

MOB-2025-0092

Terms of Reference

For Consulting Services

For a Feasibility Study for Cambodia Digital Infrastructure for
Digital Government

March 2025

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Background

The Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) has embarked on an ambitious journey to transform the nation into a vibrant digital economy and society. Central to this vision are two pivotal frameworks: the "Cambodia Digital Economy and Society Policy Framework 2021–2035" and the "Cambodia Digital Government Policy 2022–2035." These strategic documents aim to modernise public administration, enhance service delivery, and promote inclusive digital growth across the country.

The "Cambodia Digital Economy and Society Policy Framework 2021–2035" outlines a comprehensive plan to promote digital adoption and transformation among all societal actors, including the state, citizens, and businesses. Its vision is to build up the country's digital economy and society by laying the foundations for digital adoption and transformation, thereby accelerating new economic growth and improving social welfare.

Complementing this, the "Cambodia Digital Government Policy 2022–2035" focuses on establishing a digital government to improve the quality of life and build trust through better public service provision. Prepared by the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications (MPTC) and endorsed by the Prime Minister in January 2022, this policy emphasises the development of digital infrastructure, digital citizens, digital government, digital businesses, and building reliability and confidence in digital systems.

Despite these well-structured frameworks, Cambodia faces multiple challenges in realising its digital transformation goals. Its digital infrastructure and network has to be upgraded to suit the needs of planned services. Limited interoperability among digital systems which operate in silos hampers data exchange and coordination between government agencies. Low digital literacy rates, particularly in rural areas, impede the widespread adoption of digital services. Inadequate data governance frameworks raise concerns about data privacy and security, while vulnerabilities in cybersecurity pose risks to both public and private sector digital initiatives. These challenges disproportionately affect rural and underserved populations, highlighting the need for equitable digital access.

To address these challenges, the RGC has identified five main goals within the Digital Economy and Society Policy Framework: developing infrastructures to enable digital transformation, building reliability and confidence in digital systems, building digital citizens, building digital government, and enabling digital businesses. These goals are designed to promote digital adoption and transformation across all sectors of society, thereby accelerating new economic growth and improving social welfare.

The successful implementation of these policies requires the active participation and cooperation of all relevant ministries, institutions, the private sector, and citizens. Strategic partnerships and international cooperation in areas such as economy, society, business, finance, research, cybersecurity, and technology development are also crucial. By embracing these collaborative efforts, Cambodia can effectively

navigate the challenges of digital transformation and achieve the desired success outlined in its policy frameworks.

AFD in Cambodia expresses its full support to the RGC in the implementation of those strategic policies frameworks and proposes to the RGC to set up a long-term cooperation to develop RGC's priorities, especially for building the digital government.

In this context, two actions were undertaken: i) a study trip in France in December 2023 to strengthen bilateral cooperation in the digital government and innovation ecosystem and ii) a prefeasibility study in Q4 2024 to conduct a preliminary inventory and needs analysis, deepen the priorities of the upcoming digital government project and define the scope of AFD's intervention (main components) and tentative budget.

Description of the project

This project proposes the establishment of a sustainable and resilient digital infrastructure with an indicative investment budget of 50 million EUR. The focus is on enabling robust digital public infrastructures while addressing critical gaps to develop Cambodia's digital government and Cambodia IA ecosystem, with a gender and climate sensitive approach. Particular attention will be given to reducing inequalities in digital access and the use of public services, ensuring that marginalized populations can fully benefit from the digital transformation and have equitable access to essential digital public services. These efforts aim to improve the delivery of public services and the efficiency of the Government, while contribute to enhance the digital economy and strengthen societal frameworks.

Key components of the project include:

1. Developing a comprehensive strategic and regulatory framework for digital government, taking into account social inequalities and environmental impacts, based on a data approach focusing on privacy, accessibility, interoperability, security and governance;
2. Building and upgrading scalable, secure and resilient digital infrastructure, including inter-governmental networks, hosting infrastructures, and digital building blocks software, promoting climate smart techniques (energy efficiency, adaptation to climate change);
3. Deploying selected digital public services across three provinces, through the construction of Community Tech Centers, to improve the delivery of public services;
4. Improving robust governance structures to ensure effective coordination among government entities involved in digital transformation;
5. Building a National AI and Data Science Lab, a sovereign infrastructure that will serve all relevant stakeholders (Research, public, private) of the Cambodian ecosystem, providing a shared high performance computing platform.

This study shall link with another dedicated technical feasibility study on National AI and Data Sciences Lab carried out by AFD. Based on the results of

the latter, the Consultants will have to i) conduct the climate (see subsection 3.2.6), E&S assessment (see section 4), and Gender and social inclusion analysis (see section 5) to the AI component, and ii) synthesize the outputs of both studies into one project for the Royal Government of Cambodia. The 50 million EUR indicative budget is including this National AI and Data Sciences Lab component.

The project will also make use of works done by other complementary studies on energy efficiency of building components and GESI studies.

