



GEF/UNDP/ASEAN PROJECT ON REDUCING POLLUTION AND
PRESERVING ENVIRONMENTAL FLOWS IN THE EAST ASIAN SEAS
THROUGH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INTEGRATED RIVER BASIN
MANAGEMENT (IRBM) IN ASEAN COUNTRIES

Proceedings of the Third Regional Steering Committee Meeting

**4 June 2025
Bali, Indonesia
and via Zoom**



APPROVAL SIGNATURES



Mr. Oudomsack Philavong

Chair

Date 15 July 2025

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Mr. Gerd Trogemann

Co-Chair

23-Jul-2025

Date _____



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Executive Summary

The Third Regional Steering Committee (RSC) Meeting of the GEF/UNDP/ASEAN Project on Reducing Pollution and Preserving Environmental Flows in the East Asian Seas through the Implementation of Integrated River Basin Management (IRBM) in ASEAN countries was held on 04 June 2025 in Bali, Indonesia, in conjunction with the 25th Meeting of the ASEAN Working Group on Water Resources Management (AWGWRM). Co-chaired by Mr. Oudomsack Philavong, AWGWRM Chairperson, and Mr. Gerd Trogemann of UNDP Bangkok Regional Hub, the meeting brought together 70 participants from ASEAN Member States (AMS), the ASEAN Secretariat, UNDP, PEMSEA Resource Facility (PRF), and the East Asian Seas Executive Committee, both in-person and online.

The meeting reviewed progress made by the six participating ASEAN Member States (AMS) and the regional component, highlighting implementation achievements, lessons learned, remaining challenges, and next steps. The Mid-Term Review (MTR) findings were presented, confirming the project's continued relevance and moderately satisfactory overall performance, while identifying risks associated with delayed Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) signing in several countries. The RSC agreed in principle to the MTR recommendations and proposed management responses.

The RSC also reviewed the reprofiled 2025 work plan and budget, and the proposed 2026 work plan and budget, while acknowledging the need for flexibility based on implementation progress. The importance of accelerating pilot project development, improving fund delivery, and enhancing stakeholder engagement, particularly at local levels, was emphasized.

The RSC noted and adopted the following decisions during the meeting:

- The RSC concurred with UNDP's suggestion to approach Malaysia's request for a no-cost project extension with caution and to revisit the request during the 4th RSC meeting to assess the actual project status before making a final decision.
- The RSC agreed in principle on the MTR recommendations and the proposed management response, including the timeframe for its implementation. The RSC will further review these and communicate any additional concerns or objections to the Regional Project Management Unit (RPMU) and UNDP after the RSC meeting.

- The RSC agreed in principle on the proposed reprofiled work plan and budget for 2025 and the proposed work plan and budget for 2026, subject to further adjustments based on emerging project priorities. The RPMU will further amend the meeting document and presentation to correct the title of the 2026 work plan and budget, as well as to move the commencement of the pilot project development process in Q4 of 2025 instead of Q1 2026 as suggested by Indonesia.

The meeting concluded with a reaffirmed commitment to regional cooperation and timely delivery of project outcomes, especially in view of the remaining timeframe of the project.

Introduction

- i. The Third Regional Steering Committee (RSC) Meeting of the GEF/UNDP/ASEAN Project on Reducing Pollution and Preserving Environmental Flows in the East Asian Seas through the Implementation of Integrated River Basin Management in ASEAN countries was held on June 4, 2025. Organized back-to-back with the 25th Meeting of the ASEAN Working Group on Water Resources Management (AWGWRM), the meeting was conducted in a hybrid format, with in-person attendance at Holiday Inn Resort Baruna in Bali, Indonesia, and online participation via Zoom.
- ii. The RSC meeting was hosted by the Government of Indonesia through the Ministry of Environment (MOE) and attended by a total of 70 participants (37 female and 33 male). In particular, the Meeting was attended by the Chairperson of the AWGWRM, representatives from the National Focal Points (NFPs) of the AWGWRM from nine (9) ASEAN Member States (Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam), the East Asian Seas Executive Committee (EAS EC), the ASEAN Secretariat (ASEC), PEMSEA Resource Facility (PRF), and UNDP Bangkok Regional Hub in Asia and the Pacific (UNDP-BRH).
- iii. The RSC meeting was co-chaired by Mr. Oudomsack Philavong, Chairperson of the AWGWRM and Mr. Gerd Trogemann, Manager, Regional Programme and Global Policy Network, UNDP-BRH. The RPMU and MOE Indonesia served as the Secretariat for the RSC meeting.
- iv. The complete list of participants is provided in **Annex A**.

Opening of the Meeting

- i. On behalf of the Government of Indonesia, Hon. Rasio Ridho Sani, Deputy Minister for Pollution and Environment Degradation Control, Ministry of Environment of Indonesia, extended a warm welcome to participants of the Third RSC meeting of the Integrated River Basin Management (IRBM) project in Bali. Mr. Sani emphasized the meeting's crucial significance as a milestone in progressing the sustainable, integrated management of river basins, which are indispensable for fostering regional health, societal prosperity, and economic growth. As a collaborative initiative involving diverse stakeholders, he underscored the importance of the IRBM project as a platform for promoting multi-stakeholder and ecosystem-based river basin management, aligning with national

priorities and regional commitments to address complex challenges like pollution, land degradation, biodiversity loss, and climate change impacts on freshwater systems. He stressed the Project Steering Committee's role in guiding effective IRBM activities, ensuring a balance of environmental sustainability, social equity, and economic development, particularly given the persistent threats to river basins from pollution, climate change, biodiversity loss, and unsustainable land use. Highlighting the importance of regional and cross-sectoral cooperation, the Deputy Minister affirmed Indonesia's unwavering commitment to active participation in policy development, knowledge sharing, and technology advancement. He underscored that the IRBM initiative is fundamentally aligned with the Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystem (WEFE) Nexus approach, acknowledging the interdependence of water resources, energy production, food security, and ecosystem health. He emphasized that effective river basin management requires considering these sectors not in isolation but as components of a complex, integrated system. The meeting would review progress, address challenges, and chart a way forward by strengthening coordination, mobilizing resources, and enhancing stakeholder capacity, with a focus on data sharing and community engagement. He encouraged active participation to generate concrete, effective strategic recommendations for advancing equitable and sustainable management, ultimately strengthening partnerships and reaffirming collective commitment to protecting and managing river basins for present and future generations.

