

## Mekong Thought Leadership & Think Tanks Network Program

### GUIDE ON FINAL PROGRESS REPORTING For Flagship Studies and Rapid Response Projects

(Ver.3 15 May 2025)

#### 1. Introduction:

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.

#### 2. Requirements for Progress Reporting:

Report content	
1	An <b>executive summary outlines progress toward EOPOs and intermediate outcomes (set in the project proposal)</b> , factors affecting the achievement of these outcomes, as well as management implications and recommendations.
2	Relevant external changes in the grant operating context, including the political economy, are outlined.
3	An <b>evidence-based assessment of the progress</b> toward achieving sustained EOPOs and supporting intermediate outcomes is presented.
4	Dissemination of key outputs or findings is outlined, and the <b>effectiveness and efficiency of key deliverables are assessed by project team</b> .

5	The <b>positive benefit/impacts to socially marginalized communities (women, people with disability, low-income families, ethnic minorities, etc.)</b> are clearly outlined, and efforts to address MTT Water/Energy/Climate Change Nexus, including GEDSI, are explicitly highlighted.
6	The progress made toward the project's budget plan is assessed. Efforts to <b>use resources efficiently and cost-effectively</b> are clearly outlined, highlighting the demonstration of <b>Value for Money (VfM)</b> .
7	An assessment of the likely sufficiency of planned inputs to achieve the expected EOPOs and key intermediate outcomes is provided, taking into account potential risks, such as sustainability risks.
8	An assessment on the project's <b>knowledge co-production processes</b> : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Strategy to involve diverse stakeholder</u>: how inclusive and effective it is.</li> <li>• <u>Composition of stakeholders in the processes</u> (who involved: from government authorities at which level/agency, CSOs, local community, socially marginalized groups, etc.)</li> <li>• <u>Evidence</u> such as list of participants, minutes of meeting, photos, interviews, video records.</li> </ul>
9	An assessment on the project's policy influence processes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Strategy to inclusive and effective policy interfaces</u>.</li> <li>• <u>Description of processes</u> (specific policy target, stakeholders/policy influencers/policy makers, results, etc.)</li> <li>• <u>Evidence</u> such as media post, minutes of meeting, photos, interviews, video records, etc.</li> </ul>
10	An assessment on contributions of <b>early and mid-career professionals</b> in the project: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brief <u>background</u> of early and mid-career professional members.</li> <li>• Their <u>roles and responsibilities</u>.</li> <li>• The <u>depth of their engagement</u>, how it is beneficial to the project implementation.</li> <li>• <u>Records of their contributions</u> to project's policy influencing activities.</li> </ul>
11	Key <b>governance, management, and implementation</b> of project consortium members/partners, including risk management systems, are described, and their performance is assessed.
13	The report highlights <b>key lessons learned</b> from implementation that may have significant broader implications.

14	A summary of previous and/or proposed <b>management actions</b> or <b>recommendations</b> is provided.
15	<b>All deliveries/outputs</b> within the reporting period (referred to <u>Grant Agreement's TOR</u> )
<b>Considerations throughout the report</b>	
A	The report provides balanced reporting of <b>positive and negative issues</b> , achievements, and challenges
B	<b>Strong evidence</b> is provided for claims of achievement & shortcomings/challenges
C	Reports are written in plain language and use a range of presentation formats that effectively and efficiently <b>communicate important information</b> , such as photos, graphs, etc.

### 3. Key Considerations:

#### 3.1 Contribution to MTT Theory of Change:

Grantees are expected to familiarise themselves with MTT Program's Theory of Change (See Annex 1). It will also be useful the progress report indicates how the project contribute to MTT's EOPO and its objectives.

#### 3.2 Risk Management

It will be useful to present in the report the status of risks identified during the proposal designing stage and appropriate controls and treatment actions in place to address these. An updated Risk Register may be presented as Annex to the progress report

#### 3.3 Reporting Format:

Grantees are required to use a reporting format that's relevant to their projects's specific needs and purposes. The report should be no more than 50 pages, excluded annexes. A suggested report format is presented in Annex 1. Grantees are recommended to use this if they find this relevant.

