



Greater Mekong Subregion Knowledge Network



Terms of Reference¹

1. Objectives

The objective of the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) Knowledge Network (GMSKN) is to provide expertise, stimulate discussion, and raise awareness on relevant and emerging issues in the GMS. In its first phase of activity, the Knowledge Network also aims to focus on developing and disseminating knowledge that will support -coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic recovery efforts across the subregion. In the long term, the Knowledge Network will help facilitate the process of regional cooperation and integration toward achieving the GMS member countries' shared vision of an integrated, prosperous, sustainable, and inclusive GMS. These objectives will be guided by the GMS Economic Cooperation Program Strategic Framework 2030 (GMS- 2030) and the GMS COVID-19 Response and Recovery Plan.

Specifically, the Knowledge Network aims to:

- Serve as a mechanism to coordinate research findings and policy recommendations;
- Develop, synthesize, and coordinate policy advice on key

GMS-2030 acknowledges the vital role of regional knowledge centers and think tanks and refers to the establishment of a GMS Knowledge Network.

issues leading to greater regional cooperation and supporting economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic;

- Guide on best practice regulatory frameworks on cross-border issues to facilitate all aspects of regional integration;
- Enhance systematic knowledge-sharing among academic and research institutions and think tanks, especially on development experiences and policy lessons;
- Raise the region's voice in the international arena on issues related to integrated, equitable, and sustainable regional growth;
- Strengthen the network members' capacity to generate knowledge such that members can learn from one another and work together across countries; and
- Translate the knowledge produced into concrete government

policies or new information for opportunities for the private sector.

The GMSKN will play an increasingly important role in undertaking and coordinating research, and developing policy briefs at the local, national, and regional levels in the GMS. It will facilitate interaction among academics, researchers, and policy makers. Research studies and workshops carried out by the network will recommend policies and plans of joint action to enhance cooperation among the GMS member countries. The studies and workshops may also identify priority areas and projects for which technical and financial assistance could be provided by development partners and further facilitate the coordination of development partners in the region.

The GMSKN is envisioned to facilitate building of knowledge and capacity in specific development topics related to stimulating economic growth and fostering regional cooperation in the GMS. Such development topics shall be within the scope and aligned with the objectives of the GMS Program and emerging issues of GMS-2030. It will help to enhance the understanding and awareness of policy makers and the public regarding important regional sector and thematic issues. The GMSKN will foster knowledge communities throughout the region and provide learning opportunities on key and priority development topics. It will support GMS members in their development efforts and enhance development partners' ability to respond to their needs in a more effective and timely manner. The GMSKN complies with multilateral principles of political non-interference, as practiced under the framework of ADB.

2. Structure and Working Mechanisms

The structure of the GMSKN shall be based on three main bodies:

The Steering Committee

- Comprises the Mekong Institute (as network coordinator and co-chair), GMS Secretariat, and one knowledge institution from each GMS country (nominated by their respective GMS senior officials and member of the Knowledge Network);
- Will be headed by the chair, who shall be from one of the institutions from GMS countries and shall be appointed on an annual rotational basis. Rotation shall follow the standard alphabetical order of the GMS;
- Comprises GMS country representative officials who are staff or employees of their knowledge institution.

- Will be represented at a senior level (executive director, director, or department head) and a maximum of two officials shall be appointed (principal and alternate);
- Decides based on an absolute majority, except for (i) approving new members to the Knowledge Network; (ii) approving the annual work plan of the Knowledge Network; (iii) clearing final deliverables of the Knowledge Network for disclosure, which shall be decided by consensus;
- Submits to the Senior Officials' Meeting a pending issue for decision and endorsement, when necessary;
- Decides on new members to the network;
- Provides overall guidance to the network coordinator;
- Calls meetings of the General Assembly (at least once a year);
- Agrees on an annual work plan of research priorities to be endorsed by the General Assembly and the GMS senior officials;
- Screens research project proposals, and executes a priority list of possible projects;
- Meets periodically (at least every 6 months) to review progress and decide on unresolved issues;
- Actively participates in fund mobilization for network projects;
- Reports on an annual basis to the Senior Officials' Meeting of the GMS (additional reports can be scheduled, if necessary) and reports to the Ministerial Conference and the Leader's Summit of the GMS, when considered suitable; and
- Communicates mainly by electronic means.

The Network Coordinator

- Should be a member of, and co-chair the Steering Committee;
- Serves as the contact point for the network members, the GMS Secretariat, and third parties;
- Supports the Steering Committee in its meetings and decision-making;
- Processes application of the Knowledge Network's new members;
- Supports the General Assembly in its meetings;
- Processes the development of an annual work plan for the network;
- Undertakes the consultation process with network members, if necessary;
- Steers the process of fund mobilization for financing projects

and research activities;

- Steers the implementation of research projects and activities;
- Facilitates coordination with GMS bodies;
- Monitors and evaluates projects; and
- Develops materials for dissemination namely through the GMS official website.

