AUSTRALIAN WATER PARTNERSHIP PHASE 3

OUTCOME HARVEST:
Batch 1 Snapshot

Australian Aid

THE AUSTRALIAN WATER PARTNERSHIP

From Cambodia to Nepal, the Mekong to the Pacific, AWP Phase 3 is delivering real change in how governments plan, govern, and protect water resources in the face of climate change. This report brings together evidence from four activities that show how Australian expertise, strong partnerships, and flexible support are making a difference where it counts.

4
COUNTRIES & REGIONS COVERED

80+
STAKEHOLDERS INTERVIEWED

4
INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES ADDRESSED

6
AWP CONTRIBUTION PATHWAYS IDENTIFIED

OVERVIEW

WHAT IS AWP PHASE 3 TRYING TO ACHIEVE?

The Australian Water Partnership (AWP) is a DFAT-funded initiative working to strengthen climate-resilient water management across south Asia, southeast Asia and the Pacific. Phase 3 focuses on four interconnected goals, called Intermediate Outcomes (IOs), that together create the conditions for lasting change in how countries manage water.

IO1

Climate-resilient policies, practices & tools

Partner countries co-develop and trial climate resilient WRM policies, practices, and tools.

IO2

Gender-responsive & inclusive approaches

Gender responsive and accessible approaches are integrated into WRM systems.

IO3

Strategic partnerships in place

Strategic partnerships are established among Australian, bilateral, and regional partners.

IO4

Effective networks addressing water challenges

Effective and diversified partnerships and networks address climate related water challenges.

This report consolidates evidence from four Outcome Harvests conducted between late 2025 and early 2026, covering activities in Cambodia, Nepal, the Mekong region, and the Pacific. Evidence was gathered through more than 80 stakeholder interviews, focus group discussions, and review of activity documentation. Each harvest was conducted independently before being brought together in this synthesis.

RESULTS

FOUR STORIES OF CHANGE.

Across Cambodia, Nepal, the Mekong region, and the Pacific, AWP-supported work is shifting the way governments, regulators, and utilities approach water management challenges. Here is what changed, and why it matters.

FOUR STORIES OF CHANGE.

CAMBODIA

From fragmented plans to a nationally owned Roadmap

The Ministry of Water Resources (MOWRAM), with the support of AWP's partner Alluvium, led creation of a national Climate-Resilient Water Governance Roadmap, now used to brief senior government and align donor investment.

Over 150 stakeholders attended the national validation workshop, attended by the Minister and Australian Ambassador.

The Roadmap mapped who is doing what across donors, reducing duplication and positioning Australia's upcoming climate program for rapid start-up.

GEDSI considerations embedded, including dedicated inclusion activities and accessibility improvements for future phases.

NEPAL

From zero baseline to trial-ready energy storage regulation

Nepal's Electricity Regulatory Commission moved from no regulatory framework for pumped storage hydropower (PSH) to actionable tariff models and Power Purchase Agreement options.

Nepal publicly signalled its PSH direction at the Global Alliance for Pumped Storage forum in Paris, strengthening its position in regional energy diplomacy.

Australia was positioned as a strategic convenor, with the support of AWP partner Entura, bringing ERC, NEA, development banks, and private sector actors together around a shared evidence base.

Work has catalysed early movement toward a first-of-its-kind PSH demonstration project in Nepal.

FOUR STORIES OF CHANGE.

MEKONG REGION

From reactive reviews to proactive basin planning

The Mekong River Commission (MRC) shifted from a downstream impact focus to proactive, energy-aware basin planning, a change reflected in its new 2026–2030 Strategic Plan.

Multi-country technical workshops (hosted with Thailand's EGAT utility) built shared understanding of pumped storage, floating solar, and water-energy integration across four nations.

Advisor succession from Simon Krohn to Cynthia Nixon of Entura, preserved institutional knowledge during a high-pressure transition period.

GEDSI reintegrated into hydropower governance workstreams, supported by new advisor expertise.