The indicative budget of 50 million EUR should also include financing for a Project Implementation Consultant to oversee implementation of the project, in close collaboration with the implicated agencies Royal Government of Cambodia, as well as yearly financial audit and monitoring and evaluation works complying with indicators defined by the feasibility study.

Objective

The main objective is to **design a technically feasible, financially viable, socially inclusive and resilient digital government implementation plan.**

The project proposed here aims to establish first a sustainable digital infrastructure which will enable digital public services, and second, effectively address the identified and prioritised critical points to set up Cambodia's digital government – all of which will improve the economy and society of Cambodia.

This must include the following items:

1. Assess the current state of the existing digital infrastructure, governance, services and capacity;
2. Investigate the various technical and operational implementation options taking into account environmental and social impacts and climate change, consolidate the detailed activities and associated investment ; conduct an E&S risk assessment and draft the Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF); conduct a gender and social inclusion diagnosis and draft a Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Action Plan (GESIAP);
3. Proposing a theory of change (including the impact on gender equality, social inclusion and inequality reduction), its implementation in the form of a detailed activity list attached to objectives, and its logical framework as well as the procurement plan to ensure all implementation;
4. Ensuring all proposals are correctly aligned with regional frameworks, national policies, and international best practices (including environmental and social aspects and climate goals), and takes into account the existing advancements Cambodia has achieved the past years.

A proposed format for expressing the intended digital government set-up in the feasibility study, is to follow a four-tier layered format that would include the following layers:

1. **Strategic and regulatory framework layer:** public policies needed to implement organisational change, to ensure key components needed for digital government are defined for all stakeholders, to define data privacy, data governance and data security in order to ensure data sharing and interoperability is defined in legal basis, and to promote open data, social inclusiveness and climate-compatible growth. Special attention will be given to ensuring that policies actively support the inclusion of populations with limited access to digital services, fostering equitable participation in the digital economy and public services;
2. **Digital Infrastructure layer:** this includes both hardware and software components (infrastructures such as network, data centers, as well as software infrastructure such as APIs, authentication systems, office tools); the feasibility study needs to detail inter-governmental networks, its needed upgrades at the central level in Phnom Penh, the extension needed to the three selected pilot provinces (eg: Kandal, Takeo and Kampong Speu) with the objective to build a high-performance, secure, software-driven and integrated system (including security, wireless networks, VPNs and a central management etc.); components for data center and government cloud system; software components through API systems, data exchange system across ministries, from central level to provincial level, authentication system, OCR tools, office tools for government staff, dashboard to monitor and evaluate progress, and other digital enablers identified. An analysis of current and future climate risks must be carried out to ensure the resilience of the infrastructures to climate change;
3. **Public service deployment layer:** digitalisation of public services and its underlying business processes and operationalisation; public services portal; digital services delivery via the construction of community tech centers in the three selected pilot provinces or existing One Window Service Centers (OWSC) ; equitable access to essential public services, particularly for marginalized and underserved populations;
4. **Operational governance layer:** monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the project; monitoring and evaluating digital government's progress for all ministries and at the sub-national level; capacity building; change management; strategic oversight.

The ESMF and the GSIAP should be prepared in close relationship with the technical feasibility study, as the project design should avoid or reduce as much as possible the negative impacts and maximize the positive impacts. More specifically, at least one validation workshop should be organized for ESMF and another for the GSIAP to ensure the validation of all relevant actors involved on their implementation.

Scope of services, tasks, expected deliverables

1. Inception phase

1. Conduct an inception meeting with key stakeholders to discuss scope and methodology.

2. Collect relevant policies, reports, and data, identifying information gaps.
3. Prepare an inception report outlining:
 - a. Detailed work plan (also for the E&S study and gender and social inclusion assessment)
 - b. Stakeholder engagement strategy
 - c. Updated timeline

2. Diagnostic and needs analysis phase

In the pre-feasibility study phase, some preliminary work has been done to assess the legal framework, the existing network infrastructure, data centers and cloud models, the existing software infrastructure, and the mechanisms for public services (see Annex 1 for more details). The consultant should review closely the full pre-feasibility study and understand the recommendations.

Based on the findings of the pre-feasibility study and the stakeholders' consultations, the consultant is then expected to consolidate the diagnostic work, in particular attention to be paid on:

1. **Legal Framework:** Outline existing gaps and what's required for the project. Attention shall be paid on the elaboration of a legislative framework on data privacy, data governance, data sharing among administrations, cybersecurity and open-data. The consultant may suggest regulations favouring digital development consistent with a low-carbon and resilient trajectory for the country. This may include: development of sobriety standards for applications, introduction of labels, development of e-Administration in line with low-carbon principles, energy efficiency requirements for data centers. In addition, the consultant may suggest regulations integrating an inequalities-focused approach to ensure digital policies foster inclusive development. This includes assessing disparities in access to digital infrastructure and services among marginalized groups.
2. **Network Infrastructure:**
 - a. Assess the current state of the existing inter-governmental network infrastructures (at the central and provincial levels): design, backbone & access network, equipment, security, cabling, LAN, management system, etc. ;
 - b. Assess the governance scheme, the contractual model and cost structure of the current network infrastructures;
 - c. Identify and consolidate the list of sites (connected or to be connected to improve their capacity to deliver services to citizens) and analyse the current and future needs;
 - d. Identify the gap analysis to build a high-performance, software-driven, secure and integrated system: analyse the required upgrades (bandwidth, network and security equipment, LAN, etc.) and additional connections, the required human resources & skills, organisational structure, and capacity building;
 - e. Define a high level design of the target secure inter-governmental network.
3. **Data Centers and Cloud:**

