National Committee for Sub-National Democratic Development Secretariat (NCDDS)

Terms of Reference (ToR)

Senior Local Planning and Governance Consultant

Sustainable Climate-Resilient Accelerated Local Economic Development (SCALED) Project

Position : Senior Local Planning and Governance Consultant
Duty Station : NCDD Secretariat, Phnom Penh, Cambodia
Contract Duration : 90 working days, over the period from November 2026 to March 2027
Market Approach : National (Short-Term Individual Consultancy)
Expected Start Date : November 2026
Contract Type : Lump-sum contract
Grant Number : E748-KH

1. Background

The 10-Year National Program on Sub-National Democratic Development, Phase 2 (NP2, 2021-2030), was designed to implement key decentralization and deconcentration policies, specifically the Law on the Management of the Capital, Provincial, Municipal, District and Khan Administrations (2008), Law on the Management of the Commune/Sangkat Administrations (2001). NP2 aimed at enhancing the delivery of public services and local development with mainstreaming of gender equality, social equity and inclusiveness and climate change adaptation through establishing the structures and governance systems of subnational administrations to be modern, autonomous, efficient, transparent, and accountable in providing public services and local development. NP2 is implemented under leadership and management of the National Committee for Sub-National Democratic Development (NCDD) with assistance of NCDD Secretariat (NCDDS) for day-to-day management and implementation of the program.

The Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC), through NCDDS, is preparing the Sustainable Climate-Resilient Accelerated Local Economic Development (SCALED) Project to support implementation of the 10-Year National Program for Sub-National Democratic Development Phase 2 (NP2, 2021-2030). The project is expected to be implemented over a five-year period (2027-2031) with an indicative budget of US$80–100 million, primarily financed by the World Bank and other anticipated development partners. As part of early preparation, the World Bank together with the RGC undertook a detailed knowledge stocktake, from which a summary of findings relevant to this assignment is annexed below.

The proposed Project Development Objective (PDO) focuses on three interrelated dimensions:

1. Strengthening subnational administrations' resilience systems and capacities;
2. Delivery of local economic and climate-resilient infrastructure; and
3. Promoting citizen participation, social accountability, and inclusive service delivery.

The project consists of four components:

- Component 1: Local Resilience Systems Strengthening;
- Component 2: Local Resilience and Economic Investments;
- Component 3: Innovation and Learning; and
- Component 4: Coordination, Policy, and Implementation Support.

Strengthening local planning systems is a central pillar of SCALED, particularly under Component 1 and 2. This assignment is the primary entry point for system strengthening under the project and the most operationally critical activity within the SCALED preparation program. The consultant will work in coordination with other consultants engaged in other assignments, as revisions to planning documents must integrate the outputs of other assignments, including the mapping of functions related to Local Economic Development (LED), the climate targeting framework and the gender and inclusion elements of the SCALED project, as well as the recommendations of the Participatory Planning and Citizen Engagement Options for SCALED. The final expected outcome of these consultancies is a single, government-endorsed set of revised subnational planning instruments. NCDDS seeks to recruit a qualified Senior Local Planning and Governance Consultant to lead this assignment. The consultant will be supported by a Support Assistant.

2. Objective of the Assignment

The objective of this consultancy is to revise Cambodia's subnational planning guidelines; the 5-Year Development Plan and 3-Year Rolling Investment Program guidelines used by District/Municipality (DM) and Commune/Sangkat (CS) administrations, so that they produce plans SNAs can realistically finance, staff, and deliver, while giving climate resilience, gender-responsive planning, social protection, and local economic development a durable place in the planning and budgeting cycle.

The Consultant should assess whether the existing guidelines adequately address these themes and, more importantly, why the plans have not consistently translated them into actual implementation. Through document review, field consultations, and comparison with current SNA practices, the Consultant should determine whether the main issue is gaps in the guidelines or practical constraints such as limited funding, staffing, data, or enforcement. Based on the findings, the Consultant should recommend whether the guidelines need additional content or should instead be simplified and focused on a smaller number of realistic and achievable actions. Any proposed revisions should be clearly justified and practical for SNAs to fund and implement.

The revised guidelines are intended to be formally adopted through the appropriate inter-ministerial instrument, however, the assignment is considered complete upon submission of a consultant report and the proposed revisions to the guidelines. At the same time, the government's own five-year implementation planning already envisages a broader review of the subnational planning system on a timeline that may extend beyond this assignment's schedule. The Consultant, together with NCDDS, shall resolve at inception report.

To achieve full completion of this consultancy, the revised guidelines must be agreed by NCDDS.

3. Scope of Work

The consultant will focus on the following key design questions:

1. How should the revised guidelines reconcile the ambition of the planning process with the fiscal envelope and staffing actually available to SNAs?
2. What is the correct division of planning between DMs and C/Ss, and does the current architecture create duplication?
3. How should climate resilience be integrated so that it is executed rather than merely required?
4. How should social protection and social service functions enter the planning instruments, given that the fiscal instrument now exists but the guidelines predate it?
5. Why do citizens participate in social accountability but not in planning — and what part of the answer, if any, lies within the guidelines?
6. What must the revised investment programme guidelines do to be operable as the front end of the Component 2 single investment window?
7. Through which instrument, and on what timetable, will the revised guidelines be adopted — and do the government's own timetable match the project's?