- ii. On behalf of UNDP as project implementing agency, Mr. Gerd Trogemann, Manager, Regional Programme and Global Policy Network, UNDP Bangkok Regional Hub, welcomed the participants to the Third RSC meeting of the GEF/UNDP/ASEAN IRBM project. He noted that the project is now at its midpoint, with the recently completed Mid-Term Review (MTR) confirming meaningful progress, particularly in developing key tools like the State of River Basin (SORB) reporting system and solution templates for pilot project design. However, the MTR also highlighted implementation delays in Malaysia, Indonesia, and Vietnam due to pending MoA signatures, posing a risk to project outcomes. Mr. Trogemann reiterated UNDP's strong support for the initiative, emphasizing its alignment with UNDP's commitment to a healthy planet through nature-based solutions, regional cooperation, climate resilience, effective governance, gender equality, and digital transformation. He expressed hope that the meeting would identify ways to fast-track progress and translate MTR recommendations into decisive joint action to ensure the project delivers lasting impact for the ASEAN region's people and ecosystems.
- iii. Mr. Oudomsack Philavong, Chairperson of the ASEAN Working Group on Water Resources Management (AWGWRM), welcomed the participants to the meeting. He highlighted the meeting's importance as a platform for reviewing progress, addressing challenges,

and strategizing future actions towards sustainable water resource management across the region. Mr. Philavong outlined the meeting agenda, which includes a review of the decisions and recommendations from the Second RSC meeting, progress updates from the six participating AMS on project implementation, and a presentation of the key findings and recommendations from the recently concluded project Mid-Term Review (MTR). He emphasized the need to carefully consider the MTR results to identify strategies for achieving desired project outputs. The meeting would also review work plans and budgets for the remaining quarters of 2025 and for 2026. He stressed the RSC's crucial role in providing guidance to the RPMU and implementing partners in the participating countries to facilitate progress and address challenges. He concluded by expressing gratitude to GEF, UNDP, ASEAN, and PEMSEA for their support and commitment to assisting the AMS in implementing IRBM and IWRM initiatives, before formally declaring the meeting open.

1. Approval of Meeting Agenda

- 1.1 The RSC meeting adopted the agenda, as presented (**Annex B**).
- 1.2 The RSC meeting documents, PowerPoint presentations, and photos are accessible via the [3rd RSC Gdrive](#).

2. Matters Arising from the Second RSC Meeting

- 2.1 Ms. Daisy Padayao, IRBM Project Technical Officer, presented the key decisions and recommendations from the Second RSC Meeting held on 02 July 2024 in Siem Reap, Cambodia as follows:
- 2.2 **Implementation Progress**
 - The RSC requested the RPMU to continue coordinating and providing support to the 6 AMS to facilitate project approval in Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines and Vietnam, and accelerate project implementation in Cambodia and Lao PDR.

- The RSC urged the AMS to identify additional steps to increase the level of financial delivery as the project is approaching its mid-point in 2025 where the expected financial delivery is 50 per cent of the total project budget.
- Status: Progress on project approval is reported under Agenda item 4.0 as part of the regional and national/river basin progress reports.

2.3 **Project Risks and Social and Environmental Safeguards (SES)**

- The RSC recommended including project risks and the SES in future meeting agendas, recognizing risk management as essential to successful project implementation.
- Status: Report on project risks and SES is included in the MTR key findings and recommendations under Agenda item 5.0.

2.4 **Work Plan and Budget**

- The RSC requested the RPMU to provide a detailed breakdown of the 2024 reprofiled budget and the 2025 budget, with a clarification that the 2025 workplan is based on the assumption of completed 2024 activities and aligned with the priorities outlined under Year 3 of the Project Document.
- Status: Decisions and follow-up actions from the Second RSC meeting, including the detailed reprofiled 2024 work plan and budget, as well as the 2025 work plan budget, were communicated to AWGWRM via email on 13 September 2024.
- The RSC adopted the reprofiled 2024 work plan and budget, along with the proposed 2025 work plan and budget as presented, with the understanding that the 2025 work plan and budget remain subject to further adjustments based on the level of project implementation in 2024.
- Status: The reprofiled 2024 work plan and budget and 2025 work plan and budget were adopted by the 2024 RSC Meeting, with implementation of the 2025 work plan currently ongoing.

2.5 Capacity Building and Knowledge Management

- The RSC recommended extending support to non-participating AMS to enable their participation in regional project activities, i.e., regional training, learning exchanges, forums and conferences and other regional events, subject to further consultations with UNDP and contingent upon the availability of funds under the regional component.
- Status: All 10 AMS were invited to participate in the Regional Orientation Workshop on the Water-Energy-Food ecosystem (WEFE) Toolkit held on 03 June 2025.
- The RSC recommended the involvement of the AWGWRM in the consultation process for the SORB reporting prior to the publication of the SORB Guidebook and reports, and their launch during the IRBM Forum of the 2024 East Asian Seas Congress (EAS) in November 2024. The launch primarily aims to introduce the SORB reporting system and promote its application across all ten AMS. The RPMU is to provide available SORB documents to AWGWRM and ASEC for review.
- Status: Decisions and follow-up actions from the Second RSC meeting, including the timeline for SORB development, were communicated to AWGWRM via email on 13 September 2024. The AWGWRM Chair, National Focal Points (NFPs) of six AMS, and ASEC participated in the SORB launch during the IRBM Forum at the EAS Congress in November 2024 in Xiamen, China.

2.6 Third RSC Meeting

- The RSC recommended that the Third RSC Meeting and the 25th AWGWRM Meeting follow the same arrangements as the Second RSC Meeting. The decision and recommendation on the hosting of the 25th AWGWRM Meeting, to be discussed during the Closed Session of the 24th AWGWRM Meeting, will be communicated to UNDP and PRF.
- Status: The Third RSC Meeting was convened alongside the 25th AWGWRM meeting on 04 June 2025 and hosted by MOE, in Bali, Indonesia.

2.7 The meeting was informed that additional details on implementation progress and project risks will be covered under Agenda item 4.0 on Progress Reports and Agenda item 5.0 on Mid-Term Review.

