



**Australian Embassy**

**Cambodia**

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **AUSTRALIAN SOLUTION TO CAMBODIA'S FISHERIES CHALLENGES**

Today the Australian Ambassador joined representatives from the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, the Fisheries Administration, local authorities, and villagers to officially open the Sleng Fishway in Kralanh District, Siem Reap province.

Fishways benefit the environment and people since they allow fish to migrate freely upstream and downstream through weirs and dams to access food sources and spawning grounds. They have been found to boost the local economy and improve the livelihoods of those who depend on it.

The fishway has been made possible by research and funding from the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). This innovative solution is particularly critical in Cambodia as hydropower and irrigation development are essential to economic growth.

“The Sleng Fishway is expected to increase the fishing income of up to 5,000 families and help preserve over 100 local fish species, making it a significant step towards a more sustainable future for Cambodia's fisheries and fishing communities,” said Australian Ambassador to Cambodia Justin Whyatt.

Professor Wendy Umberger, ACIAR Chief Executive Officer said, “Since 2006, ACIAR has been funding research to protect Mekong fish stocks, connecting leading Australian scientists to their counterparts in Cambodia to tackle the challenges of converging food and energy security.”

“The innovations developed through these research partnerships have greatly benefitted rural communities who depend on fish for their health and wellbeing, and I'm pleased to see this technology further scaled out to benefit communities in Siem Reap,” Professor Umberger added.

His Excellency Khun Savoeun, Secretary of State of Ministry of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries said, “Cambodian fishery scientists and irrigation engineers are working with donor countries, especially Australia, to advance fish passage technology in the Mekong Region. This work is essential for protecting fish populations, ensuring Cambodian food security and rural nutrition. We are committed to working with partners to find science-based solutions to maintain river ecosystem services for the nation.”

Through the ongoing collaboration of ACIAR, DFAT, and Charles Sturt University, the Sleng Fishway was built in 2022-2023 in partnership with Cambodian government agencies, including the Fisheries Administration and the Ministry of Water Resource and Meteorology, and the provincial authorities of Siem Reap province.

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### **About Sleng Fishway**

The Sleng Fishway project's critical success is due to its close engagement with the community in all aspects of design and construction. The local meetings with stakeholders provided the team with contextual information to select the ideal fishway design for this site.

Construction of the Sleng Fishway in Kralanh District is part of the FishTech initiative, funded by ACIAR and DFAT. Learn more about the project: [FishTech: Integrating technical fisheries solutions into river development programs across South-East Asia | ACIAR](#)

FishTech will implement several demonstration projects, in Lao PDR and Cambodia over the three-year program. The project is a critical body of work helping to inform development in Cambodia and the Lower Mekong subregion to build fishways (or fish ladders) to help restore migration pathways and support **sustainable irrigation development** and the environmental resilience of local communities.

After the construction is completed, assessments of the fishway structure to ensure it provides suitable benefits to local fish and communities will be undertaken. Based on the findings, the remit of FishTech projects will be expanded across Cambodia and Laos PDR.