Ethics guide to articulate the principles of good ethical practice that all SUMERNET-granted research and joint action projects should reflect upon in their activities. The program team will apply similar approaches to ensure strategies for safe spaces in the program similar to what we have practiced under SUMERNET.

4.2 Gender, Disability and Inclusive Development

The water, energy and climate challenges in the Mekong Region reflect – and exacerbate – gender and social inequities in terms of intersectional gendered patterns of vulnerability and resource challenges. These already marginalized groups, including indigenous women and people without legal status, further

face chronic exclusions and inequities from and in water, energy and climate governance and decision-making. The above exclusions are, or risk being (perversely), amplified by research and policy advice that are gender or social equity blind, as these research and data weaknesses reinforce the invisibility of women in policy and program development and create associated policy inequities and weaknesses. This third dimension includes patterns of shallow gender and social (intersectional) analysis and recommendations, leading to less effective women-only targeting rather than strategies to address underlying structural barriers to social and gender equity and equality.

Core areas

As such, Mekong Think Tanks program will involve dedicated, cross-cutting gender and social analysis in the early start-up phase and then organize around core areas (entry points) of, and for, gender and social inclusion and equity in the program as a whole: i) the research and recommendations; ii) the policy-research interface and processes; iii) the development of regional network/alliance of KBPIOs.

As a foundation to these three areas, in its design and start up (early implementation phase), it will apply an intersectional gender lens throughout, from design through to MEL including in its ToC. In practical terms, this includes:

- Undertake analysis of equity and barriers in water, energy and climate issues as a part of the policy and research agenda. Use of analysis to inform refining of research agenda and research to be supported and synthesized, including criteria for research.
- Undertake analysis of equity, inclusion and barriers in research and policy bodies and processes themselves, including KBPIOs in the region. Use of analysis to shape inclusive regional network/alliance of KBPIOs and associated research teams, events and research-policy interface processes, including capacity development.
- Use of the analysis to develop a Gender and Social (including Disabilities) Inclusion Strategy of the program, aligned with DFAT's Gender equality, disability and social inclusion (GEDSI).
- Use of the above to refine the overall design and plans, including MEL and ToC of the program.

Three entry points:

1. *The research sponsored, synthesized and recommendations that flow from it: gender (and socially) responsive or transformative*

Through the Strategy to be developed in the early phase, it will develop both criteria and guidance for the application of an cross cutting social and gender lens within the research catalysed and supported under the program, along with associated capacity development strategies. These will draw on feminist political ecology-based guidance and relevant frameworks.

Flowing on from this, the research supported, the synthesis research, and policy recommendations generated will apply and reflect an intersectional gender lens, thus generating policy insights and advancements that prioritize, and are effectively sensitive and responsive to, diversity and multiple (and overlapping) forms of marginalization and vulnerability in relation to water, energy and climate, including Indigenous Peoples, people living with disability, and gender minorities and LGBTI peoples.

This will align with OECD/DAC markers, and in particular (to be refined in the early phase Strategy), the research and recommendations will seek to be gender responsive at a minimum and moving towards gender transformative in nature and influence.

Operationally, the program commits to (1) address gender and social inclusion issues in all funded research projects; (2) provide gender and social equality support to all research teams through a consultation process; (3) deliver gender and social inclusion related trainings for all research teams.

2. *Policy interfaces/processes: gender and socially-inclusive*

- The program will include bespoke multi-layered, multi-stakeholder interfaces that will allow much needed input of local people of all genders, especially from socially-marginalized (including people living with dis/differing abilities) and climate-vulnerable groups, combined with KBPIO analyses and discourse. Linking to Do No Harm (above), these will apply strategies for safe spaces.
- The program-led processes and policy interfaces will draw on strategies to enhance gender-balance and inclusiveness in terms of representation and process, which we anticipate will both offer opportunities for empowerment, as well as piloting and demonstrating inclusive processes.

3. *Development of regional network/alliance of KBPIOs (membership, composition, processes) itself: Catalysing results and role modelling inclusion*

The program will establish mechanisms to enhance gender and social diversity in representation and processes that enable meaningful inclusion within the regional network/alliance of KBPIOs. This will include but is not limited to seeking to establish and amplify women's leadership and ensuring that all key KBPIO regional network/alliance activities will take gender and social diversity into account.

4.3 Environmental Assessment including climate change

Core to our consortium's value is an explicit desire to reduce our impact on the environment and promote more conservative consumption patterns in our operation and our partners.

Much of the program work related to the development of homegrown regional network/alliance of KBPIOs, research activities, engagements with the policy and practice, and capacity building is towards protecting and enhancing the resilience of the environment.

To this effect, we will use the approaches that try to reduce the overall carbon footprints of the program activities following SUMERNET's Environmental Guidelines that were developed for the whole network. The Guidelines provide suggested approaches such as encouraging reduced air travel, organizing online meetings where possible, organizing events in 'green' venues i.e., hotels that have an environmental policy, reducing the use of plastic bottles, and paper printing at events, etc. The Guidelines are an evolving document that will be updated on a regular basis.

To ensure that the approaches suggested in the guidelines will be implemented, not only by our consortium members but also by other partners, we will include this guideline as part of future sub-contracts and granting agreements that might be awarded to other partners as well. They must take the environmental impacts into account for implementing the program activities and keep the Program Secretariat informed of their efforts on addressing environmental concerns through regular reporting such as mid-term and final completion reports.

We found this to be effective in the past programs and therefore plan to use this approach in the present program as well.

5. Risk Management

The risks in the Program are listed based on DFAT's risk categories: operating environments, partner capacity and relations, fiduciary and fraud, political, resources, management and planning, Environment and social safeguards, and others. The following is the risk summary relevant to the achievement of the program outcomes and the risk assessment ratings before and after treatment. The detailed risks assessment table can be referred in **Annex G**.

Table 2. Program's Summary of Risk

Risk category	Specific risks	Risk rating before treatment	Risk rating after treatment
Operating environments	• Policy stakeholders cannot easily access the policy recommendations of think tanks due to a lack of opportunities to dialogue or share • Persisting restrictions of travel and gathering due to COVID-19 pandemic • Government agencies do not support project promotion initiatives • Low rate of female young professionals, researchers, and think tanks to engage with program activities due to different power relations • Lack of participation of non-target country's stakeholders (i.e., Myanmar and China)	high	medium
Partner capacity and relations	• Lack of commitment and active engagement from KBPIOs in activities delivered by the program • Different capacities among target KBPIOs	high	medium
Fiduciary and fraud	Fraud/corruption issues arise	medium	low
Political	• There is negative perception and lack of trust of policy stakeholder on KBPIOs due to political factors • Political sensitivity and instability in the target countries	medium	low
Resources, management and planning	• Frequent project staff turnover, including of key experienced staff	medium	low

Risk category	Specific risks	Risk rating before treatment	Risk rating after treatment
	leading to delays and capacity gaps • Major fluctuations in exchange rates and/or prices of goods to be procured		
Environment and social safeguards	• GHG emission from activities conducted by the program • Program activities cause harm to the stakeholders and target beneficiaries	medium	low

6. Program Budget and Finance

The Program seeks to ensure that the program activities can be implemented to complement other programs that SEI and other consortium partners are managing. This is to ensure the highest value for money and programs will benefit from joint activities. Below is a tentative breakdown of the budget based on program activities over 3 years.

6.1 Total program budget

The Program has total budget of AUD 5.35 million to cover program activities under 5 components, including Component 1 Regional network/alliance on KBPIOs 7.3%, Component 2 WEC Research 34.6%, Component 3 Inclusive engagement 8.6%, Component 4 Professional development 21.4% and Component 5 Program management and MEL 28.1% of the total program budget. The largest portion of the funds will be allocated to research activities. Estimated annual budgets in 3 years are 1.34, 2.14, and 1.86 million AUD, respectively.