3. Country and Regional Progress Reports

3.1 In alphabetical order, the six participating AMS, followed by the RPMU, presented updates on project progress since the Second RSC meeting—highlighting achievements, challenges, and proposed ways forward. Presentations were delivered by the following representatives:

- **Cambodia:** Mr. Vorng Say, Deputy Director, Department of Water Quality Management, Ministry of Environment;
- **Indonesia:** Mr. Firdaus Alim Damopolii, Director, Directorate of Water Quality Protection and Management, Ministry of Environment;
- **Lao PDR:** Mr. Thanongxay Douangnoulak, Director, Division of Water Resources Assessment, Department of Water Resources, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment;
- **Malaysia:** Mr. Roslan bin Sukimin, Deputy Director, Division of Water Resources Management and Hydrology, Department of Irrigation and Drainage;
- **Philippines:** Atty. Ricky A. Arzadon, Executive Director, National Water Resources Board;
- **Vietnam:** Ms. Tran Thi Le Anh, Deputy Head of Environment Quality Management Division, Vietnam Environment Agency, Ministry of Agriculture and Environment;
- **RPMU:** Ms. Nancy Bermas, Regional Project Manager, PEMSEA Resource Facility.

3.2 The following are highlights from the presentations:

3.3 Cambodia

- **Progress:**
 - **Component 1 (Baseline Assessment for Source to Sea Continuum):** The SORB report for Kampong Bay River Basin was developed and presented at the EAS Congress in Xiamen, China in November 2024. A Total Pollutant Loading (TPL) report has been prepared covering agriculture and livestock loading estimates. Collaboration with FutureWater on the WEFE assessment is ongoing, with initial information provided based on the WEFE questionnaire.
 - **Component 2 (IRBM Pilot Projects):** Collaboration with EnviroStrat has been initiated, including preliminary stakeholder consultations and a site visit to identify priority issues and potential solutions for pilot project development.
 - **Component 3 (Knowledge Management and Capacity Development):** Participated in the Regional Workshop on Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) and contributed to the development of GESI action plan and stakeholder

maps; capacity on stakeholder analysis and engagement was enhanced through participation in the IRBM Forum and Regional Stakeholder Engagement Workshop at the EAS Congress 2024.

- **Component 4 (Monitoring and Evaluation):** Facilitated the Project Mid-Term Review visit and multi-stakeholder interviews at the national, provincial and river basin levels
- **Other initiatives:** Cambodia hosted the Second RSC Meeting of the IRBM Project and 24th AWGWRM Meeting in Siem Reap in 2024. It also participated in the Consultation Meeting for the 2025 IRBM Work Plan with several target activities, including capacity building and SORB validation workshop, delivered in March and April 2025
- **Ways Forward:**
 - Collaborate with FutureWater to implement the WEFE assessment survey in Kampong Bay River Basin
 - Collaborate with EnviroStrat to pilot test a solution template addressing agreed priority concern in selected hotspots in Kampong Bay River Basin
 - Convene the Second National Inter-Ministerial Working Group Meeting in November 2025

3.4 Indonesia

- **Progress:**
 - **Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) for Project Implementation:** The MoA was cleared by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) on 03 June 2025, and will be sent to PRF for approval prior to signing. Parallel to this, national and local efforts in Ciliwung River have been initiated or continued through existing government programs.
 - **Component 1:** Indonesia participated in the Regional SORB Workshop held in Manila, Philippines. Government-led efforts that contribute to SORB reporting included the following: a) Workshop on Protection and Management of Water Quality for the Ciliwung River Watershed (DAS) in Bogor; b) Workshop on Data and Information Inventory with the Local Development Planning Agency (Bappeda) of Depok City for the socialization of the Ciliwung IRBM Program in Depok; c) Focus Group Discussion on the draft Presidential Regulation concerning the Acceleration of Pollution and Environmental Degradation Control in the Ciliwung Watershed Area; and d) development of the final report on Planning for Protection and Management of Ciliwung River Water Quality, which provides a guideline for local governments on pollution control based on Government Regulation No. 22/2021.

- **Component 2:** The Ministry of Environment and Forestry (MOEF) collaborated with the River Care Community (PEPELING) and local government in June 2024 for a river cleanup and tree planting initiative in the upstream Ciliwung River. MOEF also organized the Ciliwung Festival in June 2024, in partnership with the River Friend Foundation, local government, and the private sector, to celebrate World Environment Day. Additionally, the GERBANGBIRU CILIWUNG Movement was launched, encompassing ecoriparian development planning, community empowerment programs, environmental education for students, and nature conservation initiatives. Water quality monitoring is currently being undertaken from national to local level covering 19 national locations, 60 local locations, and seven stations under automatic monitoring. A 2024 water quality monitoring assessment of Ciliwung River Basin revealed widespread domestic waste pollution, with Depok City identified as the most critical area and recommended as a priority for future pollution control efforts. From 2015-2024, 88 units of wastewater treatment plants were established. Ciliwung river clean-up and socialization initiatives were undertaken in the Depok Districts of Ratu Jaya, Kemiri Muka, and Pondok Cina. Technical guidance and field visits on wastewater management were also conducted for business sectors.
- **Component 3:** Indonesia participated in various regional learning events, including the Regional Workshop on GESI and Stakeholder Engagement in August 2024, and the IRBM Forum and World Water Week in Xiamen, China during the EAS Congress 2024.
- **Lessons Learned:**
 - Multi-stakeholder collaboration boosts impact through stronger outreach and community engagement.
 - Stronger enforcement is needed to make environmental regulations more effective.
 - Public awareness campaigns (e.g., Ciliwung Festival) can drive engagement and behavior change.
 - Youth involvement amplifies reach by spreading messages through peer networks.
 - Conservation requires a holistic approach, combining cleanup, education, planning, and advocacy.
- **Ways Forward:**
 - MoA signing with PRF targeted after the Third RSC meeting via circular format.
 - Building on the completed Report on the Preparation and Planning for Protection and Management of Ciliwung River Water Quality, and with support from the IPB University, consultations and development of the Ciliwung SORB Report is targeted to be completed by November 2025.
 - Coordinate with PRF on the procurement of local consultants to undertake the pilot project development in Depok City with guidance from PRF and EnviroStrat.