3.1. Inception and Scoping

- Review the SCALED Knowledge Stocktake on Local Investment and Planning Guidelines (DDP/DIP, CDP/CIP) and related diagnostic material prepared for this assignment, treating it as a starting point that frames the inception discussion and methodology rather than as a predetermined set of conclusions;
- Hold an inception meeting – to be convened by NCDDS – with the inter-ministerial technical working group (MoI, MoP, MEF and NCDDS) and the World Bank Task Team to establish a shared understanding of the assignment objectives, expected outputs, implementation approach, and timeline, clarify roles and responsibilities, and identify implementation considerations or risks;
- Assess the status of related strategies, frameworks, and processes that may change during the assignment, including those on climate resilience, social protection, local economic development, and subnational administration, to ensure the revised guidelines remain relevant and aligned with future developments;
- Map relevant sub-national counterparts including Capital, Provincial, Municipal, District, Khan and Commune/Sangkat administrations, line departments, SNA committees, NGOs, CSOs, the private sector, and other relevant stakeholders to be engaged throughout the assignment, particularly in the FGDs and field-testing;
- Prepare a comprehensive implementation methodology outlining the technical approaches and analytical methods to be applied throughout the assignment, including the desk review, comparative assessment, stakeholder consultations, FGDs, diagnostic analysis, validation workshops, quality assurance process, and how upstream inputs from Activities A-1, A-2, and A-3 will be integrated.

3.2. Desk study, field work, and analysis

- Undertake a comprehensive review on Stocktake report and the existing planning guidelines, related legislation, decentralization policies, planning regulations, national development frameworks, and recent evaluations of the planning system, together with a comparative assessment of international good practice in sub-national planning and investment programming;
- Test why current plans do not consistently translate mandated content into executed activities, examining in particular the roles played by the fiscal envelope available to SNAs, staffing and process financing, data reliability, and whether existing requirements — including on citizen participation — are enforced in practice, and use this diagnosis, rather than an assumption that the guidelines are silent on cross-cutting themes, to determine the direction and scale of the revision;
- Conduct Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with a range of SNAs, including both district and municipal administrations, to assess current planning practices, implementation experience, institutional capacity, and operational challenges, and to test whether urban and rural administrations warrant differentiated planning guidance;
- In collaboration with the Local Participatory Consultant (recruited separately), the consultant will assess how citizens actually engage with planning consultations — who attends and who does not, how meetings are conducted, and what happens to the priorities raised — as a basis for judging whether the guidelines' participation provisions need to be enforced, redesigned, or supported through mechanisms that sit outside the guidelines themselves;
- Conduct SWOT or equivalent analysis to identify gaps, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and priority areas for improvement, and develop a reasonable estimate of what it actually costs an SNA to carry out the planning process the guidelines mandate. In collaboration with the Local Participatory Consultant, the consultant will also consider capacity gaps for conducting the consultations mandated by the guidelines;
- Consolidate the desk review and field findings into an evidence base that clearly states the theory of change the revision will follow.

3.3. Revision of Planning Guidelines

- Prepare draft revised planning guidelines that reflect the tested theory of change, and that clarify how the district/municipal and commune/sangkat instruments relate to and complement one another rather than duplicating a similar process at both levels;
- Design the investment programming component so that it can serve as a credible entry point for investment decisions — requiring priorities to be weighed against a realistic resource envelope, and setting out the appraisal information (such as climate, environmental and social considerations, economic rationale, and operation and maintenance implications) that significant investments should carry before being included — recognizing that this guideline sits upstream of, and should align closely with, the related investment implementation manual being developed under a related SCALED activity;
- Integrate climate resilience, gender equality, social protection, public participation and social accountability, and local economic development into the planning and investment programming cycle in a way that is durable and trackable — for example through budgeted, reportable activity categories rather than narrative guidance alone — building on existing tools and recently introduced financing mechanisms for these themes so that new instruments are absorbed and aligned rather than run in parallel;

- Include a practical mechanism for closing the loop with citizens and SNA councils each planning cycle — reporting back on what was proposed, what was funded, and what was not — as a direct response to the finding that participation tends to fail where feedback is absent, and consider how meeting timing, location, and facilitation could be adjusted to reach a more representative range of residents;
- Develop practical tools, templates, workflow diagrams, examples, and quality assurance checklists to support consistent and realistic application, including an indicative costed annex setting out what it takes an SNA to carry out each mandatory planning step.

3.4. Field-Testing

- Organize sub-national level consultation meetings and testing of the draft guidelines, covering a range of DM and CS contexts — including urban and rural administrations — coordinated where possible with field visits under other Component A activities;
- Pay particular attention during field-testing to whether the revised participation and feedback provisions are realistic for SNAs to implement, and whether the guidelines' assumptions about staffing, data, and financing hold in practice;
- Incorporate field-testing findings into a revised draft.

3.5. Stakeholder Consultation, Validation, and Revision

- Conduct bilateral technical meetings with the Inter-Ministerial Working Group (NCDDS, MoI, MoP and MEF) at key milestones (inception, draft, and pre-finalization stages) to align on definitions, data fields, and reporting templates used across the SNA planning system, and to pre-clear the revised guidelines with each ministry ahead of the consolidated technical workshop;
- Conduct technical review meetings with NCDDS and the Inter-Ministerial Working Group to obtain detailed comments on the draft guidelines;
- Conduct national consultation workshops involving representatives from line ministries, Capital/Provincial administrations, District/Municipal/Khan administrations, C/S administrations, development partners, NGOs, CSOs, and other relevant stakeholders to validate the proposed revisions and gather practical recommendations;
- Coordinate specifically with related SCALED activities where the guidelines touch their subject matter — including public participation and social accountability, social protection, and the investment implementation manual — so the revised guidelines remain consistent with parallel work rather than diverging from it;
- Systematically document all comments and feedback from relevant stakeholders and assess their implications and revise the draft guidelines accordingly to produce a technically robust, consensus-based final draft that reflects both policy requirements and implementation realities.