Table 3. Summary of program budget by year

Component budget	Year1 (AUD)	Year2 (AUD)	Year3 (AUD)	Total (AUD)	%
	17 Jun 2022- 30 Jun 2023	1 Jul 2023- 30 Jun 2024	1 Jul 2024- 31 Oct 2025	17 Jun 2022- 31 Oct 2025	
Component 1: Development of home-grown regional network/alliance of knowledge-based policy influence organisation (KBPIOs)	**95,710**	**144,710**	**149,710**	**390,129**	**7.3%**
Personnel	85,710	85,710	85,710	257,129	4.8%
Direct costs	10,000	59,000	64,000	133,000	2.5%
Projects & grants	-	-	-	-	0.0%
Component 2: Enhancing climate resilience of water and energy systems through policy research and collaboration among PIOs	**493,097**	**798,097**	**558,097**	**1,849,292**	**34.6%**
Personnel	133,097	133,097	133,097	399,292	7.5%
Direct costs	10,000	20,000	20,000	50,000	0.9%
Projects & grants	350,000	645,000	405,000	1,400,000	26.2%
Component 3: Inclusive engagement with policy, practice and the public beyond dialogues for effective changes	**134,100**	**159,100**	**166,089**	**459,289**	**8.6%**
Personnel	104,100	104,100	111,089	319,289	6.0%
Direct costs	30,000	55,000	55,000	140,000	2.6%
Projects & grants	-	-	-	-	0.0%
Component 4: Professional development of agents of change	**170,615**	**525,615**	**450,615**	**1,146,845**	**21.4%**
Personnel	65,615	65,615	65,615	196,845	3.7%
Direct costs	30,000	60,000	60,000	150,000	2.8%
Projects & grants	75,000	400,000	325,000	800,000	15.0%
Component 5: Effective program management, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) for long-term sustainability	**449,092**	**515,208**	**540,145**	**1,504,445**	**28.1%**
Personnel	416,592	429,708	425,708	1,272,008	23.8%
Direct costs	32,500	85,500	114,438	232,438	4.3%
Projects & grants	-	-	-	-	0.0%
All Components	**Year1 (AUD)**	**Year2 (AUD)**	**Year3 (AUD)**	**Total (AUD)**	**%**
Personnel costs	805,114	818,230	821,219	2,444,562	45.7%
Direct costs	112,500	279,500	313,438	705,438	13.2%
Projects & grants	425,000	1,045,000	730,000	2,200,000	41.1%
Total	**1,342,614**	**2,142,730**	**1,864,656**	**5,350,000**	**100.0%**

6.2 Total program budget per cost category

The program budget includes 45.7% personnel costs, 13.2% direct costs, and 41.1% for research projects and grants.

- **Personnel costs,** include all key personnel working as the members of Program Steering Committee, Secretariat, advisors and resource persons.
- **Direct costs** are the costs for e.g., meetings, travels, trainings, regional forums, research dialogues, program audits, program mid-term evaluation, and final evaluation.
- **Research projects and grants** include the costs of the scoping study of KBIPOs, independent flagship studies, rapid response fund for practical solutions, and fellowship grants. Below includes the estimated costs, subject to finalisation and approval by the PSC including a representative from DFAT and each of the co-applicant organisations.
    - Scoping study of KBIPOs: AUD 50,000
    - Independent flagship studies: 4 studies and AUD 200,000-300,000/study. Each flagship study may include several local studies.
    - Rapid response fund for practical solutions: 7 grants and AUD 50,000/grant.
    - Fellowship grants: 32 grants and AUD 25,000/grant (MAP-WEC program supports 20 grants for young professionals, while MAP-BHC program supports 12 grants for young female researchers).

Details of program budget breakdown and time inputs of program personnel are presented in **Annexes H and I.**

6.3 Partners'contribution

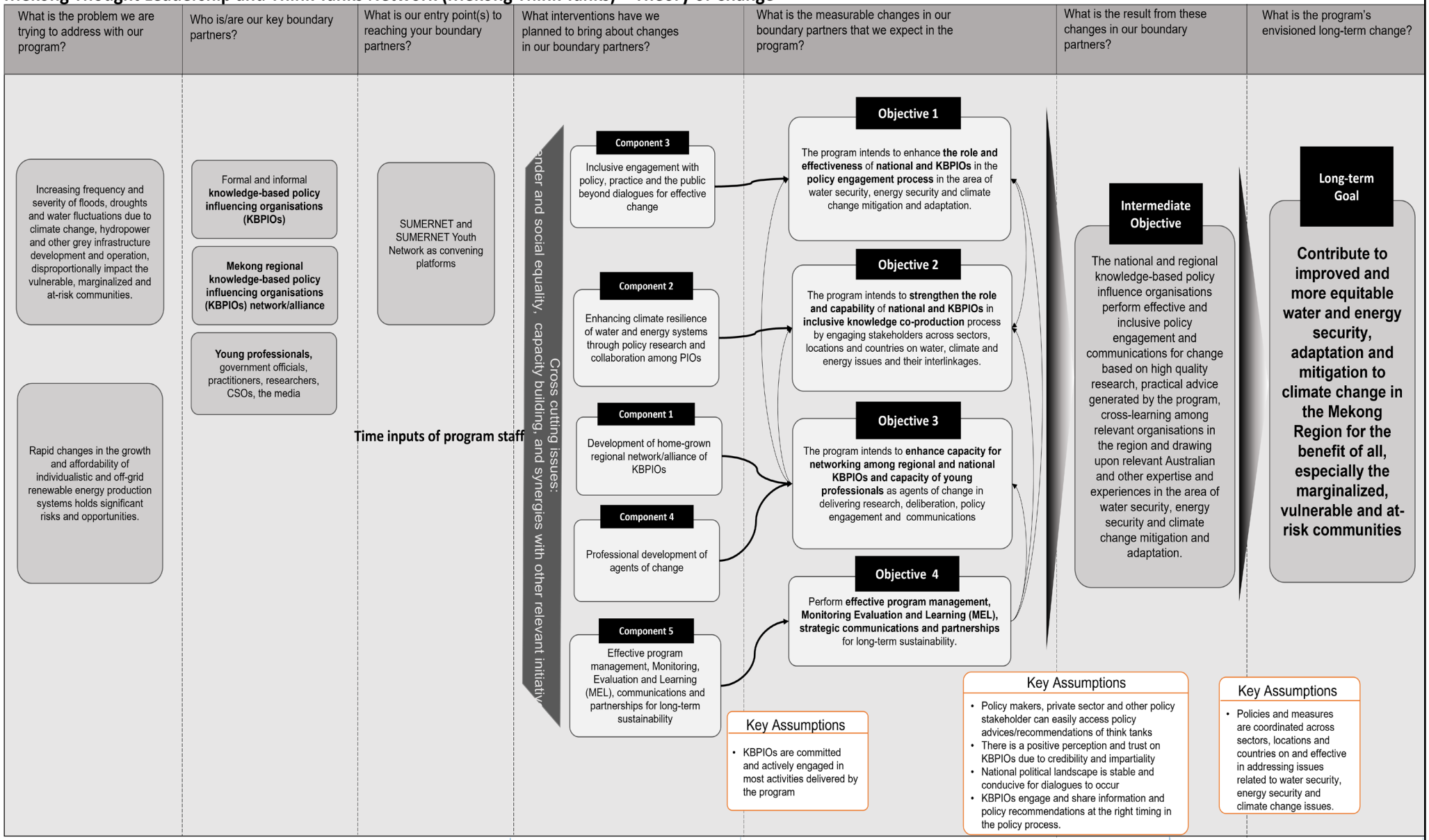
The Program intends to seek to provide in-kind contribution and share complementary activities to benefit the program by approximately AUD 3.57 million. This will account for 67% as our contribution, on top of an investment of DFAT to this initiative.

Most of the potential contribution is from SUMERNET 4 All program. Contribution in terms of complementary activities is from SUMERNET 4 All AUD 2,829,830 and USER through its research project AUD 124,648.

In-kind contribution from SUMERNET 4 All will be in total of AUD 418,867 In addition, SEI, UC and UNSW will provide in-kind of AUD 50,745, AUD 18,700 and AUD 122,850, respectively, mainly for personnel time.