PACIFIC

200+ young water professionals. One growing network

With support from AWP Partner Beca HunterH20, 25 Young Water Professionals (YWPs) from Pacific Island utilities completed the 2025 program, gaining climate resilience tools, technical skills, and Australian sector exposure through OzWater.

Alumni peer networks are now active channels for daily technical problem-solving across NRW, smart metering, GIS, and procurement.

PWWA is firmly positioned as program owner, a regionally led model for workforce development.

Early workplace translation reported: participants applied learning in decarbonisation modelling, SCADA monitoring improvements, and utility planning.

CONTRIBUTION ANALYSIS

HOW AWP MAKES A DIFFERENCE

Across all four Outcome Harvests, the same six contribution pathways emerged as consistent drivers of change: credible expertise, adaptive delivery, diplomatic facilitation, locally led co-design, strategic knowledge brokering, and durable relationships. Together, they define AWP's comparative advantage: combining trusted technical expertise, flexible modalities, and diplomatic leverage in service of locally led, climate-resilient water resource management.

1 Catalytic, high-quality technical expertise

Credible, responsive Australian experts translate partner priorities into implementable planning tools, from Cambodia's Roadmap to Nepal's PSH tariff models. Technical advice matters not just for content but for its bridging function between ministries, donors, and utilities.

2 Diplomatic convening and political signalling

DFAT Posts create the political space for collaboration, lending visibility to workshops, navigating sensitive issues, and reinforcing that Australian support aligns with government priorities. Several key outcomes would not have been possible without this diplomatic presence.

3 Locally led co-design and respect for partner priorities

AWP's influence is strongest when local partners lead. MOWRAM shaped Cambodia's process and team. ERC and NEA defined Nepal's core regulatory questions. PWWA led the design and delivery of the Pacific YWP program. This co-design approach reduces resistance, improves uptake, and ensures outputs are useful and politically feasible.

4 Flexible, responsive, and adaptive modalities

AWP's ability to mobilise quickly and adjust to partner timelines is a major driver of change. In Cambodia, AWP bridged a 12–15 month program delay. In Nepal, ERC's June 2024 request resulted in substantive policy outputs by end of 2025. This agility lets partners seize political windows.

5 Knowledge brokering and regional learning

AWP connects partners across national, regional, and global knowledge systems. Pacific YWPs connected with Australian utilities at OzWater. Mekong utilities built shared vocabulary around pumped storage through regional workshops. The value is not just exposure, but translation of global insights into local context.

6 Continuity, trust, and relationship-based influence

Long-term relationships are essential contributors to progress. The advisor succession at MRC preserved institutional memory during turnover. AWP's multi-year partnership with PWWA enabled the YWP program to mature. Continuity allows AWP to serve as a trusted, low-visibility backbone through uncertainty.

RISKS

WHAT COULD HOLD PROGRESS BACK

The report identified eight cross-cutting risks across all four Outcome Harvests. These are not reasons to doubt the outcomes; they are areas where AWP can target future support to strengthen durability and long-term impact.

1 Institutional capacity constraints

In all four contexts, institutions face overstretch and competing priorities. New tools risk being underused if absorption capacity is limited.

2 Dependence on individual champions

Progress in Cambodia, Nepal, the Mekong, and the Pacific all depend on specific influential people. Leadership changes could disrupt momentum.

3 Funding uncertainty

Short-term or late-confirmed funding windows reduce partner confidence, constrain forward planning, and create delivery risks, particularly where political windows or institutional demand are time-sensitive.

4 Political & bureaucratic sensitivities

Cross-border data sharing, donor relationships, and regulatory autonomy create dynamics that can restrict information flows and delay reform.

5 GEDSI implementation barriers

Calibrating inclusion to technical and regulatory realities remains challeng-ing. Requirements that ar-rive late or feel mismatched can create friction.

6 Donor landscape volatility

Shifts in donor priorities or withdrawal by major donors can derail coordinated planning, increase pressure on remaining funding, and risk duplication where pipelines overlap.

