# MARINE RESOURCE PROTECTION ORGANISATION

# FIVE –YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

# 2026-2030

# ACRONYMS

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| CSR | Corporate Social Responsibility |
| GBF | Global Biodiversity Framework |
| GEDSI | Gender Equality, Disability, and Social Inclusion |
| PES | Payment for Ecosystem Services |
| M&E | Monitoring and Evaluation |
| MRPO | Marine Resource Protection Organisation |
| MPA | Marine Protected Area |
| NbS | Nature-Based Solutions |
| OECMs | Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures |
| SO | Strategic Objective |

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACRONYMS ..... 1
I. INTRODUCTION ..... 3
II. VISIONS, MISSION, AND CORE VALUES ..... 5
Our Vision ..... 5
Our Mission ..... 5
Our Core Values ..... 5
Strategic Objectives ..... 7
Theory of Change ..... 7
III. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES FRAMWORK ..... 8
KEY STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES ..... 8
3.1 Strategic Objective 1: Partnerships & Inclusive Governance ..... 8
3.2 Strategic Objective 2: MPA Management & Restoration ..... 9
3.3 Strategic Objective 3: Sustainable Financing & Benefit-Sharing ..... 10
3.4 Strategic Objective 4: Capacity Research & Innovation ..... 10
IV. NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS MECHANISM ..... 12
V. MONITORING AND EVALUATION FRAMEWORK ..... 13
VI. FUNDRAISING STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK ..... 14

# I. INTRODUCTION

The coastal and marine areas of the Kingdom of Cambodia are home to a rich diversity of marine ecosystems, including coral reefs, seagrass beds, mangrove forests, wetlands, sandy beaches, and islands. These natural assets are not only vital for biodiversity but also serve as the backbone of the coastal communities' economy. Furthermore, these resources support the fisheries and tourism sectors and provide essential ecosystem services such as coastal protection and climate change mitigation.

Cambodia's marine resources are characterized by significant mangrove forests, particularly in Koh Kong and Preah Sihanouk provinces, which are crucial habitats for marine life, protect coastlines, and act as key carbon sinks. Seagrass beds are found in coastal provinces, notably Kampot and Kep. These are critically important to the marine ecosystem, serving as a habitat and food source for numerous species of marine animals, including fish, starfish, sea turtles, and particularly the endangered dugong. Additionally, seagrass helps prevent coastal erosion and maintains water clarity. Coral reefs, which are most abundant around the Koh Rong archipelago, Koh Rong Samloem, Koh Sdach, Koh Tang, Koh Polowai, and other islands, support a rich marine biodiversity, including threatened species like sea turtles. These areas are also popular destinations for marine tourism.

The fisheries sector is a fundamental part of Cambodia's economy and food security, providing livelihoods for millions of people. However, a significant threat looms as fish stocks decline due to unsustainable practices. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive and integrated approach, which this strategic plan aims to provide.




Despite their importance, Cambodia's marine environments are facing increasing threats. Overfishing, habitat loss, marine pollution, and the escalating impacts of climate change are placing immense pressure on these fragile ecosystems. The declining health of marine

resources directly affects the economic stability and food security of coastal communities, exacerbating poverty and vulnerability.

In response, the MRPO was established with a clear vision to address these urgent challenges. Our commitment is to work collaboratively with all stakeholders to strengthen the sustainable management and conservation of Cambodia's marine and coastal resources for the benefit of both present and future generations.

# II. VISIONS, MISSION, AND CORE VALUES

**Our Vision**

To achieve a future where Cambodia's marine ecosystems are sustainable, diverse, and resilient, serving as a foundation for thriving coastal communities, national prosperity, and a vibrant blue economy.

**Our Mission**

To protect, conserve, and restore Cambodia’s marine ecosystems for food security, economic opportunity, community well-being, and environmental sustainability. We achieve this through scientific research, local wisdom, and innovative practices.



**Our Core Values**

1. **Respect:** Honoring local rights, knowledge, and traditions while acting as stewards of the marine environment.
2. **Integrity:** Upholding transparency, accountability, and the highest ethical standards in all actions.
3. **Inclusiveness:** Actively ensuring equity, diversity, and social fairness by integrating all community voices into decision-making.
4. **Innovation:** Embracing new technology and adaptive methods to develop scalable, effective conservation solutions.