3.5 Lao PDR

- **Progress:**

- **Component 1:** The SORB report for Nam Tha River Basin was finalized following data analysis, conduct of training workshop, and stakeholder validation. Additionally, Lao PDR participated in the online WEFE nexus consultation workshops.
- **Component 2:** Pre-screening of potential pilot projects was conducted in the provinces of Luang Nam Tha, Oudomxay, and Bokeo in 2024. A field visit for pilot project preparation was also carried out with EnviroStrat.
- **Component 3:** The IRBM Project was showcased through a presentation and exhibit during the World Water Day celebration in Lao PDR in April 2025. The National University of Laos (NUOL) was recognized as a PEMSEA Network of Learning Center (PNLC) in November 2024. Lao PDR participated in various regional learning events, such as the Regional Workshop on GESI and Stakeholder Engagement in August 2024, and the IRBM Forum and World Water Week in Xiamen, China during the EAS Congress 2024.
- **Component 4:** Facilitated the Project Mid-Term Review visit and multi-stakeholder interviews in Lao PDR.
- **Other initiatives:** Provincial PSC Meetings were conducted in September to October 2024, and a National PSC Meeting was held in February 2025.

- **Lessons Learned:**

- To facilitate effective project implementation, enhance results and strengthen ownership, the following are crucial: strong support from the regional office and steering committees; collaboration with technical working groups; and active engagement of the private sector and local communities.

- **Ways Forward:**

- Conduct the WEFE assessment survey for Nam Tha River
- Organize PSC meetings
- Confirm priority issues and hotspot locations for IRBM pilot project development and facilitate the application of solution templates addressing agreed priority concern in Nam Tha River Basin
- Work closely with PRF to finalize the SORB report for publication and dissemination
- Deliver the 2025 action plan, including the conduct of monthly project monitoring meetings

3.6 Malaysia

- **Progress:**
 - **MoA for Project Implementation:** The coordination with the Ministry and Attorney General's Chamber (AGC) is ongoing to review the terms and conditions of the MoA. The AGC has recommended that UNDP be represented by PRF and the Government of Malaysia be represented by the Ministry of Energy Transition and Water Transformation (PETRA).
 - **Project Inception:** An initial IRBM Inception Workshop was conducted on 29 October 2024. The workshop served to introduce the project to stakeholders from national to local levels, particularly within Kedah State, and to review the State of River Basin checklist, assessing existing data availability and gaps.
 - **Component 1:** Malaysia participated in the regional WEFE online workshops facilitated by FutureWater.
- **Lessons Learned:**
 - Broadened understanding of the WEFE approach highlighted the importance of integrating ecosystems alongside water, energy, and food, moving beyond the previous WEF focus.
 - Increased awareness among indigenous communities and greater emphasis on previously underrepresented indicators, such as gender equality, are essential for inclusive and effective project outcomes.
 - Procedures for establishing project implementation agreements and strategic collaboration involving foreign entities enhance communication and coordination including with federal and state agencies.
- **Ways Forward:**
 - Target MoA signing in August or September 2025; project implementation will commence thereafter.
 - Establish coordinating committees to ensure smooth project coordination and implementation
 - Establish the Project Management Unit, including the appointment of National Coordinator and recruitment of local consultants
 - Conduct the National Inception Workshop
 - Finalize the scope and location of the IRBM pilot project in Kedah River Basin
 - Build on available IRBM-related studies or documents in Malaysia in carrying out various project assessments and initiatives

3.7 Philippines

- **Progress:**

- **Component 1:** The SORB reports for Imus-Ylang Ylang Rio Grande Rivers (IYRR) and Pasac-Guagua Watershed (PGW) have been developed. The Philippines also participated in regional online WEFE consultation workshops and submitted initial data in accordance with the WEFE survey questionnaire.
- **Component 2:** The Philippines attended the online inception meeting for the development of the IRBM pilot project framework and solution templates. It also facilitated EnviroStrat's visit to IYRR and PGW to engage stakeholders and understand the local context in developing appropriate solution templates for pilot project development.
- **Component 3:** The Philippines participated in various regional learning events, including the Regional Workshop on GESI and Stakeholder Engagement in August 2024, the IRBM Forum and Regional Stakeholder Analysis Workshop during the EAS Congress 2024 in Xiamen, China. A profile story of PGW was featured in GEF IW Portfolio Bulletin and published in PEMSEA website and social media platforms. Project activities and partners were also featured in IRBM Project knowledge products. In support of GESI mainstreaming, Indigenous People (IP) leaders in Porac, Pampanga were engaged to ensure inclusion of traditional practices and rights in project implementation. Furthermore, women's voices from Sasmuan, Pampanga were amplified through features in the IRBM Project Newsletter, GEF IW Portfolio Bulletin, and PEMSEA platforms.
- **Component 4:** Facilitated the Project Mid-Term Review visit and multi-stakeholder interviews in Cavite and Pampanga.

- **Lessons Learned:**

- Establishing clear roles, responsibilities, and expectations for all stakeholders at the onset will greatly facilitate project implementation.
- Engaging all stakeholders and sectors including women and IPs and guided by the principle of "no one left behind", will build trust and rapport among stakeholders and ensure sustainability of project initiatives.

- **Ways Forward:**

- Sign the MoA between DENR and PRF for project implementation
- Conduct National Stakeholders Forum to provide updates on project implementation and ways forward
- Conduct WEFE assessment survey in IYRR and PGW
- Finalize and publish the SORB reports of IYRR and PGW
- Confirm hotspot locations and priority issue(s) for IRBM pilot project implementation and implement the generic solutions templates in IYRR and PGW