3.6. Finalization and Endorsement

- Following the consultation process, finalize the revised planning guidelines by incorporating all agreed technical comments and recommendations;
- Support NCDDS through whichever adoption pathway was confirmed at inception — whether endorsement on the assignment's original timeline or a technically complete draft carried into the government's broader planning-system review — including preparation of presentation materials, technical briefs, and responses to comments raised during review by

the NCDDS Secretariat, the Inter-Ministerial Working Group, and the National Committee for Sub-National Democratic Development (NCDD);

- Support NCDDS in presenting and defending the revised guidelines, and in securing the necessary inter-ministerial sign-off, until the agreed completion criterion for this assignment is met;
- Propose a practical approach to disseminating and training SNAs on the revised guidelines, recognizing that formal issuance alone has not previously translated into changed practice at subnational level;
- Where feasible, support NCDDS in the briefing of development partners and other stakeholders engaged in decentralization and local governance reform on the revised guidelines, to promote coherence with related initiatives;
- Organize a final validation meeting with the Inter-Ministerial Working Group (MoP, MoI, MEF, and NCDDS) to confirm no outstanding objections prior to submitting the guidelines through the agreed adoption pathway.

3.7. Capacity Building for NCDDS and Subnational staff

- Support the preparation of user-friendly training materials on the revised guidelines, in collaboration with the Senior Capacity Development Consultant, to help guide and facilitate training for NCDDS staff and subnational staff in project target areas.
- **Provide orientation** to NCDDS and relevant subnational staff on the revised guidelines and their implementation.

4. Expected Deliverables

No.	Deliverable	Indicative Timeline	Payment Schedule
1	Inception note confirming scope, methodology, and integration approach	November 2026	20% upon acceptance of the inception note
2	Draft revised subnational planning guidelines and financing modalities for internal World Bank review and inter-ministerial technical working group review	January 2026	30% upon acceptance of the draft revised subnational planning guidelines and financing modalities
3	Organize field testing and revision	February 2027	30% upon acceptance of the deliverable #3&#4
4	Stakeholder Consultation, Validation and Revision for integration into the PIM	March 2027	
5	Finalization of revised guidelines by NCDDS	March 2027	20% upon acceptance of the final guideline

5. Duration of the Assignment

The assignment is expected to be conducted over a period of approximately **90 working days** between November 2026 to March 2027, with a level of effort to be determined by NCDDS. The Consultant will be required to travel to a few SNAs for FGD and field testing of the revised guidelines.

6. Payments

The payment will be made on the basis of lump sums to be determined based on qualifications, deliverable outputs, and contract negotiation.

7. Reporting and Supervision

The Consultant will report directly to the Project Director and/or designated Project Manager of SCALED preparation phase, in coordination with the World Bank Task Team's governance and planning focal points.

The consultant will work closely with relevant technical departments of MoI, MOP, MEF, NCDDS, SNAs and the Senior LED Consultant, Spatial and Socioeconomic Data Analyst Consultant, Climate Change Consultant, Gender and Inclusion Consultant, Local Participatory Consultant, Senior Project Management Consultant, and World Bank technical teams.

The Consultant shall coordinate the planning and scheduling of any consultations with DM/CS councils and subnational staff with the Senior Project Management Consultant and other consultants engaged in SCALED preparation, including the Local Participatory Consultant, with a view to combining or sequencing consultation activities where possible, and avoiding duplicative engagement or consultation fatigue among subnational stakeholders. NCDDS will support this coordination, including through a shared consultation calendar where feasible.

All deliverables shall be submitted in English. Khmer summaries may be requested where necessary, and the final endorsed guidelines shall be available in Khmer.

The consultant is expected to:

- Participate in regular preparation meetings with the NCDDS project team and the World Bank Task Team, are required;
- Provide brief written progress updates to NCDDS upon request;
- Respond in a timely manner to review comments and requests for revisions from NCDDS and the World Bank Task Team.

8. Required Qualifications and Experience

Education

- Advanced university degree (master's degree or higher preferred) in Public Administration, Economic, Public Policy, Local Governance, Development Studies, Urban and Regional Planning, or other related fields.

Professional Experience

- Minimum 10 years of relevant professional experience in subnational planning systems, local governance, or decentralization reform in Cambodia;
- Demonstrated experience revising or drafting government planning guidelines, manuals, or instruments;
- Experience integrating climate risk, gender, and economic development considerations into planning systems is highly desirable;
- Experience supporting government institutions on donor-funded projects, preferably financed by the World Bank or other multilateral development partners;
- Strong understanding of Cambodia's CIP/CDP/DDP/DIP planning architecture and the D&D reform agenda.

Skills and Competencies

- Excellent analytical and technical writing skills, with the ability to draft government-ready planning instruments;
- Strong facilitation and coordination skills, including the ability to integrate inputs from multiple specialist consultants into a single coherent product;
- Ability to work effectively with government agencies and development partners;
- Fluency in English and Khmer (written and spoken) is required.

9. Selection Method

The Consultant will be selected in accordance with the applicable procurement and consultant selection procedures of the World Bank and the Royal Government of Cambodia.

10. Ethical Considerations and Confidentiality

The Consultant shall:

- Maintain confidentiality of all project information and documents;
- Comply with applicable government and donor policies;
- Avoid conflicts of interest during the assignment; and
- Ensure that all outputs are original and of professional quality.

11. Administrative Support

NCDDS will:

- Facilitate access to relevant documents and stakeholders, including outputs from LED, Climate Change and Gender Activities;
- Coordinate meetings and communications with the MOP, MoI, MEF, and subnational administrations (capital, provincial, district/municipal/khan, and commune/sangkat levels), including scheduling of FGD with selected SNA, consultative workshops, TWG sessions, and field-testing logistics;
- Provide available project information and background materials;
- Review and provide feedback on deliverables in a timely manner and support the NCDDS endorsement process for the final guidelines; and
- Provide the Consultant with access to the SCALED Knowledge Stocktake, its underlying source documents, relevant government legal and policy instruments, and other available project preparation materials, subject to document availability and applicable confidentiality requirements.