Annex A

Mekong Thought Leadership and Think Tanks Network (Mekong Think Tanks) – Theory of Change



Version: 29-Aug-22

Annex B

List of Consortium Partners Mekong Think Tank Program

Consortium Lead	
Organisation name and ABN (if applicable)	**Stiftelsen The Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI)**
Type of Organisation (e.g., non-government, national institution, company) and country of registration.	Foundation registered under Swedish law. It is a non-government, Not-for-Profit organization. SEI has its registered headquarters in Stockholm (Sweden) and centres around the world, including SEI Asia, based in Bangkok (Thailand), which is an affiliate of and hosted by Chulalongkorn University, Thailand, an academic organization.
Name of main contact person (including title i.e., Mr/Mrs/Dr etc)	Dr. Chayanis Krittasudthacheewa Deputy Director, SEI Asia
Physical address (including city, postcode, country)	**SEI Headquarters** with offices at Linnégatan 87D, 115 23 Stockholm, Sweden. Represented by its **Asia Centre (SEI Asia)** with offices at 10th Floor, Kasem Uttayanin Building, 254 Chulalongkorn University, Henri Dunant Road, Pathumwan Sub-district, Pathumwan District, Bangkok 10330, Thailand.
Work phone number	SEI Asia: +66 (0)2 0730040-44
Mobile phone number	+66 (0)86 8575261
Fax number	SEI Asia: +66 (0)2 0730045
Email address	chayanis.k@sei.org

Consortium Co-lead	
Organisation name and ABN (if applicable)	**Unit for Social and Environmental Research (USER),** Department of Social Science and Development (host of USER), Faculty of Social Sciences, Chiang Mai University, Thailand. (Co-lead applicant)
Type of Organisation (e.g., non-government, national	It is a non-government, Not-for-Profit organization. The host is an academic institution, registered in Thailand.

institution, company) and country of registration.	
Name of main contact person (including title i.e., Mr/Mrs/Dr etc)	Dr. Louis Lebel Director, Unit for Social and Environmental Research (USER)
Physical address (including city, postcode, country)	Unit for Social and Environmental Research (USER), Department of Social Science and Development, Faculty of Social Sciences, Chiang Mai University, 239 Huay Kaew Road, Suthep, Mueang, Chiang Mai 50200
Work phone number	+66 53 943507
Mobile phone number	+66 93 192 9044
Fax number	+66 53 943550
Email address	louis@sea-user.org

Consortium Co-lead	
Organisation name and ABN (if applicable)	**Centre for Change Governance, Faculty of Business, Governance and Law, University of Canberra (UC),** Australia.
Type of Organisation (e.g., non-government, national institution, company) and country of registration.	Not-for-Profit Incorporated Organisation Registered in Australia
Name of main contact person (including title i.e., Mr/Mrs/Dr etc)	Dr. Darren Sinclair Director, Centre for Change Governance
Physical address (including city, postcode, country)	Institute for Governance and Policy Analysis Faculty of Business, Government and Law University of Canberra Building 24 Canberra ACT 2601 AUSTRALIA
Work phone number	+61 490 814 128
Mobile phone number	-

Fax number	N/A
Email address	darren.sinclair@canberra.edu.au

Consortium member	
Organisation name and ABN (if applicable)	**Cambodia Development Resource Institute (CDRI)**
Type of Organisation (e.g., non-government, national institution, company) and country of registration.	non-government
Name of main contact person (including title i.e. Mr/Mrs/Dr etc)	Dr. Eng Netra
Physical address (including city, postcode, country)	#56 Street 315, Tuol Kork, PO Box 622, Phnom Penh, Cambodia
Work phone number	+855 23 881701
Mobile phone number	+855 78 515 768
Fax number	-
Email address	netra@cdri.org.kh

Consortium member	
Organisation name and ABN (if applicable)	**Faculty of Engineering, National University of Laos (NUOL)**
Type of Organisation (e.g. non-government, national institution, company) and country of registration.	Government Educational Institute

Name of main contact person (including title i.e. Mr/Mrs/Dr etc.)	Dr. Phoummixay Siharath
Physical address (including city, postcode, country)	Department of Environmental Engineering, Faculty of Engineering, National University of Laos, Watnak Village, Sisattanak District, Vientiane Capital
Work phone number	+ 856-021-312072
Mobile phone number	+ 856 20 99444378
Fax number	+ 856-021-314382
Email address	phoummixay2011@gmail.com

Consortium member	
Organisation name and ABN (if applicable)	**Thailand Environment Institute Foundation (TEI)**
Type of Organisation (eg non-government, national institution, company) and country of registration.	Non-Governmental Organisation
Name of main contact person (including title ie Mr/Mrs/Dr etc)	Jeeranuch Sakkhamduang, Ph.D.
Physical address (including city, postcode, country)	16/151 Muang Thong Thani, Bond Street, Bangpood, Pakkred, Nonthaburi 11120 Thailand
Work phone number	+66 2 50 3 3333 ext.363
Mobile phone number	+66 8 9504 8293
Fax number	+662 504 4826
Email address	jeeranuch@tei.or.th info@tei.or.th

Consortium member	
Organisation name and ABN (if applicable)	**The Institute of Policy and Management (IPAM)**
Type of Organisation (e.g., non-government, national institution, company) and country of registration.	Institute at university/think tank
Name of main contact person (including title ie Mr/Mrs/Dr etc)	Assoc. Prof. Dr. Dao Thanh Truong
Physical address (including city, postcode, country)	City: Hanoi city Country: Vietnam Postcode: 100000
Work phone number	+84 2435587547
Mobile phone number	+84 913016429
Fax number	-
Email address	truongkhql@gmail.com

Consortium member	
Organisation name and ABN (if applicable)	**International Water Centre Alumni Network (IWCAN)** ABN 96 154 986 482
Type of Organisation (eg non-government, national institution, company) and country of registration.	Not-for-profit NGO, incorporated in Australia.
Name of main contact person (including title ie Mr/Mrs/Dr etc)	Dr. Frederick Bouckaert

Physical address (including city, postcode, country)	Sir Samuel Griffith Centre (N78_3.28) Griffith University, 170 Kessels Road Nathan QLD 4111
Work phone number	n/a
Mobile phone number	+61 (0)423 829 234
Fax number	n/a
Email address	Frederickbouckaert57@gmail.com

Annex C

List of Program Staff and Roles

(Version: 16th December 2022)

Program Steering Committee (PSC)

Role	Name	Organization	Gender
PSC Chair	Niall O'Connor	SEI Asia, Thailand	Men
PSC member	Louis Lebel	USER, Thailand	Men
PSC member	Darren Sinclair	UC, Australia	Men
PSC member	Wijarn Simachaya	TEI, Thailand	Men
PSC member	Eng Netra	CDRI, Cambodia	Women
PSC member	Phoummixay Siharath	NOUL, Laos	Men
PSC member	Karen Delfau	IWCAN, Australia	Women
PSC member	Truong Dao Thanh	IPAM, Vietnam	Men
PSC member	Dwight Ronan	DFAT, Australia/Thailand	Men

Note: This may be adjusted as necessary during the program implementation.