- a. Assess current hosting/storage capabilities, governance models, and cost structure;
 - b. Assess the current state of the national data centers and possible upgrades or additional data centers (backup, provinces);
 - c. Evaluate the demand for cloud services, assess a government cloud platform for shared services across the ministries, analyse the cloud models, models of costs and governance.
4. **Software Infrastructure:** Focus on existing building blocks such as CamDX (data-sharing) and CamDigiKey (e-KYC) and identify the gap analysis to i) deploy a data sharing system across all the government, ii) build authentication system to facilitate the access to public services, iii) develop common IT / desktop tools for the agents. Assess the governance scheme, the cybersecurity requirements, the required human resources & skills and capacity building.
5. **Public Services:**
 - a. Identify 3-4 key services for digitization and analyse hybrid delivery via a public service portal and the construction of Community Tech Centers or existing OWSC in three pilot provinces near to Phnom Penh. This analysis will include a detailed assessment of access to public services for disadvantaged populations, identifying existing barriers (e.g., digital divide, infrastructure gaps, affordability, digital literacy);
 - b. Assess current Community tech centers, provide possible recommendations for the construction of additional centers, ensuring their location, accessibility, and design address the needs of populations with limited access to digital services. Additionally, recommend improvements for training content to enhance digital literacy, inclusivity, and relevance to local socio-economic contexts;
 - c. Define criteria to select the provinces for the pilot rollout and future scale-up; including social criteria to prioritize areas most affected by digital divide and low access to public services;
 - a. Assess service accessibility, user experience and inclusivity. This should include an analysis of barriers faced by different demographic groups, such as literacy levels, language constraints, affordability issues, and accessibility for persons with disabilities.
6. **Operational governance:**
 - a. Examine existing institutional arrangements, inter-ministerial coordination, and capacity;
 - b. Define target institutional organization for the inter-ministerial coordination of the project and more generally for the implementation of the digital government plans; Identify tools to be implemented; Define change management, capacity building needs.

3. Feasibility study development

1. Write the theory of change, its objectives, its supporting list of activities, and its implementation plan.

2. Design technical, financial, and operational plans for digital government implementation.

a. Technical analysis should include the following components:

- i. Explore different technical scenarios and provide recommendations for digital infrastructure (inter-governmental network, cloud infrastructure, building blocks) rollout by maximizing the synergies with other existing and planned infrastructures;
- ii. Explore different scenarios and provide recommendations for the delivery of public services. The consultant shall include activities to ensure equitable access to public service for all (literacy programs, user support mechanisms, and accessibility enhancements ...);
- iii. Define related operational responsibilities (MPTC vs. sectoral ministries, provinces) and identity associated operation and maintenance arrangements (Budget, HR) to manage the deployed infrastructures;
- iv. Define the creation plan of Government Network Operator with best practices from other countries and its responsibilities (including at least technical and financial parts). This work has to be done very closely with MPTC;
- v. Define target group of beneficiaries and document the potential project's contribution to social inclusion, digital inclusion, job creation and economic stimulation and how the project mitigates associated risks. In particular, taking into account the rate of digital literacy between different social strata in Cambodia, the ways of accompanying untrained populations to access public services, the ways of including the various disadvantaged groups (elderly people, rural populations, people in poverty, etc.), the effective methods of protection of personal data;
- vi. Conduct concept design for infrastructure resilience on climate change. The design shall take into accounts the climate risks (flooding and landslides, extreme heat, etc.):
 - Describe climate change that have already been observed in the project perimeter;
 - Assess projected climate risks in the infrastructure perimeter in a time frame compatible with the project life;
 - Assess and their potential impact on project infrastructures. Identify adaptation options (technical and non-technical) and indicate the measures to be implemented in this project to ensure that infrastructures will be resilient to climate change;
 - Recommendations may include: select components and equipment resilient to future temperature ranges, relocate infrastructures to areas less prone to extreme heat or flooding, increase inter-connectivity in the most vulnerable areas, promote the use of weather forecasting systems for early warnings, increase repair and maintenance budgets,

update emergency plans to take into account all potential climatic hazards, etc.;

- Attention will be paid to the energy efficiency of the proposed infrastructure.
- b. Operational plan should detail project components, capacity-building activities, technical assistance needs, and logical frameworks (which include key indicators to measure the project's impact on inequalities);
- c. Risks assessment should detail the framework to manage the risks that may affect the project and the various stakeholders (government, other public authorities, operators, users and clients, and the general public) during the construction and operation periods (institutional and political, social, financial, technical, macroeconomic, environmental, etc.);
- d. Investment planning : Propose a phased investment approach, prioritizing high-impact, and scalable initiatives;
- e. Financial analysis should develop cost models (investment, operations and maintenance), Total Cost Ownership – TCO approach, economic models, and financing plans;
- f. Conduct cost-benefit analyses and propose funding mechanisms;
- g. Assess possible linkages and synergies with other relevant existing or planned programs of other development partners and agencies in Cambodia;
- h. Deliver a procurement plan following AFD procurement guidelines.

4. Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF)

1. Introduction: objectives and context

The development of an ESMF for this project is required because the available information on the project characteristics, in particular the layout and location of the digital infrastructures (backbones, network, cabling) are not yet sufficiently precise at this stage to be able to carry out the detailed Environmental and Social Study. The project will also include a large variety of activities with different E&S impacts.

The purpose of the ESMF is to have a preliminary E&S assessment of the project, (i) detailing all parts that can be developed from available information and (ii) framing those parts that remain to be developed (specifying the actions to be carried out, the tools and methodology that will be implemented for this, etc.). Based on existing documentation, field visits and meetings of the main stakeholders involved in the project, the ESMF should:

- a. Assess the E&S risks of targeted activities (as much as possible with existing information);
- b. Identify key mitigation and remediation measures;
- c. Identify the due diligence for complementary environmental and social assessments to be conducted during project implementation, if needed.

According to a preliminary E&S screening based on the project description, the following E&S issues have been identified by AFD (non-exhaustive list):

- a. E&S risks associated with infrastructure construction activities (building construction, renovation or expansion of networks, etc.): noise, dust, traffic disruption, soil erosion, waste management, health and safety, working conditions...
- b. Social risk related to data management (privacy, accessibility...);
- c. Social inequalities (including gender) in terms of access to digital services;
- d. E&S issues related to the supply chain of digital hardware;
- e. During the operating phase: management of electrical and electronic waste, optimization of resources through energy efficiency measures (data center electricity consumption).

No land acquisition is expected at this stage. The risk to biodiversity is also expected to be low as infrastructure construction will take place in urbanized environments.

Based on this preliminary assessment, the project is categorized as B (moderate E&S risks) by AFD at this stage¹. One of the first objectives of the ESMF is to confirm or to revise this risk category, based on the E&S risk assessment. In case that higher risks are observed, AFD needs to be informed as the earliest stage, as the applicable E&S framework will differ if a higher level of risk is observed.

2. Applicable E&S framework

For projects of category “B” financed by the AFD, the main E&S reference framework is the national regulation applicable to the project. However, for the E&S issues where the national regulation is assessed to be insufficient to mitigate the risks, international standards (World Bank’s Environmental and Social Framework²) and good practices³ should be applied.

3. ESMF elaboration: expected content

Based on existing documentation, field visits and meetings of the main stakeholders involved in the project, the ESMF will include the following elements:

- a. Description of the project/program;
- b. Justification of the choice of project (alternative/variant chosen);
- c. Description of the legal and regulatory framework: (i) explaining the content of applicable national laws and regulations and their implications for the project, in particular if any form of E&S study will be required by the Ministry of Environment for any project component (ii) analyzing the gaps between

¹ [Environmental and Social Risk Management Policy for AFD-funded Operations | AFD - Agence Française de Développement](#)

² [Environmental and Social Framework \(ESF\)](#)

³ World Bank Group Environmental, Health, and Safety – EHS – Guidelines : documents1.worldbank.org/curated/zh/157871484635724258/pdf/112110-WP-Final-General-EHS-Guidelines.pdf

national laws and regulations and AFD Group requirements (in case that international standards or good practices are triggered); and (iii) proposing appropriate measures to reduce or eliminate these gaps

- d. Description of the risk management procedure to be carried out in the next steps of the project:
 - Confirmation of the proposed E&S categorization. To do this, the Consultant will use the list of categorization criteria to be provided by AFD that covers all environmental, social, land risks, etc. and that is adapted to the sensitivity of the local context (see AFD's E&S risk management policy);
 - E&S criteria to be considered for the selection of detailed locations of the backbone network, if relevant;
 - The definition of additional studies and other risk management documents to be developed in the next steps, if applicable.