ANNEX

Stocktake Summary: Local Investment and Planning Guidelines (DDP/DIP, CDP/CIP)

Relevant Findings for SCALED Activity A-4 Design Questions

Prepared for the SCALED Project — 12 August 2026 (Version 2)

Note on purpose and use. This summary was generated by reviewing eleven priority documents identified from the SCALED Knowledge Stocktake and calibrated against the SCALED Identification Mission Aide Memoire (May 2026). Documents reviewed: Technical Guideline on the Development of District Development Plans (NCDD/MoI/MoP, March 2017); Technical Guidelines on the Development of the Commune/Sangkat Development Plan and Investment Program (NCDD/MoI/MoP, March 2017); Joint Prakas No. 0149 on Addendum Guidelines for PC/DMK/CS Investment Programs (MoI/MoP, 2 October 2020); Compilation of Sub-Decrees 182, 183, 184 and 193 (RGC, 2019); Sub-Decree No. 152 on the Transfer of the District/Municipality Fund 2024–2028 (RGC, 2023); Joint Circular No. 007 on Social and Sanitation Service Expenditure Items of the DM and CS Funds (MEF/MoI, 2025); SNA Planning Evaluation Report (MoI, July 2025); Mid-Term Review of NP2-SNDD (NCDD, 2025); Second Five-Year Implementation Plan 2026–2030 (IP5-II, NCDD, May 2026); Technical Manual for the Inclusion of Climate Resilience in Planning by Local Government (NCDD/MoE, 2017); Manual on the Implementation of Commune/Sangkat Fund Projects (NCDD, 2017). Findings below are analytical propositions for the consultant to test through desk review, focus group discussions and field-testing — not predetermined conclusions. This note is a starting point, not a substitute for direct engagement with NCDDS, MoI, MoP and MEF counterparts.

Version 2 changes: Section 1 reframed to clarify that the revision should proceed and only its direction is contested; Design Question 5 rebuilt around new evidence on participation composition, facilitation and the ISAF comparator; Section 8 corrected and substantially expanded following the launch of IP5-II in May 2026, which introduces a significant timing question for the assignment.

1. The Revision Should Proceed — Its Theory of Change Is What Needs Testing

The case for revising the guidelines is settled. MoI's own 2025 evaluation recommends it, the NP2 Mid-Term Review recommends it, IP5-II commits to it as Priority Activity 4.1.2, and Joint Circular 007 has changed the fiscal environment in ways nine-year-old guidelines cannot reflect. Nothing in this note argues for leaving the 2017 instruments alone.

What is contested is the theory of change behind the revision, and here the evidence points somewhere other than where the draft TOR is pointing. The implicit theory in the TOR is that the guidelines are silent on climate resilience, gender, social protection and participation, and that writing that content in will produce plans which address them. That theory does not survive contact with the documents.

The 2017 guidelines are substantially better than their reputation. Both the district and the commune/sangkat guidelines already require situation analysis covering natural resource management, environment and climate change adaptation. Both require development strategies in the same areas. Both carry annexes with participatory analytical tools including problem tree analysis and prioritisation scoring, and the scoring already includes equity and responsiveness to the actual needs of vulnerable groups. Both assign the Committee for Women and Children Affairs explicit roles in collecting gender-disaggregated data. On participation, the commune guideline sets a village meeting quorum of 60 percent of households with at least 30 percent women. These are operational requirements with templates attached, not vague exhortations.

And yet the 2025 SNA Planning Evaluation found five-year plans copied forward between mandates — it documents the Koh Kavei District plan for 2025–2029 as identical in structure and phrasing to the 2020–2024 plan it replaced. It found plans lacking any theory of change or indicators for climate and gender. It found thirty percent of commune/sangkat plans with no investment project matching the high-priority needs they had

themselves identified. And it found village meeting attendance running between 6 and 30 percent of households, against a mandated quorum of 60 percent.

That last figure deserves emphasis because it generalises. The binding requirement is already between two and ten times actual practice, and nothing follows from the shortfall. The gap between what the guidelines require and what SNAs produce is therefore not a drafting gap, and a revision built on the assumption that it is will produce a longer document and no change in behaviour.

Three constraints explain the gap better. The first is fiscal: most communes can fund only one to five small infrastructure projects a year, so a plan identifying dozens of needs is largely a document about things that will not happen. The second is capacity and process financing: many district planning offices run on one or two multi-skilled staff, and SNA budgets carry no dedicated line for the conduct of planning — no funding for data collection, field visits or monitoring. The third is data: the Commune Database is estimated at roughly 75 percent reliability because village-level collection is rushed and often relies on the village chief's recollection rather than records.

The 2017 Climate Resilience Technical Manual is the cautionary precedent. It supplied four well-designed participatory tools for exactly the mainstreaming task this assignment revisits. Nine years later, plans still lack climate indicators. Supplying good technical content, on its own, has already been tried.

The practical consequence. Under the TOR's implicit theory, a successful revision is longer and more comprehensive. Under the alternative theory, it is shorter, simpler, costed, and makes a smaller number of things genuinely executable — with the cross-cutting themes entering through budget-coded, reportable activity lines rather than additional narrative chapters. MoI's first recommendation is to revise the guidelines "to be more simplified and realistic," and the Mid-Term Review reinforces this by recommending fewer expected results and priority actions. The consultant should be required to test which theory holds before drafting, because the two produce incompatible documents.

Design implication — Component 1: Require the consultant to state and test the revision's theory of change at inception, and to justify any net addition to the length or step-count of the guidelines against evidence that the additional requirement will be executed within existing fiscal, staffing and data constraints.

COMPONENT 1 — LOCAL RESILIENCE SYSTEMS STRENGTHENING

2. Design Question 1

How should the revised guidelines reconcile the ambition of the planning process with the fiscal envelope and staffing actually available to SNAs?

Finding 2.1 — MoI has already reached a position on the direction of revision, and it is towards simplification. The SNA Planning Evaluation's first recommendation is to "review and revise technical guidelines for the preparation of SNA development plans to be more simplified and realistic"; its fourth is to increase the budget for the planning process, specifically for data collection and monitoring. A draft that expands the guidelines will be arguing against the client's own evaluation.