The General Assembly

- Comprises representatives of all member institutions of the network;
- Assumes the role of open-platform for the exchange of views and information among member institutions;
- Convenes once a year to discuss and provide recommendations on: (i) the annual work plan and type of outputs of the network, (ii) the role of the network in the institutional setup of the GMS, (iii) financing arrangements of the network;
- Officially welcomes new network member institutions.

3. Membership

The GMSKN shall adopt a two-tier membership mechanism:

- The first-tier membership shall be open to any interested public and private research institution willing to contribute toward the priority knowledge and research areas identified by the network. In the initial phase, priority shall be given to institutions from GMS countries. The Steering Committee will decide when to open membership to institutions from non-GMS countries.
- The second-tier membership shall be related to the composition of the Steering Committee, which includes the Mekong Institute, the ADB GMS Secretariat, and one research institution representing each of the six GMS countries.

4. The Network within the GMS Institutional Setup

- Reports through the Steering Committee and the network coordinator yearly to the Senior Officials Meeting of the GMS, and when required, to the GMS Ministerial Conference and/or the GMS Leaders' Summit.
- Collaborates, and when possible, develops joint activities with key bodies of the GMS, namely the sector and thematic working groups and task forces, the Economic Corridor Forum, the

¹ As endorsed by the GMS Senior Officials Meeting of 30 June 2022.



Business Council, the Governor's Forum, and the Development Partners Meeting.

- Provides advisory inputs toward the formulation and review of ADB's Knowledge Plan for the GMS and coordinates its implementation.

5. Implementation and Financing

Outputs and Work Plan

The indicative outputs of the GMSKN will be:

- research and analytical work on various sectoral and thematic priorities (identified through GMS 2030) leading to the production of operational policy studies and discussion papers;
- dissemination of the findings of research and analytical work through workshops, seminars, and conferences via publication and regular updates on the network website;
- training modules and capacity-building activities through individual members of the network. As much as possible, innovative approaches to knowledge generation and sharing shall be adopted to maximize its impact and effectiveness and achieve the objectives of the network.

The GMSKN will develop an annual work plan with a clear list of target activities to be reviewed through the annual meetings of its General Assembly and endorsed by the Steering Committee. The work plan will be aligned with the objectives of the GMS Program and with the emerging issues of GMS-2030. A stock-taking study (to be developed by the network coordinator and

the GMS Secretariat in 2022) highlights the knowledge needs and priorities of the region and describes how the network can contribute to addressing these emerging transboundary issues, including improvement of enabling policies, programs, and processes.

Sustainable Financing

Mekong Institute, as the network coordinator, will initiate the creation of the GMSKN and take responsibility for coordinating the network. The ADB, through its technical assistance program, will provide initial financial assistance and technical support to establish the network. However, ADB's assistance is not meant to fund the annual research work plans of the network, which over time, is expected to become self-financing through contributions and fees.

In consultation with development partners and GMS members, the network coordinator will seek to establish a fund for competitive research grants to deliver the annual workplan. These would be open to all universities, research institutions, and experts in the region. A template for proposals and evaluation criteria for this purpose will be developed to ensure a transparent and uniform process. These sustainable financing mechanisms will be discussed during the inception activities where network members can provide suggestions based on their own experience.

In 2023, ADB will also develop and approve its own Knowledge Plan for the GMS, where certain activities of the network might be included for financing. Close coordination between the ADB Knowledge Plan and the network will be undertaken through the GMS Secretariat.

STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

GMS Country Representatives

Cambodia

Hiek Chann Samnang
Acting Program Director
VOHAR-Strategic Sight Center (VSSC)

Ngo Sitthykun
General Coordinator
Asian Vision Institute (AVI)

People's Republic of China

Liao Lianzhong
Vice President
Yunnan University

Zhang Lei
Lecturer
Yunnan University

Lao People's Democratic Republic

Latdavanh Songvilay
Acting Director General
Macroeconomic Research Institute
Lao Academy of Social and Economic Science

Chansamone Vongphaisith
Deputy Director General
Institute for Enterprise Development Research
Lao National Academy of Social and Economic Sciences

Myanmar

Tin Tin Htwe
Rector
Yangon University of Economics

Cho Cho Thein
Pro-Rector
Yangon University of Economics

Thailand

Watcharas Leelawath
(formerly with Mekong Institute)
Currently Honorary Advisor
Bolliger and Company (Thailand) Ltd.,
Bangkok, Thailand

Romyen Kosaikanont
Director
Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organisation Specialising in Higher Education and Development (SEAMEO RIHED)

Viet Nam

Nguyen Dinh Tho
Director
Institute of Strategy and Policy on Natural Resources and Environment

Kim Thi Thuy Ngoc
Head of Division
Science and International Relation Cooperation
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Draft Concept Note: Stocktaking Study of the Greater Mekong Subregion Knowledge Network

Background

The terms of reference (TOR) of the Greater Mekong Subregion Knowledge Network (GMSKN) endorsed by the Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) of 30 June 2022 refers to the undertaking of a stocktaking study. In its section on “Outputs and Work Plan” the TOR reads as follows:

A stocktaking study (to be developed by the Network Coordinator and the GMS Secretariat in 2022) will aim to highlight the knowledge needs and priorities of the region and describe how the network can contribute to addressing these emerging transboundary issues, including improvement of enabling policies, programs, and processes.