3.8 Vietnam

- **Progress:**
 - **Project Approval and Launch:** The IRBM Project Document has been approved with a focus on Vu Gia Thu Bon River Basin. The approval was supported by Official Letter No. 10053/VPCP-QHQT from the Deputy Prime Minister, Decision No. 3343/QD-BTNMT from the Minister of Agriculture and Environment (MAE), Official Letter No. 9937/UBND-KTTH from Quang Nam Province, and Official Letter No. 203/UBND-STNMT from Da Nang City. Official project launch and planning was conducted in April 2025, which resulted to agreement on the project framework, implementation and coordination mechanism, and priority activities for 2025-2027.
 - **Project Management and Coordination Mechanism:** The MAE serves as the national agency responsible for national project oversight. The Vietnam Environment Agency (VEA), through the Environment Quality Management Division, serves as the national implementing agency tasked to coordinate with local authorities and development partners (GEF/UNDP/PRF). The Department of Agriculture and Environment (DAE), through the Provincial Environment Protection Authority of Da Nang and Quang Nam serve as local focal points for directing and supervising the project on the ground with PRF and UNDP providing technical guidance and support.
- **Lessons Learned:**
 - Successful project implementation requires coordinated participation from stakeholders at all levels—national, provincial, and grassroots in the Vu Gia Thu Bon River Basin.
 - Stakeholder consultations can be time-consuming due to varying levels of understanding and expectations; clear prioritization and strong coordination between central and local agencies are essential for effective planning.
- **Ways Forward:**
 - Vietnam provided a detailed table of its target activities for 2025 to 2027 under the four project components. For the year 2025, in particular, the following will be prioritized:
 - Component 1: Initiate the development of SORB report of Vu Gia-Thu Bon River Basin, including updating of biophysical, socio-economic and demographic profiles, institutional and governance review, and conduct of rapid pollution load assessment.
 - Component 2: Initiate the consultation process for identifying and confirming priority issues and hotspot locations for pilot project development in Vu Gia

Thu Bon River; and conduct governance assessments to support subsequent development of strategy and action plan for Vu Gia-Thu Bon River Basin.

Component 3: Operationalize the knowledge and learning systems on IRBM and project M&E reporting.

Component 4 and Project Management: Facilitate recruitment of Project Assistants at VEA and DAEs, and relevant Technical Service Providers.

- **Challenges and Recommendations:**

- Key challenges include the ongoing implementation of the National Government's Resolution on the reorganization of provincial level administrative units, particularly merging provinces and cities, which include Quang Nam and Da Nang as part of streamlining the organizational structure of local agencies and organizations, as well as the limited timeframe for project implementation (2025-2027) in Vietnam.
- Vietnam requested for technical support from PRF and international experts to carry out some of the key project initiatives.
- Given the limited timeframe, the 2025–2027 work plan should remain flexible, aligned with the real conditions in the Vu Gia–Thu Bon River Basin, and closely coordinated with the regional and national project implementation.

3.9 Regional Component

The regional progress report summarized overall project progress across the four components as of the mid-point of the project.

- **Progress:**

- **Overall Progress vis-à-vis the Project Results Framework Indicators:** The project has nine indicators, including three GEF Core Indicators used across all GEF projects. The MTR rated the project as moderately satisfactory, with seven out of nine indicators on track and two at high risk due to delays in MoA signing in three countries. The project contributes to GEF Core Indicator 7 (strengthening transboundary water management) and Indicator 11 (direct beneficiaries), with over 1,000 beneficiaries engaged (2023–2024). It also supports four Large Marine Ecosystems and government-led Strategic Action Plans (SAPs) in Nam Tha River Basin in Lao PDR and the IYRR in the Philippines. However, the project remains off track in MoA finalization (only three of six countries have signed) and in establishing river basin coordinating mechanisms (four of seven completed).
- **Component 1 (Partially on track):** The SORB Guidebook was launched at the IRBM Forum during the EAS Congress in November 2024. An orientation workshop on the REWEFe nexus toolkit has been conducted, and the toolkit is currently undergoing refinement and validation. A rapid assessment of Total Pollutant Load (TPL) has been completed for Cambodia and is scheduled for replication in Lao PDR. Additionally, four out seven SORB reports have been prepared.

- **Component 2 (Off track):** The development of framework and generic solutions templates for IRBM pilot project development has been initiated at the regional level, though its rollout in all seven river basins is delayed due to pending MoA signings. Initial consultations have been conducted in Cambodia, Lao PDR and the Philippines to determine priority issues and aspects of interest for pilot project development, resulting to a solutions long list. Moreover, existing SAPs in Nam Tha River Basin and IYRR will serve as references for developing the next cycle of strategic action plans.
- **Component 3 (Partially on track):** A number of regional, national and basin-level workshops and learning activities have been conducted, where 59 per cent of the beneficiaries are male and 41 per cent are female. Technical reports and guide on IRBM governance and management indicators as well various knowledge products have been developed and disseminated. Project objectives and preliminary results have been shared in key global and regional forums. The Project e-portal and microsite is also in place and is being updated regularly.
- **Component 4 and Project Management (On track):** Three RSC meetings have been conducted from 2023 to 2024. In terms of M&E, the project has submitted or completed the required quarterly technical and financial reports up to the first quarter of 2025, 2024 Project Implementation Report (PIR), Quality Assurance Reports for design and implementation stage, internal control and financial audits, and Mid-Term Review.
- **Challenges:**
 - GEF IW Core Indicators: Delay in MoA signing on project implementation with Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines in view of government review and approval processes.
 - Component 1: Data availability for the 32 SORB core indicators and delayed project start-up in three countries (Vietnam, Indonesia, and Malaysia)
 - Component 2: Pilot projects should have commenced in seven river basins by mid-2025 but affected by delays in project start-up particularly in Indonesia and Malaysia, as well as the timely recruitment of appropriate specialists to develop the solutions templates for pilot project development.
 - Component 3: While regional trainings or workshops have engaged all the project participating countries, national and basin-level trainings or workshops were limited to Cambodia and Lao PDR where MoAs have been signed, while in the Philippines trainings or workshops were limited to basin-level due to pending MoA signing.
- **Ways Forward:**
 - The RPMU, in coordination with the six ASEAN Member States to implement adaptive management measures, as recommended in the MTR, to address delays in project implementation and other changes in project situation.

