



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

The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) is Switzerland's international cooperation agency within the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs. In collaboration with other federal offices, the SDC is responsible for the overall coordination of development cooperation and humanitarian aid delivered by the Swiss Confederation.

The Swiss international cooperation in the Mekong region comprises of Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Vietnam, and Thailand (the CLMVT countries), with a country focus on Cambodia and Laos. It includes projects with broader outreach in the Mekong region.

The SDC supports development projects in the Mekong region since the 1990s, with the first Swiss cooperation office opening in Hanoi in 1992. In 2006, the SDC opened a cooperation office in Vientiane to oversee Switzerland's development cooperation activities in the country, followed by the establishment of a cooperation office in Phnom Penh in 2012. The SDC Office in Hanoi closed in 2016 after 25 years of development cooperation in the country.

The SDC in the Mekong Region

Switzerland's international cooperation programs in CLMVT aim at reducing poverty, supporting equitable and sustainable development, and fostering participative and democratic governance while improving people's resilience in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and increasing impacts from climate change and disasters.

The SDC's overall goal for the **Mekong Region Cooperation Programme (MRCP) 2022-25** is to 'enable people, in particular young people, women and disadvantaged groups in Cambodia, Laos and the Mekong region to be more prosperous, resilient and better included in development processes'.

This goal shall be achieved through the three following thematic portfolios:

In the **Climate Change and Natural Resource Management (CCNRM)** portfolio, people will have more secure and equitable access to natural resources (land, forest and water) and will be able to manage them sustainably. Implementation of responsive climate change adaptation and mitigation policies will make people more resilient to climate change and disasters.

In the **Inclusive Economic Development (IED)** portfolio, people will have access to quality vocational skills development, employment support and business development services to improve their employment and income opportunities, thus becoming more resilient to economic shocks and crises. Inclusive policies will be developed by policymakers, consulted with the private sector and civil society organizations and implemented together.

In the **Governance and Citizen Participation (GCP)** portfolio, people will benefit from responsive public service delivery and actively engage in local and national governance processes. Inclusive, evidence based and gender-responsive policies and plans will be elaborated and effectively applied into practice.

In addition to the above thematic portfolios, the transversal cross-cutting themes of **Gender Equality and Social Inclusion, Good Governance, and Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation and Disaster Risk Reduction** will consistently be applied throughout the programmes throughout the portfolio, including the support for **COVID-19 Recovery**. The recovery phase will remain a key context feature throughout this MRCP period.

The overall MRCP budget amounts to CHF 133.7 million; with CHF 46.5 million to CCNRM, CHF 46 million allocated to IED, CHF 40 million to GCP, and CHF 1.2 million to other outcomes and interventions. Geographically, CHF 59 million are allocated to Laos, CHF 46.5 million to Cambodia, and CHF 28.2 million to regional projects.

Climate Change and Natural Resource Management

Mekong Region Land Governance (MRLG): (01/2023–12/2025), CHF 8,160,000



MRLG aims to improve land governance in the Mekong Region through alliance-based approaches involving government, civil society, the private sector, and academia. The MRLG promotes more effective land governance policies and practices, particularly emphasizing the recognition of Customary Tenure and Responsible Agricultural Investment. The overall project goal is that smallholder farmers have secured and equitable access to and control over land and forest resources in CLMV countries.

Mekong River Commission (MRC) Implementation of the MRC Strategic Plan 2021-2025: (01/2021-12/2025), CHF 5,300,000



Switzerland supports the Mekong River Commission Secretariat to implement the new Basin Development Strategy (BDS) 2021-2030, the MRC Strategic Plan 2021- 2025 and to coordinate with and provide technical support to CLTV countries and stakeholders. The new BDS is an ambitious strategic shift beyond water resource planning to encompass operational management, including transboundary coordination of operations of dams and other water infrastructures through a more proactive regional planning approach and more effective transboundary cooperation and regional integration.

RECOFTC – Centre for People and Forests: Resilient landscapes for secured rights and prosperous communities: (01.2019-12.2023), CHF 4,325,000



Switzerland contributes to RECOFTC’s Strategic Plan 2018-2023 in CLMV countries. RECOFTC envisions a world where empowered local people are effectively and equitably engaged in the sustainable management of forest landscapes. Its five-year mission is to enhance capacities for stronger rights, improved governance and fairer benefits for local people in sustainable forest landscapes. Through RECOFTC, Switzerland seeks to ensure that smallholder women and men farmers living in or near forests in CLMV countries have secure and equitable access to and control over agricultural land and forest resources.

Inclusive Economic Development

Poverty Reduction through Safe Migration, Skills Development and Enhanced Job Placement in Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Thailand (PROMISE): (09/2021–08/2025), CHF 7,650,000



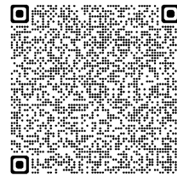
PROMISE promotes skills development and safe migration and improves the livelihoods of the migrants in Thailand and their communities of origin in CLM countries. The last phase of this regional programme will focus on the sustainability and upscaling of support to migrant workers from CLM countries to access skills development and decent employment in Thailand and when returning home. Switzerland addresses their needs with a regional approach together with the International Organisation for Migration, governments and the private sector by strengthening regional and national policies and systems.

ASEAN Swiss TVET Initiative (ASTI): (9/2022 – 2/2026), CHF 4,300,000

Switzerland in collaboration with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and Switzerland have support the government of Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar in strengthening their Technical and Vocational Training System with a strong focus on workplace-based learning in companies. This will allow to equip unemployed youth and low -skilled workers with labour market relevant skills and improve their employability. The ASEAN-Swiss TVET Initiative will also strengthen coordination and exchange on workplace based learning in the region.

Governance and Citizen Participation

Support to Parliamentary Centre of Asia (PCAsia): (04/2021- 12/2024), CHF 3,900,000



PCAsia builds the capacities of Parliaments in ASEAN countries in particular Cambodia and Laos to promote democratic accountability in the region. The Swiss contribution to PCAsia will support the capacity building of professional, non-partisan, ethical and accountable parliamentary services. The project aims to contribute to the improved performance of the target parliaments by strengthening the capacity of parliamentary staff and increasing the intensity of technical exchanges and experience sharing among their regional peers.

Inclusive Water Governance Project in the Mekong Region (IWGP): (11/2020–06/2024), CHF 3,050,000



The IWGP supports water resource governance processes at the sub-national, national and regional levels in the Mekong region to be more inclusive of civil society, women and marginalised social groups. This shall ultimately lead to more sustainable livelihoods of riparian communities through access to river resources and the environmental services they provide. Through this project, Switzerland will support civil society organisations, women and vulnerable communities to better influence water resource governance and decision-making processes at all levels in the Mekong region.



Skill for Tourism Food and Beverage Training Course in Vientiane Capital, Laos.

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