



Department of  
Agriculture and  
Environment  
Son La Province

## PRESS RELEASE

### Launch of the Project MekongElevate “Ethnic Communities Leading Inclusive Climate Action”

**Son La, March 23, 2026** – CARE in Vietnam, in collaboration with the Community Development Center (CDC), has officially launched the project **MekongElevate “Ethnic Communities Leading Inclusive Climate Action”**.

Implemented from now until March 2029 in Muong Chanh and Muoi Noi communes, Son La province, the project will provide upland communities – specifically ethnic minority women, youth, and people with disability – with solutions to enhance climate resilience, thereby contributing to the overall stability and prosperity of the Mekong subregion.

MekongElevate is funded by the Australian Government through the **Mekong-Australia Partnership (MAP)** and is implemented by CARE and local partners.

Alice Clare Hawkins, Second Secretary (Development), DFAT, echoed the goal of MAP and MekongElevate project *“Our Mekong-Australia Partnership supports local responses to shared regional challenges. Australia is proud to partner with Vietnam to support a more inclusive and resilient Mekong subregion. The MekongElevate project addresses our shared priorities of climate resilience, gender equality and inclusion. It will invest in people – particularly women, people with disability, and marginalised groups – providing them with skills and opportunities to lead and shape their own paths in the green transition”*.

Sharing at the event, Mr Nguyen Thanh Cong, Deputy Chairman of Son La Provincial People's Committee, highlighted the key value of coffee in the provincial economic as well as pathway to support local farmers to address both the market and farming challenges *“With an area exceeding **32,000 hectares**, Son La is currently a key Arabica coffee-growing region of Vietnam. However, the industry is facing significant challenges from extreme climate change and increasingly stringent international requirements for sustainability standards and traceability. Consequently, the province is decisively promoting replanting with adaptive varieties, applying advanced deep-processing technologies, and transitioning to green, low-emission production models to enhance competitive value and ensure long-term livelihoods for local farmers.”*

Throughout the implementation period, the project will focus on supporting ethnic minorities, women, youth, and people with disability within the coffee industry. Key activities include increasing the adoption of climate-smart agriculture practices and other innovations to strengthen climate-resilient livelihoods.

Furthermore, the second pillar of the project will focus on boosting access to safety nets and recovery mechanisms. These efforts aim to help ethnic minority communities recover from unavoidable loss and damage caused by natural disasters or extreme weather events. The project also prioritises activities that promote the participation and leadership of youth, people with disability, and ethnic minority women in climate-related decision-making processes.

In the context of the Mekong Sub-region facing extreme climate change impacts that directly threaten food security and social stability, the **MekongElevate** project is implemented with the strategic goal of building adaptive and resilient communities. The project focuses on promoting **Climate-Smart Agriculture (CSA)** by transferring sustainable farming techniques and fostering innovation to protect people's long-term livelihoods.

Alongside strengthening social security systems and disaster risk contingency mechanisms, MekongElevate places a special emphasis on equality and inclusion. The project is committed to **fostering leadership** and amplifying the voices of women, youth, and persons with disabilities within ethnic minority communities, ensuring they become key actors in climate-related governance and decision-making processes from the local to the regional level.

*“At CARE, we believe that lasting solutions to the climate crisis depend on who is able to participate in them. Too often, women, youth, and people with disabilities face barriers that limit their access to economic opportunities and disaster preparedness. Through MekongElevate, we work alongside communities to help reduce these barriers, strengthen practical skills, and improve access to resources, so the green transition is more inclusive and no one is left behind.”* shared **Ms. Vuong Thai Nga, Program Director of CARE in Vietnam**, during the event.

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## **About the MekongElevate Project**

MekongElevate aims to strengthen the climate resilience of upland communities in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. The project focuses on supporting minority groups, including women, youth, and people with disability from ethnic minority backgrounds across six border provinces of the three countries. In Vietnam, the project is implemented in Dak Lak and Son La provinces.

The project pursues three strategic objectives:

- **Promoting Climate-Smart Agriculture (CSA):** Assisting people in adopting sustainable farming techniques and innovations to protect their livelihoods against climate change.
- **Strengthening Safety Nets:** Supporting communities in accessing recovery mechanisms and risk contingencies to minimize loss and damage caused by natural disasters and extreme weather.
- **Empowering Leadership:** Enhancing the voices and roles of ethnic minority women, youth, and people with disabilities in climate-related governance and decision-making processes, from the local to the regional level.

Implemented by CARE and its partners, the project expects to bring direct benefits to over 70,000 people and indirectly impact approximately 1.1 million individuals. MekongElevate not only addresses environmental issues but also aims to eliminate gender and social inequalities, laying out the foundation for sustainable development in the Mekong region.

## **About CARE International in Vietnam**

CARE has been active in Vietnam since 1989, collaborating with numerous partner organizations to implement over 300 projects. CARE believes that the key to equitable and sustainable development is addressing the root causes of poverty, social injustice, and inequality. CARE consistently walks alongside its partners to support women farmers, workers, and micro and small business owners in enhancing their capacity and confidence to participate in economic development, adapt to climate change, and strengthen resilience after natural disasters. CARE strives for a society that develops equitably and sustainably for all. For more information about the organization's activities, please visit: [www.care.org.vn](http://www.care.org.vn)

## **About the Mekong-Australia Partnership**

The [Mekong-Australia Partnership \(MAP\)](#), launched in 2020, is an Australian Government initiative that responds to shared regional and transboundary challenges to support a peaceful, stable and prosperous Mekong subregion. Australia engages pragmatically and flexibly in support of the subregion's priorities and where Australia can add value. Australia works with Mekong partners in Vietnam, Thailand, Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar to improve water security and climate change resilience; counter and disrupt transnational crime; enhance economic resilience and subregional integration; build leadership and skills through scholarships and short courses; and support inclusive development, including gender quality and disability equity.