3.10 Discussion Highlights and Decision

- Indonesia confirmed that the MoA to formally initiate project implementation in the country has been cleared by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It will be forwarded to PRF for final review and approval prior to signature. Indonesia reiterated its active engagement in regional project activities in parallel with the MoA preparation and review process. Furthermore, Indonesia noted the proposed actions and management responses for the MTR recommendations.
- The Philippines informed the RSC that the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) is scheduled for a leadership transition on 10 June 2025. The representative expressed confidence for the timely signing of the MoA, noting that the incoming DENR Secretary, Prof. Raphael Lotilla, was formerly connected with PEMSEA, and this relationship is expected to facilitate the signing of the MoA between PRF and the DENR.
- In view of the delays in MoA signing, Malaysia requested for a one-year no cost extension to fully achieve all the intended outcomes of the project.
- Mr. Trogemann of UNDP addressed the Malaysian delegate's request regarding a no-cost extension, expressing concern that such extensions often incur actual costs related to maintaining project management arrangements. He suggested caution against requesting a no-cost extension too early, proposing to defer the decision until 2026 to assess the necessity for the extension.
- In line with UNDP's suggestion, the RSC agreed to revisit Malaysia's request during the Fourth RSC meeting to assess the actual project status before making a final decision on the matter.

4. Mid-Term Review Findings and Recommendations

Overview and Key Findings

- 4.1 Mr. Ugyen Dorji, Program Management and Oversight Specialist, UNDP Bangkok Regional Hub in Asia and the Pacific, presented an overview of the Project MTR and its key findings. He explained that the MTR, a requirement for all GEF-financed full-sized projects, assesses the project's strategy, relevance, progress, and risks, and identifies necessary adjustments to ensure intended outcome achievement.
- 4.2 Mr. Dorji informed the RSC that the MTR was conducted by an independent consultant from February to May 2025. The resulting draft MTR Report, which includes findings,

conclusions, and detailed recommendations, has undergone two rounds of technical review by the Evaluation Reference Group (ERG), composed of members from UNDP and the RPMU. The final draft report is now available for RSC review.

- 4.3 In terms of Key Findings, the MTR confirmed that the project's Theory of Change (ToC) remains valid and aligned with its goals. The Project Results Framework indicators largely meet the Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound (SMART) criteria, with seven indicators partially achieved and two at high risk. The MTR also verified that the project meets UNDP gender requirements consistent with a GEN 2 marker. Overall project progress ratings ranged from moderately satisfactory to satisfactory. However, project implementation and adaptive management were rated as moderately satisfactory due to delays in MoA signing in some countries. Sustainability was rated as moderately likely, noting financial and environmental risks, particularly concerning pilot projects.
- 4.4 The MTR concluded that project implementation delays were mainly due to the pending MoAs particularly from Indonesia, Malaysia, as well as the Philippines, while Vietnam has initiated project implementation only after the launching in April 2025. The MTR further noted the three-step IRBM process on SORB reporting, pilot project development, and IRBM strategy and action plan formulation. It further highlighted the funding limitation for direct pilot project implementation and the need to build local capacity, stakeholder consensus, leverage resources from public-private partnerships and integration into government plans to ensure long-term impact.
- 4.5 Mr. Dorji further informed the RSC that, in accordance with GEF requirements, a Terminal Evaluation will also be conducted. Based on the project schedule, this is expected to take place by mid-2027, prior to project closure.

MTR Recommendations and Proposed Management Response

- 4.6 Ms. Kathrine Rose Aguilung, M&E Specialist, RPMU, presented the 13 recommendations from the MTR and corresponding proposed management actions, which were categorized into five key areas: (1) Enhance Project Implementation, (2) Reinforce Sustainability, (3) Address Delayed MoA Signing, (4) Improve Financial Reporting, and (5) Enhance Monitoring and Reporting.
- 4.7 Regarding Enhancing Project Implementation, the MTR provided four recommendations: ensuring pilot project implementation, securing approval of IRBM strategies and action plans, enhancing the engagement of AWGWRM and ASEC in strengthening key project outputs, and ensuring adherence to UNDP's Social and Environmental Safeguards

(SES). The RPMU fully accepted all four recommendations, outlining supporting actions such as conducting technical workshops, providing additional technical assistance to countries and River Basin Coordinating Committees (RBCCs) with consultant support, and maintaining close coordination with UNDP, the AWGWRM and ASEC.

- 4.8 For Reinforcing Sustainability, the MTR offered four recommendations: strengthening engagement with all AMS, strengthening national and subnational government agencies leading IRBM, permanently establishing RBCCs, and supporting adoption of IRBM model by all AMS. The RPMU concurred with three of these recommendations. However, the RPMU partially accepted the recommendation for the permanent establishment of RBCCs, noting that while facilitation support would be provided, this often involves lengthy legal reviews that may not be completed within the project's timeframe.
- 4.9 On MoA signing, the MTR provided two recommendations: engaging UNDP Country Office (CO) GEF Operational Focal Points (OFPs) to facilitate project approval in Indonesia and Malaysia, and developing implementation options for countries delayed by late MoAs. The RPMU fully agreed to support the development of fast-track plans. While UNDP BRH partially accepted the recommendation concerning GEF OFP engagement, recognizing that the approval process depends on national procedures involving multiple agencies.
- 4.10 Regarding Financial Reporting, the MTR recommended documenting and communicating the impact of co-financing, as well as reviewing and updating co-financing agreements, particularly with Indonesia and Malaysia as part of the MoA signing process. The RPMU fully accepted these recommendations, committing to maintaining a standardized database to monitor delivery of co-financing commitments, showcasing innovative co-financing examples, and coordinating with Indonesia and Malaysia to finalize co-financing commitments and letters.
- 4.11 For Monitoring and Reporting, the MTR recommended revising the wording in some project indicators, specifically indicators 1 and 2 (GEF Core Indicators related to Large Marine Ecosystems). It also suggested measures to strengthen the monitoring of results for indicator 3 (direct beneficiaries), indicator 5 (to include private sector participation), and indicators 7 and 8 (to enhance measurement of knowledge gains). The RPMU partially agreed to the recommendations noting that the wording related to the project's support and contribution to the four LMEs is already clearly stated in the Project Document, thus modifications to indicators 1 and 2 are no longer necessary. However, suggestions for indicators 3, 5, 7 and 8 will be integrated into planned activities and project monitoring and reporting.