Finding 2.2 — The fiscal envelope is knowable and should discipline the plan. Sub-Decree 152 sets the DM Fund at 1.6 percent of the previous year's approved national recurrent revenue for 2024–2028, divided into general administration, social services and environmental sanitation, and local development components, with the social services and sanitation component capped at 20,000 million riels per year. Allocation across DMs runs on explicit formulae — 30 percent equal share, 20 percent population and 50 percent poverty index for social services; 40, 20 and 40 respectively for local development — and disbursement is in four equal quarterly instalments. A three-year rolling investment programme can therefore be built against a predictable envelope, which the thirty percent unmatched-priority finding suggests is not happening.

Finding 2.3 — The planning process itself is unfunded. This is the most actionable single finding in the SNA Planning Evaluation and it sits outside the guidelines' reach: no guideline can create a budget line. It can, however, state the cost of the process it mandates, which converts an invisible constraint into a negotiable one with MEF.

Design implication — Components 1 and 4: Test whether the revised guidelines should carry a costed process annex — an indicative cost per SNA of executing each mandatory step — and whether securing a dedicated planning process budget line is a Component 4 policy deliverable rather than something the guidelines can deliver alone. Test also whether the investment programme template should require priorities to be ranked against a disclosed resource envelope derived from the Sub-Decree 152 formula, so that the plan distinguishes funded commitments from an aspirational needs register.

3. Design Question 2

What is the correct division of planning labour between DMs and C/Ss, and does the current architecture create duplication?

Finding 3.1 — The two 2017 guidelines are explicit that the DDP is not an aggregation of CDPs. The district guideline states the District Development Plan is not a plan resulting from the summation of all commune/sangkat development plans in the district; the commune guideline states the commune plan is not a component of the district plan. The relationship is coordination and supplementation, not hierarchy. Whether SNAs understand and operate this distinction is an empirical question for the field work.

Finding 3.2 — Planning capacity is institutionally located but asymmetrically resourced. Sub-Decree 184 establishes in each district a Planning and Commune/Sangkat Support Office with an Article 18 mandate covering development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the five-year development plan, three-year rolling investment programme, and annual activities and budget plan. Sub-Decree 182 establishes the equivalent Planning and Sangkat Support Office in municipalities with materially the same mandate. The office is charged with both its own administration's planning and support to the tier below — a dual mandate the SNA Planning Evaluation found under-resourced, with technical support from district to commune limited by budget constraints even where the District Integration Workshop exists.

Two cautions on the sub-decree compilation. Sub-Decree 183 covers Khan administrations of Phnom Penh Capital, which the Aide Memoire places outside SCALED's scope; it is a comparator only. Sub-Decree 193 assigns health functions to Capital and Province administrations, not to DMKs, and is relevant only as an illustration of how sectoral transfers land on sub-national plans.

Finding 3.3 — The DM–C/S relationship carries a supervisory as well as a supportive dimension. Sub-Decree 184 Article 43 preserves the autonomy of both tiers, while Article 44 gives the district authority to review the legality of commune deika and decisions alongside its duty to provide technical support and capacity development. A revision that increases district review of commune plans risks converting support into control, cutting against NP2's democratic development premise.

Design implication — Component 1: Test whether the revised guidelines should differentiate the two instruments more sharply by function — the CDP/CIP as the instrument of direct citizen consultation and small-scale local response, the DDP/DIP as the instrument of economic scale, inter-commune investment and LED — rather than running parallel processes with similar content at two tiers. Test also whether the district's planning support obligation to communes should be explicitly costed within the DM Fund.

4. Design Question 3

How should climate resilience be integrated so that it is executed rather than merely required?

Finding 4.1 — Cambodia has already produced the technical content. The 2017 Climate Resilience Technical Manual supplies four named tools: disaster risk mapping, designated compulsory; trend analysis as a simplified vulnerability and risk assessment; the H-Form participatory tool for identifying adaptation measures; and disaster ranking for prioritisation. It also requires equal representation of women and other potentially marginalised people in the trend analysis and H-Form sessions, so gender is built into the tools rather than bolted on.

Finding 4.2 — The manual diagnosed its own failure condition in advance. It records that SNAs have no budget for supporting or implementing climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction activities, and notes these were then new concepts requiring significant training. It also observes that the CDP and CIP guidelines

did not at that time address climate change and disaster risk management — which is why it existed as a separate instrument. The proposition worth testing is that a free-standing manual parallel to the official guidelines is structurally weaker than integrated text, and that the tools should be absorbed into the revised guidelines rather than re-issued alongside them.

Finding 4.3 — The fiscal position of climate has changed, and in an awkward place. Joint Circular 007 makes climate change the eleventh of its service areas, with eligible activities including sub-national action plans based on climate risk index data, and reforestation. But it sits within the social services and environmental sanitation component of the DM and C/S Funds — the component Sub-Decree 152 caps at 20,000 million riels annually and allocates on a formula weighted 50 percent to poverty. Climate action is thus fiscally classified as a social service rather than as local economic development or infrastructure, which constrains the kind of climate investment an SNA can readily fund.

Finding 4.4 — IP5-II adds a forthcoming instrument. Priority Action 5.4.1 commits to development of a Strategic Plan on Climate Change Resilience for SNAs, targeted for adoption in 2026. The revised guidelines will need to align to a document that may be finalised during this consultancy.

Design implication — Components 1 and 2: Test whether the revised guidelines should incorporate the four 2017 tools directly into the mandatory situation analysis step, retaining disaster risk mapping as compulsory, and whether climate screening should attach to project appraisal in the investment programme rather than only to the five-year plan's strategy chapter. Test the fiscal classification question explicitly: whether the Component 2 investment menu should permit climate-resilient economic infrastructure under the local development component, and what regulatory change that would require. Establish the status of the IP5-II climate resilience strategic plan at inception.

5. Design Question 4

How should social protection and social service functions enter the planning instruments, given that the fiscal instrument now exists but the guidelines predate it?