#### 3.4 Contribute Most Significant Change (MSC) Stories:

MTT Program is interested to capture positive changes that occur as an effect of our granting. For more information on how to collect MSC stories, please see Annex 2: MSC Guideline for MTT Program's Supported Partner

#### 3.5 Contribution to GEDSI

Grantees will be requested to disaggregate data by gender, age, disability, and ethnicity, as much as possible. M&E framework of your project should enable the tracking of the intended

and unintended gender equality and inclusion dimensions of the grant, including changes in GEDSI norms and behaviour, monitoring of disability inclusion, and identifying actions to improve and address unintended consequences and risks.

For a more extensive guidance on GEDSI, please see Annex 3.

### **3.6 Compliance Checker:**

The Progress Report will be reviewed and assessed against MTT Grant Reporting Compliance Checker, in Annex 4.

## Annex 1: Progress Report Template/Checklist:

Part	Brief Description
<b>1. Executive Summary</b>	A stand-alone communication piece that includes a brief description of <b>what the investment is, what it desires to achieve</b> , and progress made so far. It <b>provides sufficient context for an unfamiliar reader</b> , key achievements in relation to outcomes, and lessons learned.
<b>2. Introduction</b>	This provides an <b>overall operating context for the project implementation period</b> and what the delivery partner sets to achieve.
<b>3. Context</b>	This provides <b>an overview of the changes</b> in social, technological, economic, environmental, political, legal, and ethical environment in terms of threats and opportunities impacting the investment in the short, medium, and long term.
<b>4. Results</b>	<p>This section reports on what has been achieved against end of investment outcomes, intermediate outcomes, and outputs, based on the assigned indicators from the investment's theory of change or logical framework.</p> <p>The section also shows the significant results in gender and social inclusion, as well as climate change, environment, and disaster preparedness and management.</p>
<b>4.1. Project Activities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A description of all activities implemented to achieve the outputs.</li> <li>• How these activities have contributed towards the intermediate outcomes and the end of investment outcomes whenever possible.</li> <li>• Supporting documents: meeting agenda, reports, list of participants, photos of activity, etc.</li> </ul>
<b>4.2. Progress/Achievement against project outcomes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Statement of project <b>Theory of Change and Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Framework</b> (set in the project proposal)</li> <li>• What has been achieved against <b>end of project outcome</b>: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Statement of the end of project outcome set by project.</li> <li>○ Analysis of how the project determines that the end of project outcome have been achieved/progressed.</li> <li>○ Evidence and/or documentation of the achievements.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• What has been achieved against <b>intermediate outcomes</b>: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Statement of intermediate outcomes set by project.</li> <li>○ Analysis of how the project determines that the intermediate outcomes have been achieved.</li> <li>○ Evidence and/or documentation of the achievements.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