4.12 Discussion Highlights and Decision

- Lao PDR requested further clarification on proposed action 2.2, which involves providing technical assistance to countries and River Basin Coordinating Committees (RBCCs) for drafting formal government submissions. This assistance aims to support the development and approval of IRBM strategies and action plans, targeting at least three countries by the fourth quarter of 2026.
- In response, Ms. Aguilin clarified that this proposed action aligns with the Project Document, stating that the development of IRBM Strategies and Action Plans will leverage experiences and lessons learned from pilot projects and be guided by an IRBM Guide on Improved Governance and Management of River Basins and Coastal Areas. The proposed timeline is consistent with these activities. Initiating the process in at least three countries is also in consideration of the varying levels of project implementation progress among member countries.
- Mr. Trogemann suggested that, pending further comments from RSC members, an agreement in principle on the MTR recommendations and management response could be reached and reflected in the minutes of the RSC meeting. He added that if concerns arise at a later stage, the RSC may still submit comments to the RPMU and UNDP.

5. 2025 Project Work Plan and Budget and Proposed 2026 Work Plan and Budget

- 5.1 Ms. Nancy Bermas presented the 2025 Project Work Plan and Budget, along with the proposed 2026 Work Plan and Budget. As of 31 May 2025, the project has utilized only 19.88 per cent of the USD 8.4 million total grant. This figure is significantly below the expected 50 per cent midpoint utilization, primarily due to budget reprofiling in previous years and limited activities in countries with pending MoAs. In terms of fund utilization per component: Component 1, focused on State of River Basin reporting, shows the highest expenditure; Component 3, which includes training and knowledge activities, follows; Component 2, dedicated to pilot projects, is still in its initial development phase, thus reflecting low fund delivery; and Component 4's expenditures primarily cover the regional inception workshop (see **Table 1**).

Table 1. Fund Utilization per Component from 2023-2025

Year	2023	2024	2025
Approved budget by RSC	US\$1,824,999	US\$2,176,637	US\$2,176,637
Reprofiled budget	US\$542,318.64 (29.71%)	US\$1,000,647.42 (45.97%)	US\$1,352,088.44 (62.67%)
Expenditures	US\$541,320.20 (99.8%)	US\$836,349.20 (83.9%)	US\$307,981.98 (14.25%)

5.2 Regarding the 2025 Budget, Ms. Bermas showed that project fund utilization as of 31 May 2025 is only at US\$307,982 or 14.25 per cent of the initially approved US\$2.1 million budget. In this regard, Ms. Bermas proposed a reprofiled budget from US\$2,160,937 to US\$1,352,038.44 to cover the planned activities that are anticipated to be completed in the third and fourth quarters of 2025. The biggest allocation under the reprofiled budget is for Component 2 in anticipation of the application of the solutions templates in four river basins (see **Figure 1**).

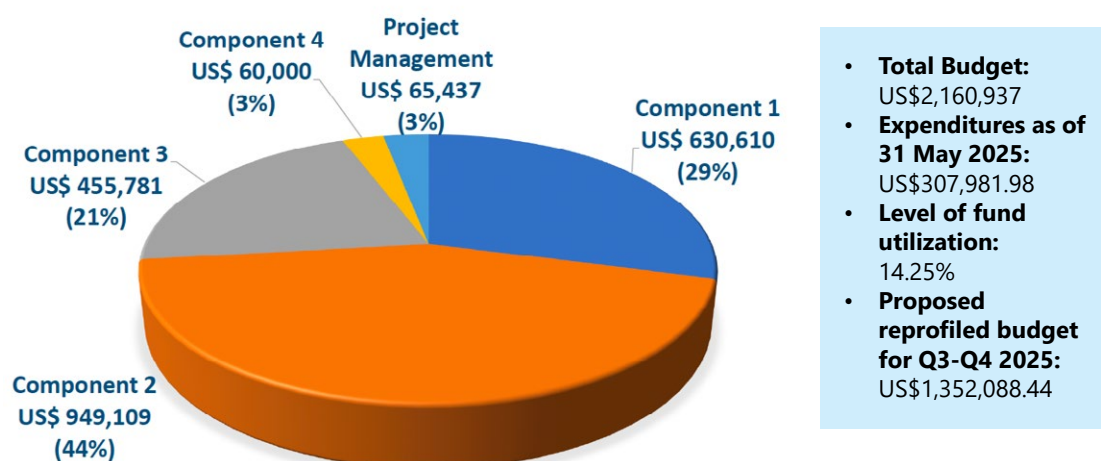


Figure 1. Approved 2025 Budget Allocation per Component and Proposed Reprofiled Budget

5.3 For 2026, the total budget proposed is at US\$2,865,939 covering activities at regional, national and river basin levels in the six participating AMS, with Indonesia and Malaysia included. Key outputs or activities expected in 2026 include the completion of the baseline SORB reporting in the seven river basins, while pilot project development

in Cambodia, Lao PDR and the Philippines will continue, and initiated in Vietnam, Indonesia and Malaysia. Capacity development and knowledge management activities will continue to be implemented to support pilot project implementation and facilitate knowledge sharing at basin and national levels, as well as across the region and beyond (see **Figure 2**).

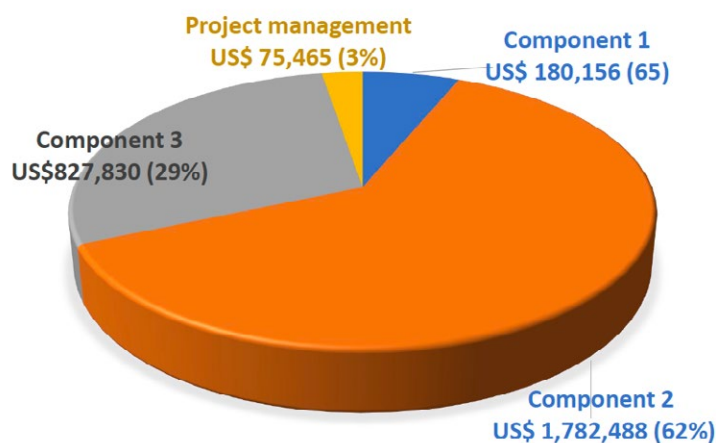


Figure 2. Proposed 2026 Budget

5.4 Discussion Highlights and Decision

- Indonesia welcomed the proposed activities for the third and fourth quarters of 2025, and for 2026, expressing their stakeholders' anticipation for the initiation of SORB reporting and consultations aimed at establishing river basin coordinating mechanisms. They urged accelerating the pilot project development process, suggesting adjusting its commencement to the fourth quarter of 2025 instead of the first quarter of 2026. Indonesia also underscored the importance of capacity development, noting their eagerness to engage in various capacity development and knowledge management activities identified in the work plan. Finally, they raised an editorial point, requesting the RPMU to amend the title in the second table header of the meeting document on Work Plan and Budget, to reflect 2026 instead of 2025.
- Since there were no further comments from the RSC, Mr. Trogemann proposed an agreement in principle on the requested approval points for the RSC. He stated that the adjusted 2025 work plan and budget, along with the plans for 2026, are approved in principle, with the caveat that future adjustments may be needed based on emerging project priorities.