Note: at this stage, AFD intends to mostly rely on national regulation for the detailed E&S studies, in addition to this ESMF

- e. Description of the initial state:
 - biophysical and socio-economic information at the level of likely areas of influence of the project, identification of main E&S sensitive points
- f. Identification of the main potential E&S impacts in relation to the activities and work envisaged as part of the project: the impacts assessment should be detailed as much as possible for all the activities already identified during the feasibility stage;
- g. Description of mitigation measures envisaged to avoid, reduce or if not possible, compensate for potential negative E&S impacts of the project: a table of recommendations and best practices in terms of mitigation measures for E&S impacts should be presented, distinguishing the different project phases (preparation, construction, operation...);
- h. Preparation of a stakeholder engagement plan:
 - Identification and analysis of the types/categories of stakeholders,
 - Consultation methodology and communication methods adapted to the context and incorporating an analysis of constraints limiting the participation of vulnerable groups and women
 - Planning / key stages of consultations during the implementation
 - Dissemination of project information to stakeholders
- i. Preparation of a complaint handling mechanism for the project: principles, modalities and steps to be followed by those adversely affected (only on environmental and social issues) to file a complaint;
- j. Description of monitoring and evaluation system to be put in place to assess the successful implementation of mitigation measures;
- k. Description of the envisaged institutional framework detailing the roles and responsibilities of actors involved in finalizing the ESMF;
- l. Identification of training needs and organizational and operational capacity building:

- m. Estimated budget for implementation of mitigation and monitoring of E&S impacts.

A workshop will be organized between E&S specialists, gender and social inclusion specialist(s) and the technical team in charge of the project design to ensure the appropriate integration of E&S issues in the project design. In the technical and financial offer to be submitted, the dedicated resources for the E&S study should be isolated.

5. Gender and social inclusion assessment

1. Background and goals of the work

AFD gender equality objectives are based on France's International Strategy for Gender Equality⁴ and are monitored on a yearly basis through OECD's DAC Gender Equality policy marker⁵.

AFD has adopted a 100% Social Link Strategy for 2021-2025, with a primary objective to "Reduce wealth and opportunity inequalities, both vertical and horizontal." In this context, AFD defines inequalities through a multidimensional approach, acknowledging the diverse factors that shape an individual's identity and social position.

The objective of this gender and social inclusion assessment is to support the appraisal and design of this Project in the assessment and integration of gender equality and social inclusion considerations. This will help define a gender equality and broader inequality reduction objectives for the Project. A gender and social inclusion diagnosis will be conducted and the key actions will be formalized in a Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Action Plan (GESIAP).

2. Detail of the expected services

Part 1 – Conduction of a gender assessment

First part of the services will comprise of a baseline gender and social inclusion assessment, covering the following aspects:

1) Context analysis of inequalities and social inclusion

- Mapping multidimensional inequalities, including economic, social, and territorial disparities
- Assessing poverty dynamics, beyond income, by considering access to services and opportunities
- Identifying marginalized groups and the specific barriers they face
- Analysing structural factors driving inequalities, such as discrimination and exclusion

⁴ <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/french-foreign-policy/human-rights/women-s-rights/france-s-international-strategy-for-gender-equality-2018-2022/>

⁵ <https://www.oecd.org/dac/gender-development/development-finance-for-gender-equality-and-women-s-empowerment.htm>

- Examining social and power dynamics influencing access to resources and rights
- 2) Analysis of the legal, political, and institutional framework**
- International commitments of the country in terms of gender equality and social inclusion impacting multidimensional inequality reduction effort (e.g. CEDAW, Beijing Action Plan, etc.);
- Country political framework on gender equality (including women's right) and social inclusion;
- Political and institutional framework on gender equality related to the digital sector;
- National policy framework, policy and strategic framework on poverty, inequalities, and social inclusion.
- Organisation and operational capacities of dedicated public entities and gender mainstreaming in other agencies (e.g. network of gender focal points in other ministries);
- Stakeholder analysis mapping in relation with gender equality and social inclusion and Project Purpose: public entities (and private entities if relevant), civil society organisations, donors, UN agencies, etc.
- Mapping of local stakeholders committed to the inclusion of disadvantaged populations

The legal framework analysis should directly feed in reflections on the preparation of the new inclusive regulatory framework for digital government.

3) Capacity assessment of Project Owner

The Service Provider will assess Project Owner and key partners' capacity in terms of gender equality and social inclusion integration, both at internal level and in their activities, in relation with the sector and objectives of the Project. To that end, the following aspects will be assessed:

- Internal commitments in terms of gender equality: gender policy or strategy, gender equality at work approach for the staff, etc.
- Internal commitments to equality and social inclusion: policy or strategy documents, professional equality initiatives for staff, etc.
- Existing and available expertise at internal level on gender and social inclusion aspects: dedicated staff, training sessions already displayed on gender equality and social inclusion, etc.;
- Other past or on-going projects and partnerships related to gender equality and social inclusion.

On such basis, the needs in training, capacity-building, and technical assistance of the Project Owner/ partners will be identified. The interest and will of the Project Owner to work on gender equality and social inclusion aspects will be highlighted, with a perspective of reducing inequalities and ensuring inclusive access to digital services.

The service provider will also contribute to the dialogue with project owner and stakeholders to support ownership for the integration of gender equality (including women's empowerment) and social inclusion as part of the project.