<b>4.2.</b> <b>Progress/Achievement against Progress Markers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>At least 6 Most Significant Change Stories</b> are collected and presented in the report, to demonstrate that <b>boundary partners</b> have learned knowledge/skills, applied them during their engagement with the project:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ <b>Policy makers:</b> 2 stories</li><li>▪ <b>Women and/or people with disabilities:</b> 2 stories</li><li>▪ <b>Policy influencer (NGO, media, etc.):</b> 1 story</li><li>▪ <b>Other Community representatives:</b> 1 story</li></ul></li></ul> <table><tr><th>Name of Interviewer</th><th>Category</th><th>Progress</th><th>Date of Collection</th><th>Example of Story</th></tr><tr><td>Ms. xxx</td><td>Policy Maker</td><td>Use project findings to draft action plan at xxx province</td><td>15 May 2025</td><td>“During my work with project xxx, I learned about..., I use that to prepare ..... for....</td></tr><tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr></table>	Name of Interviewer	Category	Progress	Date of Collection	Example of Story	Ms. xxx	Policy Maker	Use project findings to draft action plan at xxx province	15 May 2025	“During my work with project xxx, I learned about..., I use that to prepare ..... for....										
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<b>4.3.</b> <b>Progress/Achievement on Policy Interfaces</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Statement of policy targeted under the project<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Specific policy (<i>for example: Water Resource Management Policy 2025–2035, Decree No. 38/2025/ND-CP on water resource management</i>).</li><li>○ Description of project’s progress/achievement against said policy.</li><li>○ Justification of how/to what extent, the project has influenced the said policy.</li></ul></li><li>• List of policy-related activities/events within the project implementation:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Name of the activity/event</li><li>○ Objectives of the activity/event</li><li>○ Number of participants, including disaggregated information such as man/women/non-binary, position, organization, etc.</li><li>○ Outcomes of the activity/event</li><li>○ Justification of how the activity/event contribute to the project outcomes</li><li>○ Evidence: agenda, report/notes, photos, media</li></ul></li></ul>																				
<b>4.4.</b> <b>Progress/Achievement on GEDSI integration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What have been the project’s efforts/investment to promote GEDSI integration, in terms of:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Capacity of project team members</li><li>○ Capacity/awareness of boundary partners (policy makers, local communities, etc.)</li></ul></li></ul>																				

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Ensure policy interfaces are inclusive and GEDSI-proof</li> <li>• What is the progress/achievement on GEDSI integration, in comparison between beginning and end of project.</li> <li>• Evidence of the claim.</li> </ul>
<b>4.5. Unintended Outcome(s)</b>	This is a special section where the project demonstrates any outcomes <b>that have been achieved outside of the project's original objectives</b> , including unexpected positive or negative changes, ripple effects, or emerging opportunities that were not initially planned but are relevant to the project's impact or learning.
<b>4.5. Progress/achievement against project outputs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What has been achieved against <b>outputs</b> (according to project TOR): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Statement of outputs set by project.</li> <li>○ Analysis of how the project determines that the outputs have been achieved.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Evidence and/or documentation of the achievements (manuscript, other publication, policy brief, PhD thesis, training course, etc.) attached as annexes.</li> </ul>
<b>5. Program Management</b>	<p>Presents updates on <b>management arrangements</b> of the program and a brief summary presentation of resources allocated for the period and actual expenditures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has the project management arrangement changed since the beginning of the implementation? (project personnel, budget allocation, etc.)</li> </ul>
<b>6. Risk Assessment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brief description of the risks for the non-achievement of the End of Project Outcomes and how this will be dealt with by the delivery partner moving forward.</li> <li>• Are there any objectives that have not been achieved? Please provide brief description, including rationale behind it, what could have been done better, and how it has affected the end of project outcome.</li> </ul>
<b>7. Lessons Learned</b>	<p>Presents what the delivery partner has learned, reflecting on the results achieved/not achieved and looking at the overall results of implementation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Balance between positive and negative lesson</li> <li>• How could the project team improve in the future project?</li> </ul>
<b>8. Conclusion</b>	Discusses briefly the report's key highlights and sustainability plan of the project outcomes
<b>9. Annexes</b>	<p>Contains relevant information such as:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tables to support project results</li> <li>Training statistics/Stakeholder engagement statistics</li> <li>Budgets against actual</li> <li>Photos</li> </ol>

	<p>f. Risk Matrix</p> <p>g. Outputs/Deliveries within the reporting period, against the Grant Agreement's TOR</p>
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## Annex 2: Compliance Checklist

No.	Element	Complied?		Comment
		Yes	No	
Report Content				
1	An executive summary outlines progress toward EOPOs and intermediate outcomes (set in the project proposal), factors affecting the achievement of these outcomes, as well as management implications and recommendations.			
2	Relevant changes in the grant operating context, including the political economy, are outlined.			
3	An evidence-based assessment of the progress toward achieving sustained EOPOs and supporting intermediate outcomes is presented.			
4	The exposure of participants to key outputs during this reporting period is outlined, and the effectiveness and efficiency of key deliverables are assessed.			
5	The positive benefit/impacts to socially marginalized communities are clearly outlined, and efforts to address MTT Water/Energy/Climate Change Nexus, including GEDSI, are explicitly highlighted.			
6	The progress made toward the project’s budget plan is assessed. Efforts to use resources efficiently and cost-effectively are clearly outlined, highlighting the demonstration of Value for Money (VfM).			