6. Meeting Recommendations and Next Steps

6.1 Ms. Daisy Padayao presented the following highlights and decisions from the meeting:

- Agenda 2.0: Adoption of the Meeting Agenda
Decision: The meeting agenda was adopted as presented.
- Agenda 3.0: Matters Arising from the Second RSC Meeting
Noted: The meeting acknowledged the actions taken regarding the matters arising from the Second RSC meeting.
- Agenda 4.0 Country and Regional Progress Reports
Noted: The meeting acknowledged the progress, lessons learned, and next steps presented by the six participating countries and the RPMU. Moreover, the meeting noted the updates regarding the MoAs in Indonesia, the Philippines and Malaysia as reflected under Section 3.10 above, including Malaysia's request for a one-year no-cost project extension.

Decision on Possible Project Extension: The RSC concurred with UNDP's suggestion to approach Malaysia's request for a no-cost project extension with caution, considering the actual cost implications of maintaining project management arrangements. The RSC decided to revisit this request during the Fourth RSC meeting to assess the actual project status before making a final decision.
- Agenda 5.0: Mid-Term Review Findings and Recommendations
Decision: The RSC agreed in principle on the MTR recommendations and the proposed management response, including the timeframe for its implementation. The RSC will further review these and communicate any additional concerns or objections to the RPMU and UNDP after the RSC meeting.
- Agenda 6.0: 2025 Project Work Plan and Budget and Proposed 2026 Work Plan and Budget
Decision: The RSC agreed in principle on the proposed reprofiled work plan and budget for 2025 and the proposed work plan and budget for 2026, subject to further adjustments based on emerging project priorities. The RPMU will further

amend the meeting document and presentation to correct the title of the 2026 work plan and budget, as well as to move the commencement of the pilot project development process in Q4 of 2025 instead of Q1 2026 as suggested by Indonesia.

- 6.2 She further informed the RSC of the following schedule for the preparation and dissemination of the proceedings of the Third RSC Meeting.
- Circulation of the first draft proceedings: 04 July 2025
 - Review of draft proceedings: 7-18 July 2025
 - Circulation of final version of the proceedings to the RSC members: 25 July 2025
- 6.3 The RSC noted and adopted the above key decision points and requested the RPMU to record them in the minutes of the meeting and shared for review and approval by the RSC.

Closing of the Meeting

- i. Mr. Oudomsack Philavong extended his gratitude to Mr. Gerd Trogemann for co-chairing the meeting, and to all RSC and AWGWRM members, online participants, and the Secretariat for their valuable contributions to the successful conduct of the session. He highlighted the productive discussions on the seven agenda items during the half-day meeting, expressing his anticipation for continued collaboration with all countries. Mr. Philavong then formally declared the meeting closed.
- ii. The Third RSC Meeting of the IRBM Project was adjourned at 12:30pm on 04 June 2025.

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Annex B. Annotated Agenda

THIRD REGIONAL STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING

GEF/UNDP/ASEAN PROJECT ON REDUCING POLLUTION AND PRESERVING ENVIRONMENTAL FLOWS IN THE EAST ASIAN SEAS THROUGH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INTEGRATED RIVER BASIN MANAGEMENT (IRBM) IN ASEAN COUNTRIES

Bali, Indonesia
04 June 2025

PROVISIONAL ANNOTATED AGENDA

0900 – 0910	1.0	Opening of the Regional Steering Committee Meeting The Meeting commences with a welcoming message from the Host Country (Indonesia) and remarks from UNDP Representative. This will be followed by opening remarks of the Chairperson of the AWGWRM. The AWGWRM Chair and UNDP Representative will co-chair the Meeting.
0910 – 0915	2.0	Approval of Meeting Agenda The RSC will review and approve the meeting agenda.
0915 – 0920	3.0	Matters Arising from the Second RSC Meeting The RSC will review the key recommendations and decisions from the Second RSC Meeting and status or actions taken as presented by the Regional Project Management Unit (RPMU) of PEMSEA Resource Facility (PRF).
0920 – 1040	4.0	Country and Regional Progress Reports Representatives from the 6 project participating countries will be invited to share their respective progress reports focusing on major project highlights, achievements, and lessons learned, as well as constraints and challenges encountered. A regional progress report will be presented by the RPMU highlighting achievements, lessons learned, and constraints and challenges encountered.

1040 – 1120	5.0	Mid-Term Review Findings and Recommendations	<p>UNDP BRH will provide an overview of the Mid-term Review objectives, process and key findings.</p> <p>RPMU will present the recommendations including the draft management response to the MTR recommendations.</p> <p>The RSC will be invited to provide feedback on the MTR findings and recommendations, and provide guidance on the proposed management response.</p> <p>The RSC will agree on the final management response, which will be submitted as part of the finalization of the MTR process.</p>
1120 – 1150	6.0	2025 Project Work Plan and Budget and Proposed 2026 Work Plan and Budget	<p>RPMU will present the level of fund utilization as of May 31, 2025 and reprofiled budget for the remaining quarters of 2025 under each Output/Activity at national and regional levels</p> <p>RPMU will also present the proposed Project Work Plan and Budget for 2026 under each Output/Activity at national and regional levels.</p> <p>The RSC will be invited to review and adopt the proposed Project Work Plan and Budget for 2026.</p>
1150 – 1200	7.0	Meeting Recommendations and Next Steps	<p>RPMU will provide a summary of the key decisions and recommendations from the meeting, including the time line of preparation and dissemination of the meeting proceedings.</p>
1200		Closing of the PSC Meeting	

