



Australian Embassy
Cambodia

Media Release

9 October 2024

A THIRD FISHWAY TO ENHANCE LOCAL FISH BREDDING AND RICE PRODUCTION

Today, Australian Ambassador Derek Yip joined representatives from the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries as well as the Fisheries Administration and local authorities and residents to officially open the Svay Chek Fishway in Teuk Pos district, Kampong Chhnang province.

This fishway is the third one funded by the Australian Government through the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)'s Mekong-Australia Partnership. Built in partnership between Charles Sturt University (CSU) and the Fisheries Administration, the Svay Chek Fishway provides technical solutions to reconnect fisheries habitats and maintain healthy fish populations. It will support the fishing income of up to 19,000 households in the Teuk Pos district and help to preserve over 100 local fish species.

Ambassador Yip said, "The partnership in scientific research between the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research and Charles Sturt University, working closely with governments and development agencies, is strengthening local capacity and helping to deliver outcomes that will support sustainable economic development. The research will allow stakeholders to make well-informed decisions aimed at ensuring the most positive long-term outcomes for local fisheries, water managers and the economy."

The Svay Chek fishway designed based on the data from a two-decade program of fishway research in the Mekong is tailored to fit different local fish species' swimming abilities and water speed preferences. It will serve as a demonstration of a particular fishway type that can be used to guide the design of fishways in other locations in Cambodia.

Professor Wendy Umberger, ACIAR Chief Executive Officer, said "The construction of the Svay Chek Fishway will protect fish biodiversity and safeguard the food security and livelihoods of thousands of rural households. The new infrastructure will also provide valuable insights for Cambodia, donor countries, investors, and irrigation agencies when deciding whether to include fish passage technology in their development projects."

"This innovative initiative shows that fish passages can be effectively incorporated into water infrastructure projects, providing an example for other countries. It can also be used as a model

to assess the potential benefits and costs of including fish passages in similar projects," added Professor Umberger.

On the opening day of the Svay Chek Fishway, H.E. Khun Savoeun, Secretary of State of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, emphasised the importance of fish for the development of children and women in rural communities in Cambodia.

"Fish provide essential micronutrients that are crucial for the healthy development of children under five and for the well-being of pregnant women. In regions like the Mekong, fish are not only a dietary staple but also a lifeline for nutrition, especially for the most vulnerable populations. Preserving fish species through sustainable practices, such as fishways, is vital for ensuring food security and promoting healthy communities," said H.E. Khun Savoeun.

The Svay Chek Fishway was built on the Svay Chek River, which originates from the Oral Mountain, the highest mountain in Cambodia. The river provides fish and water for rice farming, benefiting nine communes before flowing into the Tonle Sap Great Lake. The fishway enables fish to freely migrate upstream and downstream through the flood weir to access food sources and spawning grounds while also allowing the irrigation system to deliver water to the rice fields.

Media enquiries: Media.Cambodia@dfat.gov.au