Finding 5.1 — Joint Circular 007 is the most significant change to the SNA planning environment since 2017 and is entirely absent from the guidelines being revised. It defines eleven service areas for DM and C/S Fund expenditure: maternal, infant and child health and nutrition; early childhood education; primary and secondary education quality; protection of women and children; gender equality; social protection; communicable and non-communicable disease prevention; social accountability; clean water and sanitation; solid and liquid waste management; and climate change. Each carries specified eligible activities and budget codes — poor household identification services and family livelihood subsidies under social protection, nutrition screening for pregnant women and children under five, disability inclusion activities.

Finding 5.2 — The circular already mandates the planning link. It requires administrations to ensure social and sanitation service projects and activities are prioritised and included in the three-year rolling investment programme, and sets bi-annual and annual reporting to councils, with DMs reporting to MEF copied to MoI and C/Ss to MoI copied to MEF. The guidelines need to catch up with an existing obligation rather than create a new one — a materially easier drafting and endorsement proposition.

Finding 5.3 — The eleven service areas cut across five of the six cross-cutting themes named in this assignment. Gender equality, social protection, social accountability and climate change are each a named expenditure category with budget codes attached. This offers a concrete integration mechanism the 2017 guidelines lacked: cross-cutting themes operationalised as budgeted, reportable activity lines rather than narrative chapters.

Finding 5.4 — IP5-II confirms the direction but places the regulatory framework later. Priority Activity 5.4.3 commits to adopting a regulatory framework on SNA roles in social protection by 2027 — after this consultancy's scheduled completion.

Design implication — Component 1: Test whether the revised investment programme template should be restructured around the Joint Circular 007 service areas and budget classifications, so that plan, investment programme, budget and statutory report share one architecture. This would address the coherence failure the

SNA Planning Evaluation identified and give the cross-cutting themes a fiscal anchor. Coordinate with Activity A-6 (SNA Social Protection Assessment) and account for the 2027 regulatory framework as a moving target.

6. Design Question 5

Why do citizens participate in social accountability but not in planning — and what part of the answer, if any, lies within the guidelines?

This design question has been rebuilt in Version 2. The evidence indicates that the participation deficit is largely driven by factors the guidelines do not control — information, facilitation, meeting timing and incentives — and the consultant should be steered away from the assumption that procedural redrafting will fix it.

Finding 6.1 — The requirement is already unenforced, so redrafting it changes nothing. The commune guideline sets a village meeting quorum of 60 percent of households with at least 30 percent women. Actual attendance is 6 to 30 percent. The mandate already sits between two and ten times above practice, and no consequence attaches to the shortfall. Any recommendation that raises or elaborates the participation requirement, without addressing enforcement and verification, will widen a gap rather than close it.

Finding 6.2 — The composition of attendance matters more than the headline rate, and it selects against the economically active. Those who attend are predominantly elderly women, people with disabilities, and children. Those absent are youth, the poor, and people who work — because meetings are held during working hours. This is a scheduling and opportunity-cost problem, not generalised apathy. For a project whose centre of gravity is local economic development, the groups most relevant to Component 2 — working-age producers, traders, and the poor whose livelihoods the investments are meant to improve — are precisely those the current process excludes. A high attendance figure achieved without them would not serve SCALED's purposes.

Finding 6.3 — Notification is thin and facilitation is the weakest link. Meetings are announced with roughly five days' notice via village chiefs, loudspeakers and social media, at village meeting points, pagodas or the village chief's house. The meetings themselves are described as conducted to fulfil the requirement, with officials reading out instructions — information-giving rather than deliberation. Citizens also arrive with limited knowledge of NP2 or IP5, so they lack the frame needed to engage with what is being asked. Notably, the 2017 Climate Resilience Manual assumed a facilitation standard well above this: probing questions, participants split into age cohorts, scoring by show of hands, problem trees translated into adaptation projects. That is a skilled-facilitator specification, and the gap between it and officials reading instructions aloud explains much of why those tools did not take hold.

Finding 6.4 — The absence of a return leg. Citizens report that the same questions are asked each year and nothing visibly follows. The mechanical cause is the finding at 2.2: thirty percent of plans contain high-priority needs with no matching investment project, and citizens are asked to prioritise against an envelope never disclosed to them. Neither guideline requires the administration to report back on what was requested in the previous cycle, what was funded, and what was not. Participation fails at the point where the process should report back, not at the point where it invites people in — and this is the one element of the diagnosis that does sit squarely within the guidelines' reach.

Finding 6.5 — ISAF is the most useful comparator, but not a model to import wholesale. ISAF operates in 93 percent of communes and reports far higher engagement than statutory planning achieves with the same citizens in the same communes, which is strong evidence that the binding constraints are facilitation, intermediation and tangible subject matter rather than legal mandate. But two qualifications matter. First, high participation numbers are not self-validating: the A-3 gender and social inclusion stocktake records that participants in social accountability processes are not consistently the right ones, so ISAF may share a version of the composition problem identified at 6.2 rather than solve it. Second, and more consequential for SCALED, ISAF's engagement rests on an intensive non-governmental facilitation structure that is donor-financed and, in IP5-II's own words, "not yet been fully integrated into the institutional mechanisms of SNAs." IP5-II Priority Activity 2.4.2 commits to expanding social accountability to all DMKs and C/Ss nationwide and to a sustainable social accountability strategic plan at C/S level targeted for 2026. The live question is therefore not whether planning should borrow ISAF's methods, but whether the facilitation capability underpinning both can be

institutionalised within SNAs and financed domestically at national scale. If it cannot, importing ISAF-style facilitation into the planning cycle simply relocates the sustainability problem.