## Strategic Objectives

1. Establish and strengthen partnerships with government, the private sector, and local communities, protect, conserve and restore marine ecosystems, ensuring a GEDSI-inclusive approach.
2. Enhance the management of marine protected areas and actively engage in the conservation and restoration of critical marine ecosystems.
3. Secure and manage sustainable financing mechanisms, coupled with transparent benefit-sharing, to ensure the long-term viability of marine conservation efforts.
4. Strengthening the capacity of individuals and institutions through investment in research to advance marine resource management.




## Theory of Change

**If** we make joint investment in managing, conserving, and restoring marine ecosystems and build the capacity building of local communities and we apply scientific knowledge, and the promotion of a sustainable blue economy, **then** the health of marine ecosystems improves, communities gain the skills and resources needed, and the economic opportunities from blue economy are created and shared fairly, **which** leads to drive positive and lasting change for Cambodia's marine environment and its people.

# III. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES FRAMWORK

The MRPO's Five-Year Strategic Objectives Framework is built upon an integrated framework that links marine ecosystems, social wellbeing, livelihoods, and sustainable development. Our approach is to strengthen resilience in both ecological and socio-economic systems, ensuring that conservation and restoration efforts for marine resources generate tangible benefits for both nature and people. This strategy is designed to make a significant contribution to the long-term health and sustainability of Cambodia's marine resources, securing their capacity to provide essential ecosystem services, support rich biodiversity, and enhance the wellbeing and resilience of coastal communities in the face of environmental change.

**KEY STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES**

### 3.1 Strategic Objective 1: Partnerships & Inclusive Governance

**SO1: Establish and strengthen partnerships with government, the private sector, and local communities to Protect, Conserve, & Restore marine ecosystems, ensuring a GEDSI-inclusive approach.**

| ACTION 1 | DESCRIPTION |
|---|---|
| A1.1- Strengthen Collaboration and Coordination with Existing Stakeholder Mechanisms | To promote shared responsibility, MRPO will integrate with existing government and international structures to avoid redundancy, strengthen ongoing conservation, and directly contribute to enforcement initiatives by aligning with established groups and frameworks. |
| A1.2- Collaborate with Experts, Research Institutions, and Citizen Scientist Empowerment | Enhance marine conservation through science-based management and innovation by leveraging strategic research collaborations and comprehensive monitoring programs. This involves partnering with academic institutions and experts to improve data quality, ecosystem tracking, and evidence-based decision-making. Furthermore, the initiative empowers citizen scientists and emerging marine professionals to actively participate in research and restoration efforts within established national frameworks. |
| A1.3- Strengthen Coordination Mechanisms and Frameworks for Effective Protect, Conserve, and Restore Marine ecosystem | To strengthen marine ecosystem protection and restoration by reinforcing governance, streamlining coordination, establishing SOPs, facilitating dialogue, and aligning activities with national plans, ensuring inclusive, transparent, and results-oriented collective efforts. |
| A1.4- Enhancing Community Participation and Ownership | To foster collaboration and knowledge exchange through professional forums and workshops. Model Community Working Groups empower local leaders to drive conservation, with a focus on promoting women and vulnerable groups for inclusive governance and equitable marine resource management. |
| A1.5- Developing a Communication and | Implement an annual communication plan featuring awareness materials synchronized with local and international |

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| Outreach Strategy to protect, conserve, and restore marine ecosystems | environmental events. Develop and publish scientific factsheets, brochures, and educational videos. Actively engaged through digital media, academic workshops, and coastal community conferences to amplify conservation messaging and foster public participation. |
| A1.6-Influence consideration for behavior change for marine ecosystem | Promote sustainable coastal practices by aligning social and economic incentives with environmental stewardship and legal compliance. Foster community and private sector accountability through eco-certification programs for waste reduction and responsible sourcing, while utilizing targeted outreach to demonstrate the vital link between ecosystem health and socio-economic stability. |
| A1.7- Mainstream GEDSI in project design and implementation | Establish comprehensive guidelines to integrate GEDSI across all project phases, from design to evaluation. Conduct regular staff training to ensure practical application in daily operations. Actively engage women, youth, persons with disabilities, and vulnerable groups in decision-making to foster inclusive and equitable marine resource management. |