No.	Element	Complied?		Comment
		Yes	No	
7	An assessment of the likely sufficiency of planned inputs to achieve the expected EOPOs and key intermediate outcomes is provided, taking into account potential risks, such as sustainability risks.			
8	<p>An assessment on the project's knowledge co-production processes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategy to involve diverse stakeholder: how inclusive and effective it is.</li> <li>• Composition of stakeholders in the processes (who involved: from government authorities at which level/agency, CSOs, local community, socially marginalized groups, etc.)</li> <li>• Evidence such as list of participants, minutes of meeting, photos, interviews, video records.</li> </ul>			
9	<p>An assessment on the project's policy interfaces:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategy to inclusive and effective policy interfaces.</li> <li>• Description of processes (specific policy target, stakeholders/policy influencers/policy makers, results, etc.)</li> <li>• Evidence such as media post, minutes of meeting, photos, interviews, video records, etc.</li> </ul>			

No.	Element	Complied?		Comment
		Yes	No	
10	<p>An assessment on contributions of early and mid-career professionals in the project:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brief background of early and mid-career professional members.</li> <li>• Their roles and responsibilities.</li> <li>• The depth of their engagement, how it is beneficial to the project implementation.</li> <li>• Records of their contributions to project's policy influencing activities. If not yet, provide tentative plan to engage early and mid-career professionals in those activities in the remaining period of the project.</li> </ul>			
11	Key governance, management, and implementation of project consortium members/partners, including risk management systems, are described, and their performance is assessed.			
<b>Considerations Throughout the Report</b>				
12	The report provides balanced reporting of positive and negative issues, achievements, and challenges			
13	Strong evidence is provided for claims of achievement or barriers to achievement			
14	Reports are written in plain language and use a range of presentation formats that effectively and efficiently			

No. Element				
		Complied?		Comment
		Yes	No	
	communicate important information			

# **Most Significant Change (MSC) Technique Guideline**

## **For Supported Partners under the Mekong Thought Leadership and Think Tanks Network (MTT) Program**

(Version: 2 October 2023)

This document serves as a general guideline for implementing Most Significant Change (MSC) Technique required for supported projects under MTT Program. For more details on MSC Technique, please refer to Davies and Dart (2005), link given below.

### **A. Definition**

The Most Significant Change technique is a qualitative and participatory form of monitoring and evaluation based on the collection and systematic selection of stories of reported behavioral changes as result from development activities.

### **B. Benefit**

- It is an effective tool for identifying behavioral change.
- It is a good means in identifying unexpected change.
- It is a good way to clearly identify the values that prevail in an organization and to have a practical discussion about which of those values is the most important.
- It is a participatory form of monitoring that requires no special professional skills. Compared to other monitoring approaches, it is easy to communicate across cultures. There is no need to explain what an indicator is. Everyone can tell stories about events they think were important.
- It encourages analysis as well as data collection because people have to explain why they believe one change is more important than another.
- It can build staff capacity in analyzing data and conceptualizing impact.
- It can deliver a rich picture of what is happening, rather than an overly simplified picture where organizational, social and economic developments are reduced to a single number.
- It can be used to monitor and evaluate bottom-up initiatives that do not have predefined outcomes against which to evaluate.