Program Secretariat (PS)

Role	Name	Responsibility	Gender
1. Program Director & Component 1 Lead	Chayanis Krittasudthacheewa (SEI)	Overall lead of the program implementation and Secretariat & Lead Component 1 Development of home-grown regional network/alliance of KBPIOs	Women
2. Program Manager and Component 5 Lead	Agus Nugroho (SEI)	Manage the program overall and lead Component 5 Effective program management, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) for long-term sustainability	Men
3. Program Assistant	New staff being recruited (SEI)	Assist the program implementation on various activities	TBC
4. MEL Specialist	New staff being recruited (SEI)	Lead on the MEL related work and support the program management (e.g partner contracts)	TBC
5. Communications Specialist	Rajesh Daniel (SEI)	Lead on communications related activities & support Component 3	Men
6. Communications Coordinator	To be determined.	Coordinate/assistant communications activities	Women
7. Component 1 Co-lead	Bach Tan Sinh	Co-lead Component 1	Men
8. Component 2 Lead	Louis Lebel (USER)	Lead Component 2 Enhancing WEC research for practical and robust solutions on policy and practice in times of uncertainty	Men
9. Component 2 Co-lead	Thanapon Piman (SEI)	Co-lead Component 2	Men
10. Component 2 Co-lead	Cynthia McDougall (SEI)	Co-lead Component 2 and guide on the issues related to gender and social equality of the program	Women
11. Component 3 Lead	Sushmita Mandal (SEI)	Lead Component 3 Inclusive engagement with policy, practice and the public beyond dialogues for effective changes	Women

12. Component 3 Co-lead	Albert Salamanca	Co-lead Component 3 (focus on multi-stakeholder engagement and MEL)	Men
13. Component 4 Lead	Leonie Pearson (UC)	Lead Component 4	Women
14. Component 4 Co-lead	Phoummixay Siharath (NUOL)	Co-lead Component 4	Men
15. Research and fellow Coordinator	Boripat Lebel (USER)	Provide coordination support for research and fellowship grantees (Components 2 &4).	Men

Note: This may be adjusted as necessary during the program implementation.

Program Advisors (PA)

Role	Name	Responsibility	Gender
Component 1 Advisor	Eng Netra (CDRI)	Provide advisory support related to the development of regional network/alliance of KBPIOs	Women
Component 1 Advisor	Andrew Noble	Provide advisory support related to the development of regional network/alliance of KBPIOs	Men
Component 2 Advisor	Chu Thai Hoanh	Provide advisory support on the research and policy related to water, agriculture, climate	Men
Component 2 Advisor	Francis Johnson (SEI)	Provide advisory support on research and policy related to energy and climate	Men
Components 2 & 4 Advisor	Pichamon Yeopanthong (UNSW)	Provide advisory support on research and policy related to environmental governance and indigenous knowledge and youth engagement	Women
Component 3 Advisor	Wijarn Simachaya (TEI)	Provide advisory support on the policy engagement related to environment and natural resources management	Men
Component 3 Advisor	Klomjit Chandrapanya	Provide advisory support on transboundary water cooperation and communications	Women
Component 4 Advisor & trainers	To be determined.	To be determined	TBC
Component 5 Advisor	Karen Delfau (IWCAN)	Provide advisory support on Gender and Social Inclusion	Women
Component 5 Advisor	Frederick Bouckaert (IWCAN)	Provide advisory support on MEL framework and engagement with Australian experts and networks	Men
Others	To be determined		

Note: This may be adjusted as necessary during the program implementation.

Annex D

Mekong Thought Leadership and Think Tanks Network Program (Mekong Think Tanks)

Communications Plan

(Version: 16th December 2022)

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Purpose of the document

This is a guide to communications planning for the Mekong Think Tank program. It is intended for the program consortium. This is an indicative plan that will be further updated during the first six months of program implementation and improved upon every year.

In brief: Mekong Think Tanks (MTT) program

There are numerous development challenges facing the Mekong Region influenced by climate change and the pandemic, including national and global food security associated with sea level rise in mega-deltas of Asia, triggering new poverty traps and emerging hotspots of hunger to potential conflicts over transboundary water resources (i.e., China and Mekong countries).

The Mekong Think Tanks initiative will focus on water and energy challenges in the context of climate change impacting the most vulnerable and marginalized in society in Mekong countries. This will be achieved through evidence-based research and analysis, engagement with regional, national, and local policy think tanks, and effective dialogue with decision makers.

Communication objectives

The communication objectives connect back to the overall objectives of the program design.

> **The long-term goal** of the program is *to contribute to improved and more equitable water and energy security, adaptation and mitigation to climate change in the Mekong Region for the benefit of all, especially the marginalized, vulnerable and at-risk communities.*
>
> The program will be able to contribute to this long-term goal, if the following **end of program outcome** is achieved: *Water, energy and climate research and policy interfaces are robust and more inclusive, resulting in more effective and equitable policies, which are cross-sectoral, informed by evidence, and are responding to the needs of vulnerable groups.*

The intermediate objective of the program will be to develop a regional network or alliance of knowledge based policy influencing organisations (KBPIOs) that, through the implementation of program activities, intends to:

1. Strengthen the **role and effectiveness of national and regional KBPIOs in engaging with national and regional policy processes** on water and energy security and climate change mitigation and adaptation.
2. Strengthen the **role and capabilities of national and regional KBPIOs in inclusive knowledge co-production processes** by engaging with stakeholders across sectors, locations and countries on water, climate and energy issues and their interlinkages.
3. Enhance the **capacity for networking of national and regional KBPIOs** and build the **capacity of young professionals in delivering research and communicating and engaging with policy processes**.

Communication objectives (linked to above) are:

1. **Raising awareness** towards improving water security, enabling clean energy transitions, and enhanced adaptation and mitigation actions on climate change in the Mekong Region.
2. **Influencing policy** and policy makers for more equitable policy and practices on interlinked issues of climate, water and energy.
3. **Enhance dialogues and engagement** through innovative and effective outreach including strategic activities and targeted outputs focusing on formal/informal think tanks and young professionals.

The communications plan will support strategic outreach and outputs for the program to address the following development needs (as outlined in the proposal):

Development needs addressed	**Indicative communications support**
1. Need to establish a regional platform for networking with national think tanks across the Mekong Region, Australia and others and be a host for independent/neutral regional think tanks through increased opportunities for policy dialogues and engagement through informal and formal forums including regular Mekong regional fora.	- Workshops - Policy forums - Regional fora
2. Need for greater engagement with young professionals across sectors to enhance their understanding and awareness on their roles as current and future agents of change to improve policy and practice, by performing policy mapping and analysis, policy engagement and deliberation and communications.	- Policy communications tools (multimedia, infographics, podcasts)
3. Need to look beyond the Mekong Region for best practices. The initiative will place greater emphasis on public policy science, methods and research that will directly seek practical solutions for vulnerable groups on ground.	- Editing and packaging of high-quality research outputs focusing on practical solutions (peer-reviewed publications, working papers)
4. Need to integrate inclusive approaches in knowledge production and policy deliberation that places gender and social equality at the core of think tanks' activities through innovative, and effective communications and	- Innovative multimedia and graphics, films and podcasts - Editing and packaging of high-quality flagship publications

	media relations to publicise high quality research and policy advice strategically. High quality flagship publications about and by the program will be produced and widely shared.	(e.g. book chapters in external publications, special issue of journal. This depends on the design of flagship studies)

The MTT program communications strategy will ensure the following in all communications activities and products:

- **Be interactive,** since our goal is to invite dialogue, not just to unilaterally convey information. This means events must facilitate interaction with our boundary partners using digital communications tools such as websites and social media to encourage interaction.
- **Engage all our partners**, to make the most of their available networks and leverage their local, national and regional knowledge and connections.
- **Be gender-sensitive and inclusive** in the tone, languages, images, formats and intended audiences of all communications products
- **Present materials in different formats,** written and multimedia, long- and short-form, with different levels of depth and complexity – from articles for peer-reviewed journals, to technical reports, to policy briefs, brochures, blog posts, and multimedia presentations including short films.
- **Provide multiple entry points**, recognising that no single event, newsletter, website or publication will reach everyone, but all should make it easy to engage more deeply with the program.
- **Be multi-lingual** – Although English is the program working language, we will strive to produce publications and conduct outreach in the languages of the different Mekong Region countries.
- **Build capacity** – among program partners including the think tank people and networks, to help them to effectively communicate with policymakers and general audiences, and strengthen their knowledge and messaging skills.

Target audiences

The program will engage with stakeholders across sectors, locations and countries on water, climate and energy issues in the Mekong Region. The target audiences will be determined together with the project consortium members so that the target audiences are not developed in a silo i.e., separate from the stakeholder mapping for the project as there is an overlap between audiences.

Audiences are a crucial component in designing the communications plan. “Stakeholder analysis” and regional stakeholder forums will enable a clearer idea of the different audiences, their contexts, and examples of the messages that the communication strategy needs to formulate to reach them.