### 3.2 Strategic Objective 2: MPA Management & Restoration

**SO2: Enhance the management of marine protected areas and actively engage in the conservation and restoration of critical marine ecosystems**.

| ACTION 2 | DESCRIPTION |
|---|---|
| A2.1- Supporting the Establishment and Strengthening of MPAs and OECMs | Conduct site assessments to identify critical habitats for protection and restoration. Strengthen institutional capacity through targeted training and resource allocation. Develop comprehensive management plans that integrate OECMs with MPAs to ensure a cohesive, resilient, and well-governed coastal conservation network. |
| A2.2- Supporting the Integration of the Modem Community Resource Management Structures | Establish multi-stakeholder committees to foster collaborative governance and ensure inclusive decision-making. Implement transparent benefit-sharing mechanisms and robust accountability frameworks to guarantee that conservation rewards are distributed equitably and resources are managed responsibly among all participants. |
| A2.3- Imposing adaptive and integrated technology for MPA and Coastal Communities management tools | Employ advanced conservation technologies, such as remote sensing and real-time data collection, to improve MPA and coastal community management. These digital solutions will enhance ecosystem monitoring, human activity detection, community reporting, and data-driven marine governance. |
| A2.4- Enabling a Joint Monitoring and Evaluation System | Collaborate with communities, authorities, and stakeholders to define operational and outcome indicators for measuring MPA effectiveness. |

### 3.3 Strategic Objective 3: Sustainable Financing & Benefit-Sharing

**SO3: Secure and manage sustainable financing mechanisms, coupled with transparent benefit-sharing, to ensure the long-term viability of marine conservation efforts.**

| ACTION 3 | DESCRIPTION |
|---|---|
| A3.1- Research and Develop Standards for Marine Eco-Tourism | Conduct in-depth studies of global best practices for sustainable diving and snorkeling to identify successful conservation-based tourism models. Use these insights to collaborate with the relevant institutions in developing national guidelines and operational standards for Cambodia's tourism operators. |
| A3.2- Promoting sustainable Marine Ecosystem CBET model | Develop integrated tourism offerings that combine recreational activities with hands-on conservation and educational experiences. By partnering with operators and authorities, foster community-led eco-tourism (CBET) models that generate sustainable livelihoods and incentivize the protection of marine habitats, ensuring long-term environmental stewardship and local prosperity. |
| A3.3- Promoting Blue Carbon | Initiate "Blue Carbon" by restoring mangroves and seagrasses to capture carbon. Conduct local assessments to measure carbon storage and develop carbon credit projects that generate sustainable funding. Redirect these revenues into community-led coastal protection, providing a reliable source for ongoing restoration and environmental management. |
| A 3.4- Develop Modern Coastal Community Enterprises and market access | Assess communities to identify socio-economic needs. Support local product development by improving quality and securing market access, linking community enterprises to sustainable value chains for diversified coastal household income. |
| A3.5- Sustainable Financing Models: Market and None market mechanism and benefit sharing | Implement sustainable financing models for long-term conservation funding and establish transparent benefit-sharing frameworks to ensure equitable revenue distribution, incentivizing local stakeholder participation in environmental protection. |
| A3.6- Strengthening Social and Environmental Safeguard Mechanisms | Conduct social impact assessments to identify vulnerable groups and proactively mitigate project-related risks. Establish a transparent and accessible grievance redress mechanism for community members to safely report concerns and resolve disputes fairly throughout the project. |

### 3.4 Strategic Objective 4: Capacity Research & Innovation

**SO4: Strengthen the capacity of individuals and institutions through investment in research to advance marine resource management.**