4) Socio-economic assessment of the Project target area

This socio-economic assessment at the project target area will be performed in preparation of the ESMF (see section 5). However, the consultants should ensure that all sex-specific data relevant for the gender analysis, as well as data on social inclusion and inequalities, will be included in the socio-economic survey to optimize the data collection. In particular, focus group discussions (FGD) with women and other disadvantaged groups representatives in the project area are expected to identify existing biases, barriers, difficulties, opportunities, etc.

5) Gender and social inclusion analysis in the digital sector

Digital transformation provides new opportunities for the empowerment of disadvantaged people, including women and girls, but discrimination, negative stereotypes, and social and cultural biases create other challenges for disadvantaged groups including for women and girls to thrive in a highly digital economy and society. A thorough literature review of existing studies, reports on the impact of the digital sector on gender equality, social inclusion, and inequalities should be carried out to identify main challenges and opportunities. This analysis should be complemented by interviews and workshops with key stakeholders of the Project (relevant teams/units and women representatives of the digital sector, a representative sample of final users of digital public services, with attention to disadvantaged groups) to reflect the specific Cambodian context. Examples of issues could be:

- Gender and social inequalities in access to technology and digital services
- Digital skills gap in the education sector and unequal access to digital employment due to social and gender norms and deep-rooted gender stereotypes
- Cybersecurity and cyber safety for women and other marginalized groups, technology-facilitated gender-based violence and discrimination
- Lack of disaggregated data on gender, social class, ethnicity, etc.
- Bias and discrimination in AI, reinforcing pre-existing social and gender inequalities
- Under representation of disadvantaged groups (women, ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities, etc.) in governance and leadership within the digital sector

The Service Provider must adopt an intersectional approach, i.e. will consider interactions between different social categories and factors (gender, age, community, ethnicity, social class, disability, sexual orientation, etc.) and their consequences on individuals' roles and place in the society. The influence of these factors and their combination in the production or reproduction of social inequalities and exclusion must be highlighted.

Part 2 – Design of a Gender Action Plan for the Project

Based on the gender and social inclusion assessment and its outputs, the Service Provider will design, in cooperation with Project key stakeholders, the Gender and Social Inclusion Action Plan (GSIAP) of the Project.

The Gender and Social Inclusion Action Plan will include the definition of a gender equality, social inclusion and inequality reduction objectives for the project that will also be reflected in the theory of change of the project. Such objectives will be developed in a set of gender and social inclusion activities, to be accurately and operationally described and directly integrated into the project's activities. The GSIAP will include a monitoring and evaluation scheme.

The GSIAP will be presented in a concise manner in the form proposed in Appendix 2 of the TORs. If relevant, a detailed narrative description of the theory of change, the objective, and proposed actions will be attached.

The gender and social inclusion team is expected to closely coordinate with the E&S team and technical team, as well as the Project Owner and other service providers in charge of the feasibility study, project partners, etc., in order to ensure consistency between recommendations and the GSIAP, on one side, and Project objectives and activities, on the other side.

6. Terms of reference of the recruitment of PIC Consultant

The consultants will write the Terms of Reference for the Project Implementation Consultant which will complement the competences of the Project Management Unit (to be created by MPTC and MEF for the project implementation with advice from the Consultant on the necessary competences). The PIC will conduct the detailed design of the whole project as well as assist the project owner in the general implementation of the project especially the procurement.

Organisation of the mission

1. Stakeholder consultations

On top of what has been done during the pre-feasibility phase, the consultant shall conduct more structured interviews and workshops with:

1. Relevant government ministries in particular MPTC (including Digital Government Committee), MEF (including Digital Economy and Business Committee – DEBC, Techo Startup Center), Ministry of Interior, etc.

Objectives:

- a. Deepen the understanding of the needs of each with relevant stakeholder.
Note: it is expected that the consultant prepares in advance the questionnaire before each meeting;
- b. Conduct a detailed diagnostic of existing situation;
- c. Update the SWOT analysis (cf. Prefeasibility study);

- d. Identify main stakeholders of the project and conduct co-design/participative workshops;
 - e. Assess their capability to implement the project (sub)components together with solutions to put in place;
 - f. Identify the potential institutional risks for the implementation of the project and mitigation measures.
- 2. Development partners (including ADB, JICA and KOICA) and private sector representatives.
Objectives:
 - a. Mapping of each DP is doing/ will do with regards to digital transformation with RGC;
 - b. Identify overlapped area with contemplated AFD financed project or introduce possible synergies (in particular on the cybersecurity topic);
 - c. Identify any possible risks for the project implementation;
 - d. Complement the understandings of Cambodian digital transformation context.
- 3. Civil society organizations and end-users.
Objectives:
 - a. Understand the needs of the end-users in terms of basic/digital services and the current difficulties (with a focus on women and disadvantaged population);
 - b. Design the component “public service” of the project to respond as much as possible to the needs of disadvantaged population with limited access to digital services;
 - c. Identifying and mapping people with limited access to digital services (women, persons with disabilities, rural communities, ethnic minorities, indigenous groups) and assessing their level of access to digital tools and connectivity.