7 Translation-to-practice gaps

Gains risk stalling in the concept-to-pilot stage without structured follow-through: action plans, working groups, and post-program support.

8 Advisor & talent pipeline risks

Over-reliance on specific individuals and limited national specialist pipelines may extend institutional dependency on external expertise.

RECOMMENDATIONS

5 PRIORITIES FOR WHAT COMES NEXT

To convert the promising early outcomes into lasting systems change, AWP Phase 3 should focus on five strategic priorities. These recommendations draw directly from harvested outcomes and cross-program risks to strengthen the effectiveness, durability, and strategic value of AWP's engagement.

01 Fund early proof points and commit to predictable, longer-term resourcing

Support Roadmap-aligned pilots in Cambodia, a PSH demonstration in Nepal, surge support to MRC during peak workflows, and utility mini-projects in the Pacific. Move from planning and diagnosis into visible delivery. Multi-year commitments are essential; short planning cycles undermine the momentum these activities have built.

02 Calibrate GEDSI for technical and regulatory contexts

Define proportionate GEDSI deliverables for each activity type and embed inclusion inputs early, not late. Match reviewer expertise to technical scopes. Resource translation and accessibility as standard practice, not optional extras.

03 Strengthen the path from learning to practice

Institutionalise post-program follow-through: working groups, action plans, mentor check-ins, and operational guidance. In Cambodia: translation briefs and Roadmap socialisation. In Nepal: a PSH working group. In the Mekong: embedding energy-aware planning in MRC procedures. In the Pacific: utility debriefs and alumni topic clinics.

04 Future-proof the advisor modality and build national talent pipelines

Develop structured succession plans with shadowing, phased handovers, and curated knowledge bases. Build national capability through scholarships, secondments, and targeted skill development in hydrology, regulatory economics, and water-energy integration. Pre-position regional experts for surge support during peak workflow periods.

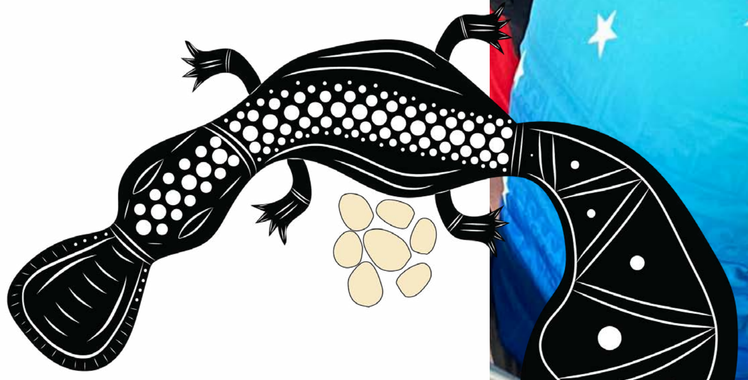
05 Improve monitoring to capture implementation and system-level change

Extend MEL tracking beyond activity completion: follow pilots, network-enabled problem-solving, equity outcomes, and system changes. Use simple, scalable rubrics (diagnosis → pilot → adoption → scale) to support cross-program learning and strengthen the evidence base for DFAT's climate, resilience, and governance objectives.

WHAT COMES NEXT

Taken together, the four Outcome Harvests show that AWP Phase 3 is influential in shaping institutional behaviour, responsive to partner priorities and political windows, and well-positioned to support downstream implementation. The decisive next step across all four contexts is the same: converting planning and learning into implementation-ready projects and sustained practice.

Predictable resourcing, light-touch post-program structures, and context-appropriate GEDSI will help close the diagnosis-to-delivery gap, ensuring that the outcomes harvested here become the foundations for lasting climate-resilient water management across the Indo-Pacific.



CLICK HERE TO READ:

Outcome Harvesting Synthesis Report

Batch 1 – AWP Phase 3

Australian Aid

THE AUSTRALIAN WATER PARTNERSHIP

waterpartnership.org.au