| ACTION 4 | Description |
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| A4.1- Strengthening National and Local Capacity on adaptive marine ecosystem management | Enhance national and local adaptive marine ecosystem management capacity through targeted gap assessments in marine science and data management, followed by specialized training, technical workshops, and mentoring program on protection and restoration techniques. |
| A4.2- Promote scientific research and monitoring of marine ecosystems and engineering solutions | Advance scientific research and monitoring for marine ecosystems and engineering by establishing standardized data collection protocols. Conduct regular assessments of reef and seagrass health while utilizing ecological engineering to support habitat restoration. Translate research findings into actionable management plans to ensure the long-term resilience of marine biodiversity. |
| A4.3- Advancing and adapting Innovation and Technology for marine ecosystem management | Adopt and scale innovative technologies and digital tools to strengthen marine ecosystem management. Deploy advanced monitoring systems to track habitat health and resource use. Continuously refine these technical solutions to meet local needs, ensuring management strategies remain responsive to changing environmental conditions. |
| A4.4- Empowering local young professionals through a marine resource protection learning platform | Initiate a learning platform to empower local young professionals in the field of marine resource protection. Provide access to specialized training modules, technical resources, and collaborative tools that foster skill development. By bridging the gap between academic knowledge and field application, this platform supports a new generation of conservation leaders in managing marine ecosystems effectively. |

# IV. NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS MECHANISM

MRPO will apply NbS to address environmental and social challenges in the marine context. NbS are actions that protect, manage sustainably, and restore natural ecosystems to effectively tackle societal challenges while delivering benefits for both people and biodiversity.

| SO | Core NbS Focus | Concise NbS Action | Alignment |
|---|---|---|---|
| **SO1: Partnerships & Inclusive Governance** | Collaborative and Inclusive Management | Strengthen marine governance through inter-agency protocols, research partnerships, and community working groups. Ensure transparent coordination and science-based decisions using GEDSI-inclusive frameworks and behavior-change strategies, actively engaging the private sector and vulnerable groups in coastal restoration. | Cross-Sectoral & Inclusive |
| **SO2: MPA Management & Restoration** | Ecosystem-based Coastal Resilience | Strengthening the MPA and OECM network through habitat assessments and data-driven management. Deploy monitoring technologies and joint M&E systems to track ecosystem health, while establishing collaborative community structures for inclusive, equitable resource management. | Applicable & Realistic |
| **SO3: Sustainable Financing & Benefit-Sharing** | Diversified Blue Economy & Equitable Finance | Establish diverse funding streams by developing national eco-tourism standards, blue carbon credit projects, and sustainable community enterprises. Operationalize transparent benefit-sharing and safeguard mechanisms to ensure revenues are equitably distributed, providing local stakeholders with long-term financial incentives to protect and restore marine ecosystems. | Sustainable & Realistic |
| **SO4: Capacity Research & Innovation** | Science-Driven Adaptive Management & Professional Empowerment | Strengthen institutional and local capacity by integrating advanced marine research, ecological engineering, and digital monitoring tools into adaptive management frameworks. Establish a dedicated learning platform and professional development programs to empower a new generation of conservationists with the technical skills needed to monitor and protect marine biodiversity. | Research & Adaptive |

# V. MONITORING AND EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

The MRPO will implement a robust M&E framework to ensure that all strategic objectives are met with transparency and that conservation actions lead to measurable impact. This system is designed to allow for adaptive management, enabling the organization to refine its strategies based on real-time data and environmental changes.

### 5.1 Indicators and Framework

To measure the effectiveness of the 2026-2030 Strategic Plan, MRPO will utilize a two-tiered indicator system:

**Operational Indicators:** Tracking the completion of specific activities, such as the number of GEDSI-inclusive workshops held or the amount of mangrove area restored.

**Outcome Indicators:** Measuring the health and resilience of the ecosystem, such as increases in fish biomass, seagrass density, and the economic stability of coastal households.

### 5.2 Joint Monitoring Mechanisms

In alignment with Strategic Objective 2, MRPO will establish a Joint M&E System:

**Stakeholder Engagement:** Collaborating with local communities, government authorities, and research institutions to define success metrics.

**Advanced Technology:** Utilizing remote sensing and real-time digital data collection to track habitat health and human activity within MPAs.

**Citizen Science:** Empowering local "citizen scientists" and young professionals to participate in data collection, bridging the gap between scientific research and local wisdom.

### 5.3 Reporting and Learning

**Annual Reviews:** Progress will be assessed annually against the Five-Year Plan to ensure alignment with national environmental goals.

**Adaptive Management:** M&E findings will be translated into actionable management plans to ensure long-term resilience for marine biodiversity.