### **C. Process**

#### **1. Identify target stakeholders or boundary partners**

Boundary partners are those individuals, groups, or organizations with whom the program interacts directly and with whom the program can anticipate opportunities for influence. These actors are called boundary partners because, even though the program will work with them to effect change, it does not control them. The power to influence development rests with them. In

the case of MTT Program, boundary partners are most-likely policy stakeholders whom you intend to directly engage to influence relevant policy processes. They could be stakeholders from government, private/commercial companies, and civil society. In the MSC survey, select most accessible and strategic boundary partners.

## 2. Determine the domain of change

Domains are broad and often fuzzy categories of possible significant change stories. A domain of change is not an indicator; it is defined broadly to allow people to have different interpretations of what constitutes a change in that area. In the case of MTT Program, our domain of interest is the policy influence by your project as follow up of your research and policy engagement activities with the respective boundary partner.

## 3. Define reporting period

Most applications of MSC have been as a form of monitoring. Monitoring involves periodic collection of information, but the frequency of monitoring varies across programs and organizations. In this MTT Program, depending on the scope of expected change, the reporting period ranges from 6 - 12 months.

## 4. Collecting significant change stories

The central part of MSC is asking open-ended questions to boundary partners. There are various ways to formulate the questions, however in this conference support program, the suggested key questions are as follows:

1. *“Thinking back about when you start to involve in our project, since [period] months ago, what do you think has been the most significant change in your personal and professional aspects as a result of your involvement?”*
2. *“Why do you feel that change is most significant?”*

Since our domain of change focuses on policy influence, please add the third question:

3. *“Please mention any influence of our project on your work due to our engagement”*

Since the stories will need to be supported by information about the respondent and collection specific information (name, designation/role, institution, country, date of collection, place, etc.), will be also required to be collected. Please consider using the suggested MSC Questionnaire template enclosed with this guideline. The collection of the survey can be done in various ways, through face-to-face interviews, email responses, phone calls, or other appropriate means which will better ensure the response.

## 5. Formulate the stories

From the collection of responses from the key questions, the information is then arranged into stories. The stories should be written in a personal way as if the person him/herself wrote the stories. The following are two examples of the MSC stories:

#### Example 1

*“In the past year that I’ve been involved with your team, the most significant change is in my capacity as a researcher. I became much more familiar with wetland ecosystems in dry deciduous forests in Cambodia and Vietnam. I also have new working relationships with colleagues in Cambodia and Vietnam which will be very useful for me in my future work.”*

(Mr. T, Director of Research Institute Vietnam, 20 November 2019)

#### Example 2

*“The lessons from the project are useful for my work. In my work in this district, I can use the knowledge when we develop the investment plan, which is now underway. The investment strategic plan elaborated on where we should have factories, agriculture, livestock raising, and where to develop irrigation system. We are now developing the five-year socio-economic development plan. We are now making a village plan for the pilot villages. Lessons from this project can be used when we develop the village plan. There are currently two villages that the village plans are being completed. Later on, it will be expanded to other villages”.*

(Ms. L, Planning division of Luang Namtha District, Lao PDR, 18 March 2018).

### 6. Verify stories

Since formulation of stories is done by you, it is useful to have another step which purpose is to confirm accuracy of your perception of the feedback by the respondent. The way to verify is simply by sharing the draft story to respective respondent and request their confirmation whether the story reflects correctly on their actual feelings. Consequently, respondent may also suggest modification of his/her story. Nevertheless, due to possible time constraints, it is left to the discretion of the organizer on the need for this verification process.

#### Sources:

Davies, J. and J. Dart. 2005. The ‘Most Significant Change’ (MSC) Technique - A Guide to Its Use. CARE International. United Kingdom. Available online at: <http://www.mande.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2005/MSCGuide.pdf>. Retrieved on: 22 May 2014.

Serrat, O. 2009. *The Most Significant Change Technique*. Knowledge Solutions. Asian Development Bank. Available online at: <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/27613/most-significant-change.pdf>. Retrieved on: 15 January 2020.

### Most Significant Change Questionnaire [Suggested template]

Date :

Name :

E-mail :

Organisation :

Position :

Please answer the following questions:

1. Thinking back about when you start to involve in our project, since **[period]** months ago, what do you think has been the most significant change in your personal and professional aspects as a result of your involvement??