Finding 6.6 — IP5-II supplies both a target and a channel. The Citizen Participation Index is to move from a 2025 baseline of 0.58 to 0.75 by 2030, and the Responsiveness Index from 0.67 to 0.77. Priority Activity 2.4.1 commits to 100 percent of SNAs having active websites and Facebook and Telegram channels by 2026–2027, and Priority Activity 2.5.2 promotes the Commune Database within a digital planning system. These create disclosure channels the 2017 guidelines could not assume.

Design implication — Components 1, 3 and 4: Test four propositions in preference to adding consultation steps. First, that the existing quorum should be enforced and verified through disaggregated attendance reporting rather than raised. Second, that meeting timing and location should be specified to accommodate working people, with attendance reported by age, sex, disability and livelihood group so that composition becomes visible. Third, that the guidelines should require a closing-the-loop step — a published statement of what was requested last cycle, what was funded, what was not and why — conducted against a disclosed resource envelope, using the IP5-II digital disclosure channels. Fourth, and most significant for SCALED, that the facilitation capability question should be treated as a financing and institutionalisation question rather than a drafting one: who facilitates planning consultations, what skills that requires, and whether the sustainable social accountability model IP5-II commits to for 2026 can carry the planning cycle as well. This last point should be worked jointly with Activity A-5, and may be a Component 3 innovation-and-learning agenda rather than a Component 1 guidelines output.

COMPONENT 2 — LOCAL RESILIENCE AND ECONOMIC INVESTMENTS

7. Design Question 6

What must the revised investment programme guidelines do to be operable as the front end of the Component 2 single investment window?

Finding 7.1 — The Aide Memoire is specific that Component 2 will finance climate-resilient local economic development investments through a single investment window primarily targeting DMs, and that NCDDS, MEF and MoI all emphasised the need for a consolidated investment project implementation manual for DMs equivalent to the government's PIM for C/Ss. This is the sharpest calibration point for the assignment: the DIP is the pipeline a DM-level window draws on, so the investment programming half of this consultancy sits on the critical path for Component 2.

Finding 7.2 — The C/S PIM shows the scale of what a DM equivalent must cover. The 2017 manual runs a full cycle — project study and technical appraisal, procurement and contract management, technical audit — with procurement thresholds at public bidding for development projects from 2,000,000 riels, price comparison between 400,000 and 2,000,000 riels, and direct contracting below 400,000 riels. It carries environmental impact analysis requirements for new roads, dams and projects affecting protected areas; a land acquisition regime prohibiting use of C/S funds where a project would demolish houses or business structures, with voluntary land donation and land acquisition report forms; and an indigenous peoples safeguard requiring a safe measures report and consultation in their own language where a village population is more than five percent indigenous.

Finding 7.3 — The PIM is explicitly downstream of the investment programme: project preparation follows inclusion in the three-year rolling investment programme and precedes procurement. The revised CIP and DIP guidelines therefore define the entry gate to the PIM, and any screening criterion the guidelines omit — climate, environmental and social, economic appraisal — cannot be recovered later without duplicating appraisal.

Finding 7.4 — DM-level investments will be larger and more complex than the C/S projects the 2017 PIM addresses, pointing to gaps a DM PIM must fill: multi-year and multi-commune investments, higher procurement thresholds, more substantial environmental and social risk, operation and maintenance liabilities, and revenue-generating or LED-type assets such as markets.

Design implication — Component 2 and Activity A-7: Test whether the revised DIP guideline should carry an eligibility and screening annex specifying, for each investment type, the appraisal evidence required at programming stage — climate risk screening, environmental and social screening, economic justification, and an operation and maintenance financing plan. Flag the sequencing dependency explicitly: the A-4 draft investment programme guideline should precede or run concurrently with the A-7 DM PIM.

COMPONENT 4 — COORDINATION, POLICY AND IMPLEMENTATION SUPPORT

8. Design Question 7

Through what instrument, and on what timetable, will the revised guidelines be adopted — and does the government's own timetable match the project's?

Finding 8.1 — Corrected in Version 2. IP5-II was launched in May 2026 and places the planning system revision at the far end of the plan period. Priority Activity 4.1.2, "Reviewing and Revision of SNA Planning Systems," carries results framework targets of reviewed in 2029 and approved in 2030. IP5-II also frames the revision more broadly than this assignment does: the planning system is to be revised to align with a new three-tier structure of metropolitan, regional and local administrations, covering Capital, Provincial and DMK/CS levels, with MoI, MoP, MEF and NCDDS jointly responsible.

This is the most consequential finding in Version 2 and it cuts two ways. The assignment has a clear government mandate — it is not freelancing. But the draft TOR targets endorsed guidelines by March 2027, roughly three years ahead of the government's own approval target, and against a narrower scope than IP5-II envisages. Either the SCALED consultancy is intended to front-run and accelerate IP5-II Activity 4.1.2, in which case that should be stated explicitly and NCDDS should confirm the acceleration is wanted; or the consultancy produces technical input to a longer government process, in which case "formal endorsement" is the wrong completion criterion and the deliverable should be a well-founded draft with an agreed transition into the IP5-II workstream. The current TOR does not choose, and the choice determines whether the assignment can succeed on its own terms.

Finding 8.2 — A structural question sits inside the IP5-II framing. Because IP5-II ties the planning system revision to a new metropolitan/regional/local administrative architecture, a revision of DDP/DIP and CDP/CIP guidelines undertaken now, in isolation, risks being overtaken. The consultant should establish at inception how far the administrative restructuring has advanced and whether the guidelines can be revised in a way that is robust to it.

Finding 8.3 — Endorsement is a two-ministry act, not an NCDDS act. Joint Prakas No. 0149 of 2 October 2020 was signed by the Minister of Interior and the Minister of Planning; Article 1 put the addendum guidelines into use, Article 2 obliged councils, governors and commune chiefs to study and implement them, and MoP, MoI, the NCDD Secretariat and sub-national councils and governors were made responsible from the date of signature. The TOR's condition of "formal endorsement by NCDDS" understates what adoption requires and what March 2027 implies.