# VI. FUNDRAISING STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

## 6.1 Fundraising Goal and Objectives

To secure a diversified and sustainable funding base of at least **"One Million USD"** over five years to support the protection, restoration, and management of Cambodia's marine ecosystems while ensuring equitable benefit-sharing. The primary goal is to ensure the financial sustainability of MRPO to implement its 2026–2030 programme.

**Objective 1:** Assure predictability of funding for core marine conservation programmes.

**Objective 2:** Ensure effective targeting of donors across bilateral, multilateral, and private sectors.

**Objective 3:** Establish fundraising priorities that complement national and international marine strategies.

## 6.2 SWOT Analysis of Fundraising Capacity

Understanding MRPO's current position is crucial for designing appropriate fundraising targets.

**Strengths:** Clear 5-year strategic objectives; highly experienced board; unique focus on marine ecosystems and the blue economy.

**Weaknesses:** Newly established status; limited full-time staff; initial dependence on partner networks.

**Opportunities:** National science-based focus; partnership with national and international NGOs; emerging "Blue Carbon" and "Blue Economy" funding streams.

**Threats:** High competition for grants; low initial reputation/donor confidence due to organization age.

## 6.3 Strategic Fundraising Pillars

MRPO will utilize four pillars to secure a diversified funding base:

**Pillar A: Institutional Grants & Technical Partnerships**

**Targets:** Global Environment Facility (GEF), Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF), Adaptation Fun (AF), European Union (EU), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and technical partners like Conservation International, Fauna & Flora, IUCN, ThinkAqua.

**Action:** Jointly develop proposals for MPA management and marine habitats restoration aligning with the Global Biodiversity Framework (30x30).

**Pillar B: Blue Economy & Private Sector Engagement**

**Targets:** Tourism operators (diving/snorkeling) and coastal developers.

**Action:** Implement a "Payment for Ecosystem Services" (PES) model and launch "Corporate Blue Carbon" programs for mangrove/seagrass investment.

- **Pillar C: Sustainable Financing & Innovation**
    - Targets: Global carbon markets and impact investors.
    - Action*:* Develop a Blue Carbon Credit feasibility study and establish a Community Conservation Trust Fund for GEDSI-inclusive livelihood projects.

### 6.4 Donor Database & Partnership Strategy

Based on our five-year program strategy, MRPO will proactively develop project proposals for submission to diverse donors. As MRPO is a newly established NGO, we recognize that the most effective strategy for successful fundraising is to build strong, technical partnerships with national and international conservation NGOs. Such partnerships are essential to strengthen our proposals and significantly increase the chances of securing vital funding.

**Strategic Partnerships & Networks**

**NGO Alliances:** MRPO will actively seek partnerships with established conservation organizations to co-develop projects that address complex marine issues.

**National and International Memberships:** To ensure we are at the forefront of national and international development and conservation dialogues, MRPO will seek membership in critical networks such as the national NGO network.

**Technical Synergy:** We will specifically leverage technical partnerships to enhance the scientific rigor of our grant applications.

**Donor Database Management**

MRPO will maintain a dynamic donor database (updated annually) to effectively identify potential supporters. This database will be used to track specific opportunities.

### 6.5 Implementation Roadmap & Timeframe

MRPO will transition from donor-dependency to market-based sustainability over five years:

| Funding Type | 2026 | 2027 | 2028 | 2029 | 2030 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Grants | √√√ | √√√ | √√√ | √√√ | √√√ |
| Service/Consultancy | √√√ | √√√ | √√√ | √√√ | √√√ |
| Merchandising | √√ | √√ | √√ | √√ | √√ |
| Fundraising Events | √ | √ | √√ | √√ | √√ |
| Membership | √ | √ | √ | √√ | √√ |

Note: √ low, √√ medium, √√√ high priority.

### 6.6 Roles in Fundraising & Governance

MRPO will maintain a clear division of labor to ensure efficiency and transparency:

**Executive Committee:** This body will play the leading role in the day-to-day development of funding proposals, technical research, and donor reporting. The Executive Committee, led by

the Executive Director, will meet monthly to track progress. A Mid-term review will be conducted at the end of 2028.

**Governing Board:** The board will act as a non-executive, strategic body. They will provide vital support by building high-level connections with potential donors, consulting on the donor database, and ensuring that all fundraising activities adhere to the highest standards of Integrity and Transparency.