2. Why is this change significant to you?

3. Please mention any influence of our project on your work due to our engagement?

*Thank you very much for your valuable reflection*



# Mekong Thought Leadership and Think Tanks Network Program (MTT): Flagship Study and Rapid Response Projects Guidance Note

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### 1. Introduction

#### 1.1 What is this Guidance Note for?

This guidance note (GN) is designed for the MTT Flagship Study and Rapid Response Projects to address gender equality, disability inclusion, and social inclusion (GEDSI). The note provides clear expectations, guidance and contextual information to support a comprehensive understanding of GEDSI in the Water-Energy-Climate Nexus across the Lower Mekong Basin countries. In applying a GEDSI lens, projects will effectively mainstream a GEDSI perspective into their projects,<sup>1</sup> ensuring that the overarching objectives of inclusivity and equity core to the MTT program are also reflected in project work.

#### 1.2 Who should use this Guidance Note?

Flagship Studies and Rapid Response Projects, to meet MTT and DFAT requirements, are asked to understand **who** the GEDSI-related actors are, **what** the GEDSI-related barriers, challenges, and/or issues are in the WEC nexus context of their projects, and indicate **how** they will logically, consistently, appropriately, and feasibly incorporate a GEDSI lens throughout their research and project work. These expectations aim to ensure a GEDSI-aware approach and that, as a minimum, the 'do-no-harm' principle is upheld.

#### 1.3 Why is this needed?

The Long-term Goal of the Mekong Thought Leadership and Think Tanks Network Program (MTT) 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.”**

Aligned to this, and more concretely, the *End of Program Outcome* is that **“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.”**<sup>2</sup> Evident in these aims is that MTT’s focus on research and policy at the Water-Energy-Climate nexus is not only to contribute to enhanced *effectiveness* but equally to enhanced *inclusiveness* in policy processes and *equity* in policy and its outcomes.

To set up for success on this Goal and Outcome, MTT has committed to: *“The research sponsored, synthesized and recommendations that flow from it [being] gender (and socially) responsive or transformative.”*<sup>3</sup> Similarly, it has committed to *“Policy interfaces/processes [being] gender and socially-inclusive.”*<sup>4</sup> As such, **all research and policy engagement within MTT needs to integrate**

<sup>1</sup> Mainstreaming approaches refer to integrating and incorporating specific considerations or issues into the mainstream or core activities, policies, and practices of a project Program, organisation, or society. It involves incorporating these considerations as a fundamental part of decision-making processes rather than treating them as separate or peripheral concerns. The goal of mainstreaming these issues or considerations is to create sustainable and long-lasting change, where equity, inclusion, or sustainability becomes an integral part of the normative practices and decision-making processes rather than an isolated or peripheral concern.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, pg 13.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, pg 9. As per the Program Design document (pg 9), the third prongs of its commitments on GEDSI is: 3. *Development of regional network/alliance of KBPIOs (membership, composition, processes) itself: Catalysing results and role modelling inclusion.*

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, pg 9.

**(mainstream) a Gender Equality, Disability, and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) lens consistently and appropriately** across all aspects of their work.

Flagship Studies and Rapid Response Projects are asked to meet GEDSI-related MTT program objectives and DFAT requirements and policies. Text box 1 (below) identifies the key DFAT strategies and approaches for consideration.