The key target audiences (specifics may vary across sectors, countries, and locations):

- Policy-makers/decision-makers
- Academia and research institutions
- Formal and informal national think tanks (including local grass-root and civil society organizations), national and regional think tanks in the Mekong Region)
- Civil society and local community groups
- Intergovernmental and regional organizations, donors and financial institutions
- Young professionals as agents of change in delivering research, deliberation, policy engagement and communications
- Media

Policy communications and media engagement

A core feature of the communications strategy is supporting efforts at actively informing, participating and engaging with policymakers, policy audiences and policy arenas including media engagement in order to achieve the program objectives.

The communications strategy therefore brings emphasis to bear on policy communications approaches that aim to better understand and influence the policy-making environment. Policy communications approaches aim to build capacity of researchers, policymakers or other knowledge based policy influencing organisations (KBPIOs) in contributing to, and influencing, policies that help make the Mekong Basin more water secure, embrace the energy transition, and advance climate action. Strategic and effective policy communications includes strong media outreach and media relationships to reach the wider public.

Media engagement is a vital part of our work since growing public attention on environmental issues leads to an enabling environment for improvements in policy and practice. We aim to actively engage with media both through connections of the individual component teams and partnering with regional media networks such as Internews/Mekong Eye through trainings and workshops. We will facilitate linkages between media and researchers for more long-term partnerships for example through fellowship grants that may award to young journalists from the region.

Activities and outputs will include website outreach, op-eds in regional news outlets, expert blogs, social media, short films and grants to young media fellows to produce stories and podcasts (see more details in section below on “communication outputs”).

Key messages

During first six months of program implementation, this section will be completed with key messages developed, most likely per target audience. Key messages developed in early stage will further evolve along with the program work, research findings and stakeholder engagement.

Key messages:

1. **Improved cross-sectoral governance is needed:** Cross-sectoral, cooperative among stakeholders and countries, and gender-sensitive and participatory governance can better address the growing uncertainties in water and energy use and the impacts of climate change.

2. **Achieving resilience to future climates mandates policy-oriented research**: evidence-based knowledge generated through policy-oriented research, analysis and advice on the governance, socio-economic values, benefits, and risks associated with water, energy, and the environment can support achieving resilience to future climates.

Prioritized channels

The different channels that will be used are based on the target audience analysis, with use of channels depending on which channels the target audiences aremost comfortable with. For example, if information is received through colleagues, conferences, or online.

The channels are segmented into:

Media channels	Face to face channels	Digital channels

Op-eds, media forums, interviews with media; media bloggers and outlets	Workshops, networks events, policy forums, conferences	SUMERNET, SEI (and consortium) websites, online communities, social media, videos and multimedia. (Social media handles of the program team will be used in Twitter and Facebook, for example.)

Digital presence and promotion

A program webpage will be developed in the SUMERNET or SEI website that will host the publications including blogs and academic articles, public presentations, project flyers, and other program deliverables. The program consortium will decide if a unique "visual identity" will be developed for the program: for e.g., does the program need its own logo?

For publicising products and activities, the program consortium should follow a communications and branding guide of the program including attribution guidelines that is developed as separated document.

Communications activities and outputs

These are expected activities and outputs during the course of program, to be further discussed within the consortium as responsibilities for leading and/or delivering the different outputs will be shared across the consortium members. Efforts will be made to produce key outputs not only in English but also in other local languages in the Mekong Region, whereable possible.

A. Program publications

- General information: Program flyers, posters and briefings, key message summary
- Academic articles including working papers, book chapters, special issue journal
- Program reports in summary form
- Synthesis of learnings from the Mekong Annual Regional forums

B. Online digital

- Program webpage in SEI and SUMERNET websites
- Multimedia: short films, podcasts (dedicated You Tube channel)
- Data Visualization (graphs and flyers on key research outputs
- Use of SEI and SUMERNET social media channels

C. Workshops and forums

- National and regional workshops
- Policy dialogue forums
- Mekong Annual Regional forums

D. Media engagement

- Op-eds in regional outlets
- Press releases for events and key publications
- Media interviews and media briefings during key events

- Publications of policy recommendations

E. Media-policy capacity building

- Fellowship grants to selected Mekong media (from past experience in SEI and SUMERNET, one of the successful approaches to effective media engagement and building of strong media relationships is the use of the grants or direct commissioned stories for multimedia)
- Collaboration with specific media outlets and media influencers in the Mekong Region viz. Internews/Mekong Eye, to produce or publish stories from this program. This will include also commissioned multimedia and podcasts by influential media podcast producers, for example in Vietnam
- Media-researcher workshops that can build media outreach capacity of researchers, policymakers and policy influencers to effectively communicate policy messages to the media and the general public.

Evaluation

There will be regular yearly evaluation to assess the effectiveness of communications activities and help identify areas of strength and weaknesses so that future efforts may be adjusted accordingly. Qualitative and quantitative indicators, measured against baseline data where possible, can be used. These will include activity and impact indicators, as follows:

- **Activity indicators** (demonstrating quantitative implementation achievements) – such as the number of features written, publications distributed or downloaded, press releases disseminated, events organized, etc.
- **Impact indicators** (involving quantitative and qualitative measures) – can include number of media articles, direct feedback from target audiences, rate of attendance and/or viewers of project activities or events, measures of awareness of the project/key messages among target groups, etc.

Communication work plan (to be developed the implementation period cross-linked to work components and granted projects)

During the first six months of program implementation, the progam will develop a detailed communication work plan for the program period that links with different components, granted projects and communications support.