The work plan subsequently prepared by the Network Coordinator and the GMS Secretariat will be submitted to the SOM for endorsement.

Objectives

The broad objectives of the stocktaking study are:

- To identify the priority themes and sectors for knowledge generation and dissemination in the GMS;
- Under each of the identified priority themes and sectors, to propose specific topics and initiatives where the GMSKN can bring added value;
- To provide the basic elements for the Network Coordinator and the GMS Secretariat to develop a draft 2-year work plan for the GMSKN with indicative activities.

Scoping

- The TOR of the GMSKN also gives some indication of what technical scope the work plan should have. In this regard, the stocktaking study should be done using clear criteria when it comes to reviewing themes and sectors, as follows:
 - aligned with priorities and emerging issues of the GMS-2030 Strategy and the Covid-19 Response and Recovery Plan (2021-2023),
 - aligned with any other national and regional initiatives designed to support post-Covid-19 recovery,
 - related to the macroeconomic and social challenges to

the subregion derived from the ongoing headwinds and uncertainties in the global economy,

- related to any other emerging areas that help the region achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the goals of sustained economic growth and poverty reduction, and
 - defined clearly the needs and benefits for regional cooperation and integration.
- The TOR of the GMSKN also gives some indication of various types and forms of knowledge outputs and activities, namely the production of research and analytical work, dissemination of such work through conferences/workshops, and training and capacity-building modules. The stocktaking study should also provide some indicative suggestions for such activities. For this, the selection of knowledge activities and products should be done with clear criteria, as follows:

- can bring added value and complement other GMS sources of knowledge, namely from each GMS country as well as from other regional cooperation initiatives (i.e. UNESCAP, ASEAN, Mekong-Lancang Cooperation);

- are practical and usable by governments, the private sector, and other stakeholders in terms of policy dialogue and developments, cross-sectoral cooperation, and capacity building;
- can be taken forward and further expanded through sector and thematic working groups of the GMS program;
- provide recommendations and actions for regional cooperation opportunities and benefits; and
- address implementation issues of the GMS-2030 Strategy and the GMS COVID-19 Recovery and Response Plan (2021-2023).

Deliverables:

The stocktaking study should produce an interim and a final report that includes:

- a review of the knowledge needs and priorities of the subregion/region going through key themes and sectors,
- the identification of specific topics and initiatives within the various themes and sectors where the GMSKN can bring added value.
- specific proposals for activities related to those topics and initiatives and other indicative elements of a 2-year Work

Plan for the GMSKN (the latter to be developed by the network coordinator and the GMS Secretariat).

Process: Consultation and Endorsement

While it is important to hear as many stakeholders as possible when undertaking the stocktaking study, it is also crucial that this activity is done in a timely and efficient manner and a work plan for the GMSKN is ready for approval in early 2023. The consultation should then include and consist of the following:

- (i) country-level knowledge and research community (coordinated through each GMS country representative at GMSKN Steering Committee), (ii) GMS Business Council and other private sector entities suggested by the GMS Business Council, (iii) GMS governments (coordinated through each GMS National Secretariat);
- A written review of documents and/or virtual group meetings of the stakeholders listed above.

As indicated in the TOR of the GMSKN, it is important to keep the SOM informed and seek its endorsement of key activities and deliverables. In this case:

- After review and clearance by the Steering Committee, the deliverables of the stocktaking study are to be submitted the SOM for information and feedback.
- The work plan subsequently prepared by the network coordinator and GMS Secretariat, and cleared by the Steering Committee is to be submitted to the SOM for endorsement.

Consulting Requirements

- The GMS Secretariat will engage a small set of individual consultants to undertake the stocktaking study. The budget will come from the Asian Development Bank technical assistance for the GMS Program.
- The type of consultant required for this activity is a “knowledge management specialist.” Considering the wide technical

scope of the study and of the subsequent GMSKN work plan, specialized sector nor thematic consultants are unsuitable. Knowledge management specialists can map priority knowledge needs, identify the most appropriate knowledge products, and develop a knowledge plan, across the various themes and sectors.

- A set of two individual consultants would be best suited to the activity. While a senior consultant could lead the consultations with stakeholders and draft the final report, a junior consultant could focus on information collection and draft specific inputs for the report.
- A one-person month for the senior consultant and two person-months for the junior consultant should suffice for the activity.

Proposed Activities

- 21 October 2022: First meeting of the Steering Committee
- Early November 2022: Proposed concept for stocktaking study endorsed by the Steering Committee
- Late November 2022: Mobilization of consultants to conduct the stocktaking study
- Early February 2023: Submission of the consultants’ interim report
- Late February 2023: Submission of the final report by consultants
- Early March 2023: Endorsement by the Steering Committee of the draft work plan for GMSKN (to be prepared in parallel by the network coordinator and GMS Secretariat using the consultants’ interim report)
- Mid-March 2023: Endorsement of the GMSKN Work Plan by the SOM
- April 2023: Discussion of the GMSKN Work Plan at the first annual meeting of the GMSKN General Assembly





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