#### **Text box 1: DFAT Strategies and Approaches for GEDSI<sup>5</sup>**

- DFAT Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Strategy:  
<https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/gender-equality-and-womens-empowerment-strategy.pdf>
- DFAT Development for All 2015-2020: Strategy for Strengthening disability-inclusive Development in Australia's aid program:  
<https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/development-for-all-2015-2020.pdf>
- Gender Equality, Disability, and Social Inclusion Analysis Good Practice Note:  
<https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/gender-equality-disability-social-inclusion-analysis-good-practice-note.pdf>
- Disability Inclusion in the DFAT Development Program Good Practice Note (April 2021):  
[www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/disability-inclusive-development-guidance-note.pdf](http://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/disability-inclusive-development-guidance-note.pdf)

## **2. Key GEDSI issues and approaches in the Lower Mekong Basin WEC Nexus**

### **2.1 Key GEDSI issues in the Lower Mekong Basin WEC Nexus**

**Gender equality** refers to the equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities of women, men, girls, boys, and people of other genders. **Gender equity** and wider equality are achieved when the different behaviors, aspirations, and needs of all people are equally valued and accounted for.

The term '**people with disabilities**' is conceptualized as including those with episodic or long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments which, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.<sup>6</sup>

**Disabilities = impairments + barriers**

**Impairments** may limit an individual's personal or social functioning compared to those who do not share the same impairment (characteristic or condition, such as hearing and/or vision impairment, developmental delay, or physical impairment). Impairments can be visible and permanent, and they can also be invisible and temporary, which can make identifying and including people experiencing impairments difficult.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Please see Section 3 of the full GEDSI Guidance Note for Flagship Study and Rapid Response Projects for additional details

<sup>6</sup> From DFAT's Development for All 2015–2020 May 2015 Strategy (available at: <https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/development-for-all-2015-2020.pdf>): The reference to disability is based on the characterisation of persons with a disability in Article 1 of the CRPD. The term 'episodic' has been added by DFAT in line with the 'evolving concept of disability' referred to in the Preamble (e).

<sup>7</sup> From DFAT's Development for All 2015–2020 May 2015 Strategy (available at: <https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/development-for-all-2015-2020.pdf>): While prevention of impairments (for example, avoidable blindness and road safety activities) remains an important public health objective, it is outside the scope of disability-inclusive development as set out in this strategy and recognised in the mid-term review of Development for All: L. Kelly and L. Wapling, *Development for All Mid-Term Review Report*, October 2012, p. 31, 65, viewed 23 January 2015, <<http://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Pages/development-for-all-strategy-mid-term-review.aspx>>.

The full inclusion of people with impairments in society can be inhibited by attitudinal and/or societal **barriers** (such as stigma), physical and/or environmental barriers (such as stairs), and policy and/or systemic barriers, creating a disabling effect.

**Disability-inclusive development** promotes effective development by recognizing that, like all members of a population, people with disabilities are both beneficiaries and agents of development. An inclusive approach seeks to identify and address barriers that prevent people with disabilities from participating in and benefiting from development. The explicit inclusion of people with disabilities as active participants in development processes leads to broader benefits for families and communities, reduces the impacts of poverty, and positively contributes to a country's economic growth. People with disabilities are the most significant and most disadvantaged minority in the world.

**Social inclusion** encompasses groups that are socially marginalized or have inequitable access or control of resources to fully participate in, and benefit from, development processes. The Mekong sub-region is home to diverse peoples, including Indigenous peoples/ethnic minorities, who are often the poorest of the poor within their countries.<sup>8</sup> The percentage of the population regarded as Indigenous or an ethnic minority varies considerably from country to country<sup>9</sup>.

## 2.2 Key GEDSI approaches in the Lower Mekong Basin WEC Nexus

### A GEDSI-aware approach:

- Aims to understand risks to women and people of diverse genders, people with disabilities, and socially marginalized groups when undertaking a project;
- Project activities do not exacerbate existing inequities or exclusion practices.

### The 'do-no-harm' principle:

- Ensures that initiatives, at a minimum, do not pose undue risks to local people and marginalized community members and do not jeopardize their livelihoods or well-being.
- When socially marginalized groups and their interests are ignored, projects unwillingly contribute to and exacerbate the conditions that perpetuate poverty and exclusion.