Target audience	Activity/Product	Key Message	Timing	Notes

Mekong Think Tanks
Program Activity Implementation Schedule
Version: 8-Dec-22

Annex E

WBS No.	Component/Activity	Relevant Milestones	2023												2024												2025												2026
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1
1.	**Component 1: Development of home-grown regional network/alliance of KBPIOs**																																						
1.1.	Review existing networks/alliance and best practice of KBPIOs in the region	Brief internal report produced							◆																														
1.2.	Design of regional network/alliance of KBPIOs	Design of regional network/alliance developed																																					
1.3.	Development of regional network/alliance of KBPIOs and recruitment of its members	Regional network/alliance established									◆																													
1.4.	Organize and facilitate regional network/alliance meetings	Regional network/alliance meetings organised									◆						◆							◆										◆						
1.5.	Explore the options jointly with Component 5 for sustainability of regional network/alliance																																						
2.	**Component 2: Enhancing climate resilience of water and energy systems through policy research and collaboration among PIOs**																																						
2.1.	Literature review to identify knowledge gaps	Brief internal report produced						◆																															
2.2.	Policy review in each country to understand policy needs and problems																																						
2.3.	Scoping study of KBPIOs to understand the current situation	Scoping study report and manuscript produced							◆																														
2.4.	Cross-cutting social and gender analysis study	Gender and Social Inclusion Strategy for the program							◆																														
2.5.	Commissioning and implementation of flagship research studies	Policy recommendations and other products generated																									◆						◆						
2.6.	Commissioning and implementation of rapid response grants	Policy recommendations and other products generated																															◆						
2.7.	Mentoring support for supported research																																						
2.8.	Dialogues with regional network/alliance members and regional/international experts	Recommendations on focus WEC issues generated																																					
2.9.	Production of high-quality research outputs	Manuscripts submitted																															◆						
3.	**Component 3: Inclusive engagement with policy, practice and the public beyond dialogues for effective changes**																																						
3.1.	Literature review to identify the policy gaps	Brief internal report produced						◆																															
3.2.	Informal and formal engagement with regional and bilateral policy and planning	Communications plan updated						◆																															
3.3.	Contribute to the scoping study of KBPIOs																																						
3.4.	Organisation of Mekong Annual Regional Fora	Mekong regional annual fora organised									◆													◆										◆						
3.5.	Synthesis of learnings from the Mekong Annual Regional Fora	Synthesis report, paper produced (i.e. practical guidelines on policy communications and strategic methods for influence)												◆													◆									◆			
3.6.	Publications of policy recommendations and other outreach materials.																																						
3.7.	Policy communication and media engagement																																						
4.	**Component 4: Professional development of agents of change**																																						
4.1.	Literature review and engagement to understand the capacity needs of the agents of change	Brief internal report produced						◆																															
4.2.	Contribute to the scoping study of KBPIOs																																						
4.3.	Design and implement a mutual learning environment (trainings, events, and others)	Training/workshops/other activities organised																																					
4.4.	Competitive fellowship grants (1-2 years duration)	Fellowships granted																																					
4.5.	Young professional networking/share learning with SUMERNET Youth Network (SYN)	Networking events organised									◆						◆							◆					◆								◆			
4.6.	Synthesis of experience and lessons learned of young professionals and host institutes	Synthesis report/paper produced																																			◆		
5.	**Component 5: Effective program management, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) for long-term sustainability**																																						
5.1.	Program management and coordination of tasks from program components 1-4																																						
5.2.	Recruitment of advisors and other resource persons																																						
5.3.	Sub-grant and contract administration and management																																						
5.4.	Organisation of key program meetings, trainings and events																																						
5.4.1.	Program launch event	Program launch event organised						◆																															
5.4.2.	Meetings with DFAT (quarterly)	Quarterly meetings held			◆			◆			◆			◆			◆			◆			◆			◆			◆			◆			◆			◆	
5.4.3.	Program Steering Committee meetings (twice a year)	PSC meetings organised			◆									◆						◆						◆					◆					◆		
5.4.4.	Program Secretariat meetings (bimonthly, adjustable based on the needs)	PS meetings organised		◆		◆		◆		◆		◆		◆		◆		◆		◆		◆		◆		◆		◆		◆		◆		◆		◆		◆		◆	
5.4.5.	Other strategic meetings (partnerships, collaborations and fund raising)																																						
5.4.6.	Mekong regional annual fora (logistical support)	Mekong regional annual fora organised									◆													◆										◆						
5.4.7.	Networking meetings (KBPIO and young professional) (logistical support)	Networking events organised									◆						◆							◆										◆						
5.4.8.	Trainings and workshops for capacity development (logistical support)	Training/workshops/other activities organised																																					
5.5.	Program monitoring, evaluation and learning																																						
5.5.1.	Development of gender-responsive MEL framework for the program	MEL framework finalised							◆																														
5.5.2.	Implementation of MEL framework																																						
5.5.3.	Program midterm evaluation	Independent midterm evaluation conducted																				◆																		
5.5.4.	Program final evaluation	Independent final evaluation conducted																																					◆
5.6.	6-monthly, annual reporting and final completion report	Annual and final reports delivered					◆					◆						◆						◆						◆						◆			◆
5.7.	Program financial aquittal audits and sub-grant financial audits	Program and sub-grant audits conducted																						◆															◆
5.8.	Partnership and cooperation with other relevant initiatives																																						
5.9.	Fundraising support and opportunity scanning																																						

Note: The implementation schedule is subjected to be regularly reviewed and updated.

Mekong Think Tank Program
Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Framework
Version: 16-Dec-22

Annex F

Level Code	Result level	Result statement	Expected behavioural change (End of Program)	Indicator No.	Indicators	Baseline	Target	Target explanation	Required data	Disaggregation	Data source	Data collector	Timing/Frequency
0	Long-term Goal	**Contribute to improved and more equitable water and energy security, adaptation and mitigation to climate change in the Mekong Region for the benefit of all, especially the marginalized, vulnerable and at-risk communities.**		0									
1	End of Program Outcome	**Water, energy and climate research and policy interfaces are robust and more inclusive, resulting in more effective and equitable policies, which are cross-sectoral, informed by evidence, and are responding to the needs of vulnerable groups.**	National and regional KBPIOs support the formulation of national and regional policy agendas in the Mekong region on water security, energy security and climate change mitigation and adaptation through robust and inclusive research and effective policy engagement.	1-1	Number of national and regional policy, practice, plan or action in the Mekong region on water security, energy security and climate change mitigation and adaptation supported with infromation gathered or generated from research	0	5	50% of total flagship studies and rapid response grants to achieve this. 0.5*(4+7)=5.5 ~ 5	List of policy, plan, strategy or action supported	Country, sector	Project reports	Program Secretariat Subgrantee	End of the program
2.1.	Objective	The program intends to strengthen the **role and effectiveness** of **national and regional KBPIOs** in engaging with national and regional **policy processes on** water and energy security and climate change mitigation and adaptation.	National and regional KBPIOs influence the outcomes of targetted national and regional policy processes.	2.1-1	Number of policy processes wherein national and regional KBPIOs are part in their formulations as members, advisers, researchers, supporters or resource persons	0	8	70% of total flagship studies and rapi response grants to achieve this. 0.7*(4+7)=7.7 ~ 8	List of processes related to policy, plan, strategy or actions that the national and regional KBPIOs are part of	Country, sector	Project reports	Program Secretariat Subgrantee	Annualy
2.2.	Objective	The program intends to **strengthen the role and capabilities** of **national and regional KBPIOs** in **inclusive knowledge co-production processes** by engaging with stakeholders across sectors, locations and countries on water, climate and energy issues and their interlinkages.	National and regional KBPIOs use the insights from high quality and inclusive knowledge to inform policy discussions.	2.2-1	Number of policy-oriented knowledge products developed by national and regional KBPIOs to inform policy processes	0	12	At least one product per each of flagship study and rapid response grant	List of products	Gender, country, sector	Copy of products Project reports	Program Secretariat Subgrantee	Annualy
2.3.	Objective	The program intends to **enhance the capacity for networking** of **national** and **regional KBPIOs** and build the **capacity of young professionals** in delivering research and communicating and engaging with policy processes.	Network members coordinate and/or collaborate among themselves to influence policy processes.	2.3-1	Number of collaborations of network members of national and regional KBPIOs to influence policy processes (beyond individual study/projects)	0	3	1 collaboration in the second year and 2 additional collaborations in the final year	List of initiatives or activities including descriptions/details	Sector	Annual program reports	Program Secretariat	Annualy
			Young professionals contribute to the influencing of policy processes.	2.3-2	Number of policy processes being contributed to by young professionals as members, advisers, researchers, supporters or resource persons	0	5	50% of total flagship studies and rapi response grants to achieve this. 0.5*(4+7)=5.5 ~ 5	List of policy, plan, strategy or action supported	Country, sector	Project reports	Program Secretariat Subgrantee	End of the program