Finding 8.4 — The annual calendar constrains any process redesign. The 2020 addendum sets priority project lists to the Capital/Provincial Strategic Planning and Budget Committee planning working group by end of March, consolidation and submission to MoP by end of April, and MoP to MEF by end of May. A revised process must fit inside this calendar or amend it in the same instrument.

Finding 8.5 — Adjacent IP5-II commitments will move under the consultant's feet. A Sub-National Budget System Reform Strategy 2026–2030 is due for approval in 2026; procedures for monitoring and evaluating development plan implementation are targeted for 2026, filling an acknowledged gap where no national guidelines currently exist; a strategic plan for local economic development is targeted for 2027; the regulatory framework on SNA social protection roles for 2027; and the DM Fund rate is slated to increase beyond 1.6 percent by 2029. Several of these will be finalised during the consultancy.

Finding 8.6 — Dissemination is a known failure mode. The Mid-Term Review found that sub-national administrations in general do not know NP2 or IP5-I. An endorsed guideline that is not disseminated and

trained on will reproduce the 2017 outcome, and IP5-II's own indicators — the planning and budgeting index moving from 0.91 to 0.95, responsiveness from 0.67 to 0.77 — will not be met by issuance alone.

Design implication — Component 4: Resolve at inception, not at finalisation, both the instrument question — new joint prakas, addendum under the existing one, or amendment of the parent Sub-Decree 219 and Joint Prakas 2417 — and the timetable question raised at 8.1. Test whether the assignment should be explicitly positioned as accelerating IP5-II Activity 4.1.2, with NCDDS confirmation, and whether the deliverable is an endorsed instrument or a technically complete draft handed into the government process. Establish the status of the 2026 M&E procedures for development plans, since these interact directly with the guidelines.

9. Gaps and Limitations in the Evidence Base

Four limitations should be acknowledged in the TOR rather than discovered by the consultant.

The stocktake contains no evaluation of the 2020 addendum's effect. We know what it mandated; we do not know whether the March–April–May calendar is met in practice. A revision that assumes a functioning calendar may be building on sand.

There is no costing of the planning process anywhere in the reviewed material. The SNA Planning Evaluation establishes that the process is unfunded but not what funding it would cost. If a costed process annex is to be delivered, the costing must be generated within this assignment.

The evidence is thin on the municipality as distinct from the district. Sub-Decree 182 differs from 184 in office structure — municipalities have a Public Works, Transportation, Hygiene, Environment and Public Order Office where districts have a separate Agriculture, Natural Resource and Environment Office — implying different planning capabilities for urban and rural economic development. Whether the guidelines should differentiate urban from rural planning is unsettled.

Finally, the reviewed material does not establish what facilitation of planning consultations actually costs, who could provide it at scale, or whether ISAF's facilitation model can be delivered by SNAs without donor financing. Given the weight Finding 6.5 places on this, it is the most important evidentiary gap for the participation strand and should be worked jointly with A-5.

10. Priority Documents for Consultant Review

Priority	Document	Relevance
Essential	Technical Guideline on the Development of District Development Plans (NCDD/MoI/MoP, 2017)	The DDP/DIP instrument under revision; planning cycle, annex tools, prioritisation scoring
Essential	Technical Guidelines on the Development of the CS Development Plan and Investment Program (NCDD/MoI/MoP, 2017)	The CDP/CIP counterpart; read as a matched pair to expose DM–C/S asymmetry (DQ2); source of the 60% quorum
Essential	Second Five-Year Implementation Plan 2026–2030 (IP5-II, NCDD, 2026)	Governs the assignment's mandate and timetable; Activity 4.1.2 targets planning system approval in 2030 (DQ7)
Essential	Joint Prakas No. 0149 on Addendum Guidelines for PC/DMK/CS Investment Programs (MoI/MoP, 2020)	DQ7 — the endorsement precedent and the binding March/April/May RTIP calendar
Essential	Sub-Decree No. 184 on Functions and Structure of	Article 18 planning mandate; Articles 43–44 on district–commune relations (DQ2)

	District Administration (RGC, 2019)	
Essential	Sub-Decree No. 182 on Functions and Structure of Municipality Administration (RGC, 2019)	Article 18 municipal planning mandate; office structure differs from districts (Section 9)
Essential	Sub-Decree No. 152 on the Transfer of the DM Fund 2024–2028 (RGC, 2023)	DQ1 — fiscal envelope, allocation formulae, expenditure components
Essential	Joint Circular No. 007 on Social and Sanitation Service Expenditure Items (MEF/MoI, 2025)	DQ4 — eleven service areas, budget codes, and the existing RTIP inclusion mandate
Essential	SNA Planning Evaluation Report (MoI, 2025)	Core evidence base; plan quality, participation composition, facilitation, data, capacity, coherence
Important	Mid-Term Review of NP2-SNDD (NCDD, 2025)	Simplification mandate; dissemination failure; baseline for IP5-II
Important	Manual on the Implementation of C/S Fund Projects (NCDD, 2017)	DQ6 — template for the DM PIM; procurement thresholds and safeguards regime
Important	Technical Manual for Inclusion of Climate Resilience in Planning by Local Government (NCDD/MoE, 2017)	DQ3 — four named tools for absorption; its own failure diagnosis; facilitation standard assumed
Supplementary	Sub-Decree No. 219 (2009) and Joint Prakas No. 2417 (2010)	Parent instruments; consult on the amendment ceiling once the instrument question arises
Supplementary	Sub-Decree No. 183 on Khan Administrations (RGC, 2019)	Comparator only — Khans are outside SCALED's scope per the Aide Memoire
Supplementary	Sub-Decree No. 193 on Health Functions to Capital/Province (RGC, 2019)	Illustrative of how sectoral transfers land on SNA plans; not a DMK instrument
Supplementary	Commune Database (cDB) and Commune Council Database (cCD) (NCDD)	Determines what data a revised guideline can realistically require; reliability estimated at 75%