Additional stakeholder consultation activities will be carried out in the context of the preparation of ESMF and GESIAP. Please coordinate between the technical team and the E&S, gender and social inclusion team(s) to optimize these activities to avoid interviewing the same stakeholders several times on similar topics. At least one on-site mission in Cambodia is required.

2. Coordination with other consultants

The consultant is expected to work closely with other consultants who perform the feasibility on some parts of the project:

- Dedicated team working on the creation of National Center of AI and Data Science (kick-off in January 2025);
- Dedicated team working on concept design of different buildings within the project (AFD PEEB team will be mobilized);

- Dedicated team working on institutional transformation of MPTC/DGC (to be confirmed).

3. Finalisation and reporting

1. Prepare a draft feasibility report for stakeholder review;
2. Organize a validation workshop to gather feedback;
3. Submit the final feasibility study, including:
 - a. Executive summary
 - b. Detailed findings and recommendations
 - c. Detailed Project components
 - d. Detailed social and economic analysis of the Project
 - e. ESMF (environmental and social management framework)
 - f. Gender and social inclusion assessment and GESIAP
 - g. Detailed financing plan
 - h. Implementation roadmap
 - i. Proposed procurement plan
 - j. Appendices with technical and financial analyses and other relevant topics
4. Prepare and finalize the terms of reference for the PIC recruitment.

4. Team composition and qualifications

Required expertise

1. Project Lead: Extensive experience in digital government (e-government) implementation, 10+ years. Deep knowledge of the French e-government rollout and ecosystem;
2. ICT Specialists: Deep knowledge of digital infrastructures, especially proven experiences in telecom network, information systems, and digital public infrastructures as well as cybersecurity, 8+ years' experience;
3. Policy Analyst: Expertise in digital governance legal frameworks, 8+ years;
4. Economist: Skills in cost-benefit analysis and investment planning in the digital sector;
5. National project coordination consultant, 5+ years (experience in relevant sectors would be a plus);
6. E&S specialist: Minimum of 8 years' experience on E&S impact assessment of similar projects in Cambodian context, excellent knowledge of Cambodian national E&S framework and proven experience on international E&S standards, good teaching and communication skills, good level of Khmer and English. Good knowledge of the digital sector would be a plus;
7. Gender and social inclusion specialist: proven experience in the conduction of qualitative and quantitative field surveys, and baseline assessment for development projects including a gender equality and inequality reduction objectives; experience in managing development projects and sound knowledge of donors strategies on gender equality and social inclusion, sectoral knowledge, good level of Khmer and English, knowledge and experience of similar projects in Cambodia is a plus.

Specific attention will be brought to the diversity of profiles, particularly in terms of age and gender, as well as the balance between international and national expertise.

Other requirements and suggestions

1. AFD encourages applicants to perform joint-venture applications or co-consortium offers for complementary expertise to cover all expertise fields.
2. AFD encourages key experts to be supported by national expert(s) that can cover field of expertise related to: Public administration / governance expert with knowledge of digital systems, digital government, digital infrastructure and/or digital financing.

5. Budget

The maximum budget for this feasibility study is 280.000 EUR (excluding VAT).

The consultant need to leverage findings in the pre-feasibility study phase (included in Annex 1 and as a separate attachment) to focus efforts and avoid redundancy.

Billing modalities:

- 20% of Advance
- 20% at the validation of the Inception report and diagnostic and needs analysis deliverables (deliverables 1 and 2);
- 20% at the validation of the Intermediate version of the feasibility study and ESMF (draft deliverables 3 and 4);
- 18% at the validation of the Gender assessment and social inclusion report including the GSIAP (deliverable 5);
- 31% at the validation of the final version of the feasibility study and ESMF (final deliverables 3 and 4);
- 11% Terms of reference for the recruitment of the PIC consultant (deliverable 6).

6. Reporting requirements and timeline

Deliverables

1. Contract signing: defined as date "T";
2. Inception report (deliverable 1): T + 1 week;
3. Diagnostic and needs analysis report and presentation (deliverable 2): T + 5 weeks;
4. Draft feasibility study, ESMF, GSIAP and presentation (draft deliverables 3, 4 and 5) T + 12 weeks;
5. Final feasibility study, ESMF, GSIAP and presentation (final deliverables 3, 4 and 5): T + 16 weeks;

The feasibility study shall be delivered by **October 2025 at the latest**.

6. Draft terms of reference for the Project Implementation Consultant (draft deliverable 6): T + 18 weeks;
7. Final terms of reference of PIC (final deliverable 6) + 20 weeks.

The mission will begin in May 2025 and conclude by December 2025, following a phased approach. All the deliverables will be produced in English.

7. Logistics and Support

Consultant responsibilities

1. Arrange travel and accommodation for field missions.
2. Secure necessary permissions for data access.

MPTC and AFD responsibilities

1. Provide access to relevant documents and facilitate stakeholder engagement.
2. Facilitate logistics for workshops and meetings.