Mekong Think Tank Program
Progress Markers
Version: 16-Dec-22

Annex F-1

Level Code	Result level	Result statement	Beneficiaries expected for behavioural change	Expected behavioural change (Early)	Expected behavioural change (Midterm)	Expected behavioural change (End of Program)	Indicator No.	Indicators
0	Long-term Goal	**Contribute to improved and more equitable water and energy security, adaptation and mitigation to climate change in the Mekong Region for the benefit of all, especially the marginalized, vulnerable and at-risk communities.**					0	
1	End of Program Outcome	**Water, energy and climate research and policy interfaces are robust and more inclusive, resulting in more effective and equitable policies, which are cross-sectoral, informed by evidence, and are responding to the needs of vulnerable groups.**	National and regional Knowledge based policy influence orrganisations (KBPIOs)	National and regional KBPIOs use the information they gathered or generated from research to engage with policy processes.	National and regional KBPIOs influence the formulation of national and regional policy agendas in the Mekong region.	National and regional KBPIOs support the formulation of national and regional policy agendas in the Mekong region on water security, energy security and climate change mitigation and adaptation through robust and inclusive research and effective policy engagement.	1-1	Number of national and regional policy, practice, plan or action in the Mekong region on water security, energy security and climate change mitigation and adaptation supported with infromation gathered or generated from research
2.1.	Objective	The program intends to strengthen the **role and effectiveness** of **national and regional KBPIOs** in engaging with national and regional **policy processes on** water and energy security and climate change mitigation and adaptation.	National and regional Knowledge based policy influence orrganisations (KBPIOs)	National and regional KBPIOs strengthen their capacities to become effective partners in national and regional policymaking on water and energy security and climate change mitigation and adaptation.	National and regional KBPIOs communicate and engage in evidence-based dialogues of targetted national and regional policy processes.	National and regional KBPIOs influence the outcomes of targetted national and regional policy processes.	2.1-1	Number of policy processes wherein national and regional KBPIOs are part in their formulations as members, advisers, researchers, supporters or resource persons
2.2.	Objective	The program intends to **strengthen the role and capabilities** of **national and regional KBPIOs** in **inclusive knowledge co-production processes** by engaging with stakeholders across sectors, locations and countries on water, climate and energy issues and their interlinkages.	National and regional Knowledge based policy influence orrganisations (KBPIOs)	National and regional KBPIOs learn to design inclusive knowledge co-production processes.	National and regional KBPIOs produce high quality and inclusive knowledge.	National and regional KBPIOs use the insights from high quality and inclusive knowledge to inform policy discussions.	2.2-1	Number of policy-oriented knowledge products developed by national and regional KBPIOs to inform policy processes
2.3.	Objective	The program intends to **enhance the capacity for networking** of **national** and **regional KBPIOs** and build the **capacity of young professionals** in delivering research and communicating and engaging with policy processes.	National and regional Knowledge based policy influence orrganisations (KBPIOs) and Mekong's young professionals	National and regional KBPIOs express interest to form a network. Young professionals participate in capacity building activities (fellowships, trainings, mentoring, etc.) on research, policy engagement or communications	National and regional KBPIOs actively initiate and/or lead in networking activities. Young professionals apply learnings on research, policy engagement or communications that they obtained from the program in their project activities.	Network members coordinate and/or collaborate among themselves to influence policy processes. Young professionals contribute to the influencing of policy processes.	2.3-1	Number of collaborations of network members of national and regional KBPIOs to influence policy processes (beyond individual study/projects)
							2.3-2	Number of policy processes being contributed to by young professionals as members, advisers, researchers, supporters or resource persons

Mekong Think Tank Program
Indicators and Output Metrics
Version: 16-Dec-22

Annex F-2

Level Code	Result Level	Result statement	Indicator No.	Indicators	Baseline	End of Program Target	Relevant output metrics (to be reported only)
0	Long-term Goal	**Contribute to improved and more equitable water and energy security, adaptation and mitigation to climate change in the Mekong Region for the benefit of all, especially the marginalized, vulnerable and at-risk communities.**	0				
1	End of Program Outcome	**Water, energy and climate research and policy interfaces are robust and more inclusive, resulting in more effective and equitable policies, which are cross-sectoral, informed by evidence, and are responding to the needs of vulnerable groups.**	1-1	Number of national and regional policy, practice, plan or action in the Mekong region on water security, energy security and climate change mitigation and adaptation supported with infromation gathered or generated from research	0	5	- Number and List of relevant policy documents
2.1.	Objective	The program intends to strengthen the **role and effectiveness** of **national and regional KBPIOs** in engaging with national and regional **policy processes on** water and energy security and climate change mitigation and adaptation.	2.1-1	Number of policy processes wherein national and regional KBPIOs are part in their formulations as members, advisers, researchers, supporters or resource persons	0	8	- Number of national KPBPIOs involved in policy processes - Number of regional KBPIOs involved in policy processes - Number of policy-related events attended by KBPIO members
2.2.	Objective	The program intends to **strengthen the role and capabilities** of **national and regional KBPIOs** in **inclusive knowledge co-production processes** by engaging with stakeholders across sectors, locations and countries on water, climate and energy issues and their interlinkages.	2.2-1	Number of policy-oriented knowledge products developed by national and regional KBPIOs to inform policy processes	0	10	- Number of research/studies implemented - Number of knowledge products by category (peer review articles, policy brief, report, paper, etc.) - List of authors (disagregated by gender and country) - Number of young professionals (fellow and non-fellow) contributing to the research/studies (disagregated by gender and country)
2.3.	Objective	The program intends to **enhance the capacity for networking** of **national** and **regional KBPIOs** and build the **capacity of young professionals** in delivering research and communicating and engaging with policy processes.	2.3-1	Number of collaborations of network members of national and regional KBPIOs to influence policy processes beyond their individual study/projects	0	3	- Number of KBPIO network members (disagregated by gender and country) - Number of capacity building events - Number of KBPIO network participants attended capacity building events (disagregated by gender and country)
			2.3-2	Number of policy processes being contributed to by young professionals as members, advisers, researchers, supporters or resource persons	0	5	- Number of fellows (disagregated by gender and country) - Number of fellows trained (disagregated by gender and country)

MEKONG THINK TANKS RISK REGISTER

Program Risk Register

Annex G

Investment Name:	**Mekong Think Tanks**		**Aidworks Number:**
Date of Last Review:	**29-Aug-22**	**Date of Next Review:**	**Country:** Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, Vietnam
Investment Manager:	**SEI**	**Delegate:**	**Sector/s:**
Objective/s:	1. Enhance the role and effectiveness of national and regional KBPIOs in the policy engagement process in the area of water security, energy security and climate change mitigation and adaptation. 2. Strengthen the role and capability of national and regional KBPIOs in inclusive knowledge co-production process by engaging stakeholders across sectors, locations and countries on water, climate and energy issues and their interlinkages. 3. Enhance capacity for networking and cross-learning among regional and national KBPIOs and capacity of young professionals as agents of change in delivering research, policy engagement and communications. 4. Perform effective program management, Monitoring Evaluation and Learning (MEL), strategic communications and partnerships for long-term sustainability.		

Risk Category	Risk Event - what could happen	Risk Source/s - what could cause the event to happen	Risk Impact/s - what would happen if the event occurs?	Risk Owner - Who is responsible for ensuring this risk is managed?	Risk rating before any controls			Existing Controls (what's currently in place?)	Current/ Residual Risk Rating			Proposed Treatments (If no further treatment required or available, please explain why)	Person Responsible for Implementing Treatment/s	Implementation Date for Proposed Treatment/s	Target rating when Proposed Treatments are in place			Does this risk need to be escalated?
					Likelihood (refer to matrix)	Consequence (refer to matrix)	Risk Rating (refer to matrix)		Likelihood (refer to matrix)	Consequence (refer to matrix)	Risk Rating (refer to matrix)				Likelihood (refer to matrix)	Consequence (refer to matrix)	Risk Rating (refer to matrix)	
							-				-						-	
Operating environment	Policy stakeholders cannot easily access the policy recommendations of KBPIOs due to a lack of opportunities to dialogue or share	Political instability, limited space of policy engagement/dialogue in national level, restrictions due to COVID	Challenge is achieving outputs and objectives of the program	Component 3 Lead and Co-lead	Possible	Moderate	Medium	The program is currently working with regional platforms and stakeholders, to provide opportunities for policy dialogues.	Unlikely	Moderate	Medium	The program will develop country-specific engagement and communications strategies that will identify avenues in the policy process for effective engagement (including online and social media). In addition, the program will create own engagement platforms and opportunities at national and regional levels	Component 3 Lead and Co-lead	Q1-Q2 2023	Rare	Moderate	Low	No
Operating environment	Persisting restrictions of travel and gathering due to COVID pandemic	Increasing COVID infection in the target countries	Challenges in organisation of meetings and policy dialogue events	Program Manager	Possible	Moderate	Medium	The program team is already familiar to online platforms and tools for virtual engagement. Almost all meetings with co-applicants have been organised	Possible	Moderate	Medium	The program will develop alternative plans which use hybrid approach (i.e., online and offline activity delivery).	Program Manager	Q1 2023	Rare	Moderate	Low	No
Operating environment	Government agencies do not support project promotion initiatives	There has been no engagement in the initial stage of the program to target government agencies	Challenge is achieving outputs and objectives of the program	Component 1 and 3 Lead and Co-lead	Unlikely	Major	Medium	The program discusses this risk with co-applicants which represent all target countries, seek appropriate strategy to mitigate the risk	Unlikely	Moderate	Medium	Draw upon strong existing and develop further bilateral relationships with key government representatives to ensure their support and buy-in of the activities at the outset and throughout the project Involve relevant government authorities in project activities and awareness-raising sessions to increase their understanding and support of the project Develop an advocacy strategy to define the most appropriate engagement strategy with government authoritie	Component 1 and 3 Lead and Co-lead	Q1 2023	Rare	Moderate	Low	No
Operating environment	Low rate of female young professionals, researchers, and KBPIOs to engage with program activities due to different power relations	Target KBPIOs doesn't understand the purpose of the program	Challenge is achieving outputs and objectives of the program	Component 1,2,3 and 4 Lead and Co-lead, Program Manager	Possible	Moderate	Medium	The program conveys the purpose of the program clearly to the co-applicant and counterparts, so at least they will be able to ensure more participation	Unlikely	Moderate	Medium	The program will set specific criteria for granting and recruitment process to improve the gender balance of direct beneficiaries of the program.	Component 1,2,3 and 4 Lead and Co-lead, Program Manager	Q1 2023	Rare	Moderate	Low	No
Operating environment	Lack of participation of non-target country's stakeholders (ie. Myanmar and China)	Participation of such stakeholder is not supported by the program	Less relevant and effective policy engagement at the regional level	Component 1 and 3 Lead and Co-lead, Program Director, Program Manager	Likely	Moderate	High	The program discusses this risk with DFAT, co-applicants and counterparts, seeking appropriate strategy or ways to still involve relevant stakeholder	Possible	Moderate	Medium	The program will identify opportunity and other resources to support participation of non-target country's stakholder, while keeping DFAT informed	Component 1 and 3 Lead and Co-lead, Program Director, Program Manager	Q1 2023	Possible	Minor	Medium	No
Partner capacity and relations	Lack of commitment and active engagement from KBPIOs in activities delivered by the program	Lack of participatory approach in the engagement with program	Challenge is achieving outputs and objectives of the program	Component 1 Lead and Co-lead, Program Manager	Possible	Major	High	Close engagement during program design and planning with co-applicants and counterparts which are mostly key KBPIOs in the region	Unlikely	Major	Medium	The program will involve other potential KBPIOs in the design, planning, and delivery of activities to ensure commitment and active participation.	Component 1 Lead and Co-lead, Program Manager	Q4 2022	Rare	Major	Medium	No