Meaningful engagement of women, men, and people with disabilities in a project requires understanding these barriers and proactive measures to address them. Strategies to meet with GEDSI groups need to be tailored to their needs and roles. Something as simple as the time of day and location of where project activities are held can be designed to allow for women's inclusion. Consulting with diverse women and people with disabilities may require alternative approaches and different modalities, and projects are encouraged to consider how to engage women and gender-diverse people in the various stages of their projects.

**Intersectionality** acknowledges that everyone has their own unique experiences of discrimination and oppression and that we must consider everything and anything that can marginalize people, including gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, and physical ability. An **intersectional GEDSI lens** supports projects to address this complexity, recognizing different experiences result in

<sup>8</sup> Errico, S. (2017). The rights of indigenous peoples in Asia: Human rights-based overview of national legal and policy frameworks against the backdrop of country strategies for development and poverty reduction. Geneva and Bangkok: International Labour Organization. (page 1).

<sup>9</sup> 1-1.5% in Thailand and Cambodia; 13.8% in Vietnam; and between 35 and 70% in Laos (see: Errico, S. (2017). The rights of indigenous peoples in Asia: Human rights-based overview of national legal and policy frameworks against the backdrop of country strategies for development and poverty reduction. Geneva and Bangkok: International Labour Organization. (page 3)).

different lived experiences and unique barriers to engaging in water-energy-climate change decision-making and policy development.

Flagship Study and Rapid Research projects are asked to consider how they can best apply an intersectional GEDSI lens to project design and implementation and how multiple identities may lead to barriers to contributing to the project work.

### 3. How to incorporate a GEDSI lens into your project

**Table 1: GEDSI-related Expectations for MTT Projects**

<b>1. GEDSI-related expectation: Understand GEDSI in the project context</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Identify the specific issues of GEDSI groups in the context of water, energy, and climate change in the particular location of the project</li> <li>b. Identify who is at risk of being excluded;</li> <li>c. Identify the barriers to inclusion &amp; equity for these groups;</li> <li>d. Identify how they are involved and represented in the sector and project roles</li> <li>e. Ensure the GEDSI approaches mainstream and target these groups in the project</li> <li>f. Identify how GEDSI issues and initiatives can be tracked throughout the project cycle and integrated into the MEL</li> </ul>	
<b>Delivery/Output:</b> ½ page narrative and stakeholder analysis as a part of risk assessment (see: <a href="#">Worksheet Template 1</a> )	<b>Timeline:</b> With submission of initial project documents as a part of the risk assessment documentation
<b>2. GEDSI-related expectation: Designate a GEDSI focal point internal to project team</b>	
<b>Delivery/Output:</b> Provide contact details of the GEDSI focal point person communicated to the MTT Secretariat.	<b>Timeline:</b> As soon as possible, by May 17 <sup>th</sup> , 2024.
<b>3. GEDSI-related expectation: Participate in GEDSI online training and GEDSI workshops</b>	
<b>Delivery/Output</b> GEDSI focal point and project lead will participate in online training and GEDSI workshops.	<b>Timeline:</b> Online training: May 17 <sup>th</sup> , 2024; GEDSI Workshop: May 31 <sup>st</sup> 2024; Regional forum: Oct 2024 (date TBD)
<b>4. GEDSI-related expectation: Identify project activities to reflect the GEDSI lens</b>	
<b>Delivery/Output:</b> Project table that illustrates how GEDSI fits in with stages of the project, including Theory of Change, Risk analysis, research methodology, MEL, reporting and manuscripts, etc. (see: <a href="#">Worksheet Template 2</a> ) This should use a twin-track approach to address GEDSI mainstreaming and targeted initiatives.	<b>Timeline:</b> Output: 1-to-2-page GEDSI lens plan submitted to SEI within three months after the project start date.
<b>5. GEDSI-related expectation: Demonstrate that the GEDSI lens has been applied through the identification of criteria, indicators, and means of verification</b>	
<b>Delivery/Output:</b> Table linked with or supplementing Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) framework documentation (see <a href="#">Worksheet Template 3</a> ).	<b>Timeline:</b> Throughout the project, reflected in or alongside MEL.