8. Relevant Documentation

The following documents will be made available:

1. Cambodia Digital Economy and Society Policy Framework 2021–2035;
2. Cambodia Digital Government Policy 2022–2035;
3. Full pre-feasibility Study Report (2024);
4. Other relevant reports and data from government agencies and development partners.

Annex 1: Pre-feasibility study key findings

Overview

The pre-feasibility study conducted between September and December 2024, led by Expertise France and NumériCité and supported by the Agence Française de Développement (AFD), assessed Cambodia's readiness for digital government transformation. It focused on key areas including legal frameworks, digital infrastructure, digital enablers, operational governance, and public service delivery. This study serves as the foundation for the proposed feasibility study, highlighting gaps, challenges, and strategic opportunities.

Key findings

Legal and strategic framework

1. Cambodia has established foundational strategies like the Cambodia Digital Economy and Society Policy Framework (CDESPF) 2021–2035 and the Cambodia Digital Government Policy (CDGP) 2022–2035.
2. Key challenges include the absence of comprehensive regulations on data protection, cybersecurity, and interoperability.
3. Ongoing legislative efforts, such as the draft personal data protection and cybersecurity laws, need acceleration to ensure robust legal support for digital initiatives.

Digital infrastructure

1. While Cambodia's fiber-optic network spans 46,000 km, connectivity gaps persist, particularly in rural areas.
2. Centralized data management is limited, with ministries relying on external cloud providers, raising concerns about data sovereignty and security.
3. The planned national data center by 2027 offers an opportunity to centralize data governance, but significant resource allocation and planning are needed.

Digital enablers

1. The Cambodia Data Exchange (CamDX) provides foundational interoperability but faces challenges in full implementation due to inconsistent data standards and governance issues.
2. Limited deployment of digital identity systems (e.g., CamDigiKey) restricts their usage across government services.
3. A unified approach to IT architecture, interoperability, and APIs is required to eliminate redundancies and enhance efficiency.

Operational governance

1. Governance structures such as the National Digital Economy and Society Council (NDESC) and related committees lack coordination and transparency.

2. Ministries operate in silos, leading to fragmented digital transformation efforts. The absence of measurable KPIs hinders performance tracking and accountability.

Public service delivery

1. Programs like One Window Service Offices (OWSOs) and Community Tech Centers (CTCs) have improved access but remain underutilized due to infrastructure and connectivity challenges.
2. Most public services are still paper-based, creating inefficiencies and limiting citizen access, especially in underserved areas.

Recommendations

Legal framework enhancements

1. Fast-track the enactment of data protection, cybersecurity, and interoperability laws.
2. Develop a unified national data governance strategy to ensure data security and accessibility.

Infrastructure development

1. Expand inter-governmental fiber-optic network to selected provinces using hybrid network approaches.
2. Accelerate the construction and operationalization of the national data center to enhance data sovereignty.

Operational Governance

1. Establish a centralized digital governance body with clear mandates to ensure coordination across ministries.
2. Strengthen inter-ministerial collaboration through standardized platforms like CamDX and KPI

Public Service Expansion

1. Introduce a national public service portal and mobile platforms to provide user-centric, accessible services.
2. Scale up OWSOs and CTCs to bridge the urban-rural digital divide.

Digital Literacy and Inclusion

Promote digital skills training through CTCs and other initiatives, ensuring inclusivity for marginalized communities.

Conclusion

The pre-feasibility study underscores Cambodia's potential for digital transformation while identifying critical gaps that must be addressed. By prioritizing legal frameworks, infrastructure, governance, and service delivery, the feasibility study can guide the Royal Government of Cambodia toward achieving its digital government goals. These

findings provide a robust foundation for targeted investments and strategic interventions in the upcoming phase.



[eGov Cambodia]

The Full prefeasibility study is available here: [Pre-feasibility study fi](#)

Annex 2: Gender Action Plan Template

- **Activities:** Describe here the activities that are expected to be implemented to tackle gender inequalities. A more detailed description will be provided in addition to this table in order to describe the detailed contents of these activities.
- **Responsibilities:** Detail here the share of responsibilities, in particular between Project Owner, Technical Assistance, communities, etc. Implementing responsibilities can be common or shared between several partners.
- **Result Indicators:** Result indicators will allow defining an objective and measuring the implementation progress. Indicators must be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-bound). For instance, if the activity is “Training session on gender equality for the team”, the indicator will be “XX trained persons”.
- **Means of verification:** Specify here the deliverables that will allow verifying the achievement of result indicators. For instance, if the indicator is “XX trained persons”, the means of verification could be the attendees list, a training report, etc.
- **Resources:** These are resources, in a broad understanding, supporting the activity implementation: necessary budget, human resources, regular functioning expenses and equipment, etc.;
- **Priority / Deadline:** Inform here the priority level of the activity, and/or the deadline, in line with Project steps and milestones.

Activities	Responsibilities	Result Indicators	Means of Verification	Resources	Priority / Deadline
1. Component 1 - XXX					
Activity 1.1.					
Activity 1.2.					
2. Component 2 - XX					
Activity 2.1.					
Activity 2.2.					
...					