MEKONG THINK TANKS RISK REGISTER

Risk Category	Risk Event - what could happen	Risk Source/s - what could cause the event to happen	Risk Impact/s - what would happen if the event occurs?	Risk Owner - Who is responsible for ensuring this risk is managed?	Risk rating before any controls			Existing Controls (what's currently in place?)	Current/ Residual Risk Rating			Proposed Treatments (If no further treatment required or available, please explain why)	Person Responsible for Implementing Treatment/s	Implementation Date for Proposed Treatment/s	Target rating when Proposed Treatments are in place			Does this risk need to be escalated?
					Likelihood (refer to matrix)	Consequence (refer to matrix)	Risk Rating (refer to matrix)		Likelihood (refer to matrix)	Consequence (refer to matrix)	Risk Rating (refer to matrix)				Likelihood (refer to matrix)	Consequence (refer to matrix)	Risk Rating (refer to matrix)	
Partner capacity and relations	Different capacities among target KBPIOs	Different level of knowledge, experience and qualified human resource availability in the country	Challenges in quality of participation and engagement among target KBPIOs	Component 1 and 4 Lead and Co-lead, Program Manager	Likely	Moderate	High	The program is currently delivering scoping study to understand the level of capacity of target KBPIOs. The program is also discussing with co-applicants on their capacity needs and what they can share to support other KBPIOs	Possible	Moderate	Medium	The program will deliver capacity building activities based on the needs of the think tank.	Component 1 and 4 Lead and Co-lead, Program Manager	Q2 2023	Unlikely	Moderate	Medium	No
Fiduciary and fraud	Fraud/corruption issues arise	Behavior of staff or partner that deviates from agreed code of conduct and fraud control strategy	Loss of budget value and reputational damage	Program Director, Program Manager	Unlikely	Major	Medium	Communicate code of conduct and program's fraud control strateygy to all involved staff, co-applicants and counter parts and ensure they agree to comply.	Unlikely	Major	Medium	Ensure quality financial and procurement processes are in place Clear disciplinary procedures initiated where misuse of funds/fraud is found Partnership agreements stipulate financial management requirements Relevant staff trained on all aspects of compliance Proactively share information on fraud with donors Annual audit of partners' accounts and a commitment to addressing auditors' findings	Program Director, Program Manager	Q3 2022	Rare	Moderate	Low	No
Political	There is negative perception and lack of trust of policy stakeholder on KBPIOs due to political factors	Lack of participatory approach in the engagement with program	Challenge is achieving outputs and objectives of the program	Component 1 and 3 Lead and Co-lead, Program Manager	Possible	Moderate	Medium	The current co-applicants and counterparts are organisations with good reputation	Unlikely	Minor	Low	The program will prioritise to engage with KBPIOs with current good standing and develop country-specific engagement and communications strategies to anticipate political dynamics that may jeopardise our approach	Component 1 and 3 Lead and Co-lead, Program Manager	Q1 2023	Rare	Moderate	Low	No
Political	Political sensitivity and instability in the target countries	Policitical dynamics in the country, such as election and other political events	Challenge is achieving outputs and objectives of the program	Component 3 Lead and Co-lead	Unlikely	Moderate	Medium	The program discuss this risk with co-applicants which represent all target countries, seek appropriate strategy to mitigate the risk	Unlikely	Minor	Low	The program will optimise engagement at the regional level	Component 3 Lead and Co-lead	Q1 2023	Rare	Minor	Low	No
Resources, management and planning	Frequent project staff turnover, including of key experienced staff leading to delays and capacity gaps	Lack of opportunities for career development and interesting remuneration packages, and also matching job position with qualification and interest	Delays in activities implementation	Program Director, Program Manager	Possible	Minor	Medium	The program ensures matching job position with the qualifications of the staff, also clear job description.	Unlikely	Minor	Low	Strong recruitment procedures and staff retention policy in place Competitive remuneration packages to retain staff Annual appraisal and regular performance review and continuous professional development to enhance staff loyalty Codes of conduct in place to support staff to adhere to organisational policies	Program Director, Program Manager	Q3 2022	Rare	Minor	Low	No
Resources, management and planning	Major fluctuations in exchange rates and/or prices of goods to be procured	Global uncertainties	Loss of budget value	Program Director, Program Manager	Possible	Moderate	Medium	Realistic budgeting and costing	Possible	Moderate	Medium	Monthly budget vs actual review of expenditure and exchange rates Close financial management support to partners to manage fluctuations Regular price monitoring for key commodities Approach donor for budget revisions if necessary	Program Director, Program Manager	Q3 2022	Unlikely	Minor	Low	No
Environment and social safeguards	GHG emission from activities conducted by the program	Events and meetings need to be organised or participated by the program	Increasing GHG emission	Program Director, Program Manager	Likely	Minor	Medium	Apply SEI Environmental Management Policy and request co-applicant and counterparts to share similar policisies in the organisation. Limit regional design and planning meetings to online or hybrid meetings.	Possible	Minor	Medium	The program will develop alternative plans which use hybrid approach (i.e., online and offline activity delivery).	Program Director, Program Manager	Q3 2022	Possible	Limited	Low	No
Environment and social safeguards	Program activities cause harm to the stakeholders and target beneficiaries	Unanticipated effects or impacts to the program activities	Reputational damage and loss of trust	Program Director, Program Manager	Possible	Major	High	Apply SUMERNET Conflict Sensitivity Guidelines and Research Ethics Review Process	Unlikely	Major	Medium	Deliver trainings on Do No Harm approach to all co-applicants, counterparts, fellows and stakeholders involved in the program	Program Director, Program Manager, Component 4 Lead and Co-lead	Q1 2023	Rare	Moderate	Low	No